



THE DEVELOPMENT OF PACE WITH SUPPORT FROM THE COMINO FOUNDATION

The Comino Foundation seeks to support the development of potential in all young people including support for organisations that work with those who are disadvantaged.

In 1996 Alan Roberts, the Administrator became aware of the new PACE Centre near Aylesbury, which Heather Last was establishing to improve the development of children with motor disorders, such as cerebral palsy. Heather was working via the medium of conductive education, which is a personality-centred education process which recognises the person as a whole and helps them to develop their intellectual, emotional, social and physical abilities. It is not a treatment or therapy, but a continuous learning process where individuals have to be active and discover their own solutions to the many problems of daily living. The PACE Centre however, is uniquely trans-disciplinary by combining conductive education with occupational therapy, physiotherapy and formal education.

The educating for whole life programmes are designed around an in-depth knowledge of each child and it is the responsibility of a Team Leader to differentiate between the needs of each child in a group. When it is appropriate for a child to be taught either individually or in a smaller group, the structure of their learning day is designed to accommodate this. A partnership is created between child, parent and staff members in order to facilitate the learning process. Parent training and support is an essential part of the curriculum as it enables parents to promote their child's learning at home throughout the day. Volunteers are also trained within the groups as they have a crucial role in helping and supporting families within their local community.

The Comino Foundation Education Fellow, Eric Bates, recognized that the PACE Centre was an organisation in which GRASP principles were being applied. PACE stands for 'Positive Achievement inspired by the principles of Conductive Education'. It was also evident that for the PACE Centre to succeed and broaden its influence Heather Last would need to develop effective training programmes for staff and parents in the theory and application of conductive education. Funding for training from the Comino Foundation started in 1997 and continued through to 2009. Alongside funding from other charitable institutions, this enabled the Pace Centre to progressively expand and become recognized as a leading institution for conductive education. Following recognition by Buckinghamshire Local Education Authority in 2005 PACE was able to raise funds to move to new and larger purpose built premises.

The funding enabled a full-time Training Co-ordinator to be employed who could work directly with staff to improve their skills and application of a trans-

disciplinary approach. It also enabled PACE to be promoted as a practice base for students studying for a Conductive Education Degree with support from a training brochure. The post also made significant input to the PACE Centre Training Curriculum (PCTC) which is now well advanced and in use with 20 core training modules which are supported by a range of training materials, including DVDs.

The 2009 Ofsted report states that The PACE Centre is an outstanding school that provides an excellent quality of education for all pupils. The integration of education, therapy and care ensures that pupils' complex needs are consistently addressed. Pupils make outstanding progress in their academic, physical and communication skills, and in their personal development. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Much of the school's work is conducted in groups, in which pupils learn to relate to one another and, where possible, to take the initiative. Pupils were said to have empathy with one another and show each other consideration and real respect and friendship.

Heather Last retires in December 2011 but her excellent PACE legacy will continue to reach a much wider, international, constituency due to the development of the training programmes funded by the Comino Foundation.

Anthony Darbyshire
The Comino Foundation
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