

Children from Highover School Hitchin play bridge at the House of Lords

Nine children from Highover School in Hitchin were honoured this week to visit the House of Lords and play bridge with some Peers. They have been taught to play by Heather and Simon from the club as part of our Bridge into Schools initiative.

Following a tour of the Palace of Westminster, and a chance to meet with local MP Bim Arofami, the pupils played bridge with members of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Bridge (APPG).

They showed that the game can be enjoyed by people of all ages and they held their own against the Peers, playing with a skill and confidence not often found in players of their age.

The children are part of the School Bridge Club which was set up with help from Hitchin Bridge Club some eighteen months ago. Hitchin Bridge Club, the largest bridge club in North Hertfordshire, started an initiative to teach bridge in local schools 18 months ago and has been involved in three local schools.

John Rogan, a teacher at Highover School, says he has noticed how the children have benefited from playing bridge. "I have seen a distinct improvement in the children's mathematical skills but also in their problem-solving, logic, and strategic thinking. As they are playing as a partnership it has also benefited their communication and social skills. But above all they really enjoy it and have fun - there is always great excitement at the school club when they are playing!"

The visit was organised in conjunction with the English Bridge Union and the national charity for bridge, English Bridge Education & Development (EBED). At end of the visit the children were awarded their bronze level certificates under the EBED's Junior Award Scheme – they are pictured with their certificates alongside Lord Skelmersdale of the APPG for Bridge.

Whilst the Club have been active in three schools in the area the main limiting factor in expanding into more schools is availability of volunteers from the club to help with the teaching aspects. You don't need to be an expert player at bridge but be used to being with children and able to communicate the basics of the game to them. We start with mini bridge where there is no bidding and only after a year or so do they move on to full bridge so it is mainly at a basic level. We expect the teachers at the school to organise the club and be in charge of discipline we just help with the bridge aspects and also hope the teachers learn the game at the same time! So if you feel you can commit time to help in a school please do contact Bernard, Heather or Simon. You will find it very rewarding.

