

Notes from visit to Lewisham Young Leader's Academy session at St. Dunstan's College



The Lewisham Young Leaders Academy (LYLA) is a part of the Young Leaders Academy and is a charitable organisation that provides educational, personal development, and leadership opportunities to young people from Black African/Caribbean & Dual Heritage (8 to 16 years old).

Members of the Committee, namely- Cllr Luke Sorba (Chair), Cllr Jack Lavery, Cllr Carol Webley-Brown and Cllr Coral Howard, attended a session of

the Lewisham Young Leader's Academy at St. Dunstan's College. They met with young people as well as the session facilitators. The following key points were noted during the visit:

- The Young Leader's Academy first started in Harlesden as the Westside Young Leader's Academy (WYLA) where they currently have about 120 young people enrolled. At WYLA, they also run a parent's academy where they connect parents with different organisations. This is a non-statutory group and has great engagement with parents.
- The session at LYLA started with GAS- Gratitude, Affirmation and Silence. A few of the young people shared something they were grateful for, followed by group affirmations and a minute of silence. This demonstrated the positive attitude being cultivated and reinforced in the young people.
- Following the GAS session and a drill, the young people were divided in groups and sent to separate classrooms. Each classroom had a different session that focused on a particular theme such as financial literacy, public speaking, enterprise awareness and so on. These themes change every term.
- LYLA focused on business and financial literacy along with effective communication skills. These sessions also worked on building self-esteem and sense of identity in the young people.
- LYLA also runs different programmes such as:
 - Genius Programme- This is where the young people get to meet and hear from successful African and Caribbean role models.
 - Scholarship Programme- LYLA helps the young people prepare for various bursary opportunities.
 - Sports & Fitness- Fit to lead programme that encourages participation in different sports.
- LYLA also helps the young people prepare for apprenticeship opportunities.
- Young people who have benefited from the programme can also return to work as peer mentors.
- Various site-visits are also arranged for LYLA attendees. Some recent visits include- NBC Studios, SkyTV and Imperial College London.
- The Young Leader's Academy is a charitable organisation. Lewisham Council has funded LYLA while St. Dunstan's has provided free use of its facilities. With public sector austerity and the Council having to make budget cuts in order to set a legally required balanced budget, there is uncertainty around funding for LYLA, but Lewisham Council wants to do all that it can to support this brilliant initiative.