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Happy anniversary: MP Meg Hillier joins celebrations as City Year UK and National Grid mark five years of helping young talent blossom in London

City Year UK supports children from disadvantaged areas to excel at school

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- **Launched in London in 2010, City Year UK has expanded to Birmingham and will launch in Manchester this September**
- **National Grid has supported City Year UK since it started in 2010**

Politician Meg Hillier joined in the celebrations as National Grid and City Year UK celebrated half a decade of making a difference to the lives of London's youngsters.

The Hackney South and Shoreditch MP was the special guest at an event to mark the landmark fifth birthday of the initiative, which was held at Whitmore Primary School.

Whitmore was one of the first five schools to pilot City Year in the UK back in 2010. Since then, City Year UK has grown to 22 schools across London and Birmingham and is now preparing to launch in Manchester.

Founded by two Harvard graduates in the USA in 1988, City Year UK works with schools in disadvantaged areas. National Grid played an instrumental part in launching City Year in the UK and has sponsored the initiative since its inception in London.

At City Year UK's heart is the corps of dedicated young local role-models who volunteer for a year to support children at participating schools excel in their studies. One of City Year UK's original volunteers Rodney Williams was among the guests at the birthday bash.

The visit took Rodney, who now works as a Project Officer on National Grid's flagship London Power Tunnels scheme, back to his roots as he spent a year as a City Year UK volunteer at the school after university.

He said: "Being a City Year UK volunteer for a year at a school is a great way to give back and make a positive difference to young people's lives. You really get to know the kids and be a part of their lives."

"The 12 months I spent as a City Year UK volunteer at the school had a big impact on me and gave me new skills and experiences that University didn't and it helped me get where I am today."

Rodney added: "It's great to be back at Whitmore Primary School and to hear about how City Year UK is continuing to work with National Grid to do great stuff with young people at schools across the capital and beyond."

Meg Hillier said: "It's great to see City Year thriving in Hackney. Pupils really benefit from these additional role models in the classroom."

She added: "And I congratulate National Grid on their sustained commitment to Hackney and Whitmore primary school - let's hope this breeds a new generation of engineers in Hackney."

Penny Smith, Head Teacher at Whitmore Primary School said: "Year after year, City Year UK's volunteers make an invaluable contribution, with their energy, drive and commitment felt across the entire school."

"They start the day with the children in breakfast club, followed by fun exercises in the playground to get them 'fired up' and ready to learn. Once the school days starts, the volunteers can be found supporting children in class, running games at playtime, developing sports and tutoring children."

She added: "They act as a brilliant bridge between teachers and children as children respond well to their unique role as mentors."

National Grid's Head of Cable Tunnels David Luetchford, was also at the celebration, he said: "National Grid has an important role in connecting Londoners to the energy they use, but it's also important that we connect with the communities where we work."

"Our work with City Year UK enables us to connect with one of the capital's most precious resources – its young people."

He added: "It's great to see firsthand how the programme is making such a positive difference in the lives of young people."

Links:

<http://p19-preview.awardspace.net/cityyear.org.uk/>

<http://www.nationalgridconnecting.com/unleashing-citizen-power-with-city-year/>

<http://www.londonpowertunnels.co.uk/>

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