

Victoria Park Primary Academy – Ballot Street Spice



The partnership between Victoria Park Primary Academy (VPA) and the Real Ideas Organisation (RIO) has created Ballot Street Spice (BSS) a school based, social enterprise established to tackle the challenge of bringing a diverse community together, creating real enterprise experiences for pupils and delivering accessible jobs for parents.

At VPA we understand the importance of looking past the school gates to connect with business partners and the wider community. Whether through innovative curriculum links, real social enterprise learning challenges or through our V IP business partnership programme the academy has been working collaboratively since 2007 to turn round what was a “failing” school into what is now a nationally recognised “outstanding” academy.

We wanted to address the lack of social mobility and the difficulty of engaging our school’s wider community. We serve a diverse community, more than 40 languages are spoken by the children at VPA so we started by bringing parents and children together to cook and share recipes, cultural barriers were broken down and what emerged was a range of unique spice blends.

We started working in partnership with RIO, a social enterprise that is passionate about education and solving social problems to create an imaginative and uniquely enterprising way of making a difference to the school and its local community and BSS was born.



Since then RIO has been working with children, parents and community business partners to develop and grow BSS our school based social enterprise. In year 1 we ground and sold 54,000g of “Mrs Mahal’s Masala”, created 3 new jobs and had more than 300 visits to our Spice Club.



Creativity and energy have been unleashed across our curriculum. All of our 450 pupils take part in extended Ballot Street challenges for a minimum of 6 weeks each year. They engage with hundreds of community members, working in partnership with local business and create real change in our community.



Our enterprising learning challenges partner with local and national businesses like Spice Kitchen who sell our products through their website, Asda and MyBnk who use our products in their “In a Box” challenge programme.

Recently BSS has caught the attention of Richard Branson, has been recognised by Asoka’s international Changemaker programme and is followed with interest by the RSA, Ofsted and Whole Education.





Support from West Midlands Heritage Lottery Fund enabled us to walk a camel, through the streets creating a viral video on You Tube. In 2016 we have plans for a Smethwick Spice Festival and Ballot Street Café to reach out to partners and our community in new ways.

Ballots Street Spice is an innovative real enterprise, trading unique spice blends, working hand in hand with business partners and community members to deliver inspiring results. Together we have created a partnership that produces exceptional leaning experiences, real job opportunities and brings our community together.

