



## **TV icon salutes Wearside school for creating first dementia-friendly generation**

Television legend Angela Rippon has today paid tribute to students and staff at a Wearside primary school for their pioneering efforts to create a dementia-friendly generation.

The broadcasting icon and Alzheimer's Society ambassador admitted she was 'proud to be associated' with Bernard Gilpin Primary School for their ground-breaking campaign to create a dementia-friendly community in Houghton-le-Spring.

Angela, who has personal experience of dementia herself, sang the school's praises as the Alzheimer's Society and Public Health England joined forces in calling on schools across the North-East to follow the example set by their peers.

Pupils and teachers at the school have made key steps towards reducing the stigma that results in many people with dementia experiencing loneliness and social exclusion by becoming Dementia Friends and by opening up their doors to those affected by the condition.

'Bernard Gilpin Primary School pupils are setting tremendous examples for their fellow students across the North-East and I really think they can inspire an entire generation to change attitudes for the better,' said Angela.

'They are growing up with the knowledge and understanding necessary to get rid of the taboo that is attached to dementia as well as the social isolation and loneliness that rub salt into wounds for families affected by the condition.

'We're hoping to achieve an entire dementia-friendly generation who will understand what dementia is and who will not be afraid or frightened by the disease so there won't be a stigma attached to it in the future.

'It's encouraging to know we are heading in the right direction because of the sterling Dementia Friends work the staff and students are doing at Bernard Gilpin.



Bernard Gilpin Primary, which serves Houghton-le-Spring, was one of the first schools to set its sights on becoming dementia-friendly in an initiative launched by Angela and Prime Minister David Cameron.

Since then the school has won awards for its work that involves staging Singing for the Brain music therapy sessions aimed at people with dementia and hosts Dementia Cafes.

Angela said headteacher Andrew Bainbridge deserved 'immense credit' for his 'tremendous enthusiasm and determination' to help make life better for people with dementia.

'The work schools like Bernard Gilpin are doing will have a huge impact on different levels,' she added.

'They can really transform the lives of people who live with dementia and their carers and truly enable them to live well with the condition within the community.

'They will help ensure that the signs of dementia are recognised early and that health experts are able to diagnose dementia early which can ensure people with the condition receive the support they need to live well.

'It will also help create the dementia-friendly communities that are vital to ensure people with dementia can live well within their own communities after a diagnosis because the environment and people around them will be more suitable.

'The fact they have really embraced the Dementia Friends initiative and they love interacting with the older generation is great for the kids, great for the school and great for the community.

'It is win-win-win situation. I'm proud to be associated with the schools and I'd love every school in the North East to follow their absolutely brilliant lead.'

Angela spoke out as Alzheimer's Society and Public Health England have released results of the first ever poll of young people's attitudes to dementia, which reveal that around a third (31 per cent) of young people would feel uncomfortable talking to someone with dementia.

However, more than half (55 per cent) believe that if people understood more about the condition and how to help, life would improve for those affected.



Former Sunderland Mayor Bob Heron, whose late mother had dementia, is the chair of governors at Bernard Gilpin and he echoed Angela's sentiments.

'Young people hold the key to what our society will look like in the future and we want it to be a dementia-friendly one,' Bob said.

'Dementia is a cause that is very close to my heart because my mum had it for 13 years before she died so the work that the school is doing means a lot to me for lots of reasons,'

'It really is a community school. We hope to bring other schools into the circle as well because it doesn't just affect the grandparents and great grandparents at Bernard Gilpin; it affects kids at schools across Wearside.

'That is why we want more schools to get involved. Hopefully they can see benefits because the dementia-friendly work we have done has ballooned out of all proportion. It has encouraged kids to look outwards and we need this happen across Sunderland schools but and I am sure it will spread little by little.

'Angela has been fantastic with us. When she paid us a visit before Christmas she offered us assist with the local shopping centre in the near future to help the traders create a dementia-friendly community as well.'

To support the ambition to create a dementia friendly generation, Alzheimer's Society has launched a new section on its website [www.alzheimers.org.uk/youngpeople](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk/youngpeople) aimed at teachers, youth group leaders, young people and parents. The site hosts new teachers' resources for Key Stage 3, including lesson plans to build an understanding of how dementia affects people, class activities, videos, and fundraising ideas to support the work of the charity.

-ends-

#### Notes to editors

1. The 2.3 million figure of people aged between 8 and 17 based on data from the ONS 2013 mid year estimates of population by single year of age.  
[www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables)
2. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1,327 children aged 8-17. Fieldwork was undertaken between 19th - 21st October 2014. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB children (aged 8-17).



3. For more information on becoming a young people and Dementia Friends, visit [www.alzheimers.org.uk/youngpeople](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk/youngpeople) or [www.dementiafriends.org.uk](http://www.dementiafriends.org.uk). Follow Dementia Friends on Twitter
4. Alzheimer's Society is the UK's leading support and research charity for people with dementia, their families and carers. We provide information and support to people with any form of dementia and their carers through our publications, National Dementia Helpline, website, and more than 2,000 local services. We campaign for better quality of life for people with dementia and greater understanding of dementia. We also fund an innovative programme of medical and social research into the cause, cure and prevention of dementia and the care people receive.
5. Public Health England's mission is to protect and improve the nation's health and to address inequalities through working with national and local government, the NHS, industry and the voluntary and community sector. PHE is an operationally autonomous executive agency of the Department of Health. Follow us on Twitter @PHE\_uk
6. **School boilerplate**