



● **GANG TALK:** Pupils Zena Mahmood, Deyarna Morton, Devante Tyndale, Nazim Hussein, Rukhsar Hussein and Sharick Morton during their visit to see Home Secretary Jacqui Smith, also pictured.

# Tackling the gangs

**HOME SECRETARY Jacqui Smith has been urged by a group of schoolchildren from Leeds to follow their pioneering methods of tackling gang culture.**

Six children from Hillcrest Primary School, in Chapeltown, met Ms Smith in her Commons office to present their innovative project Gangs – Hoodies or Goodies.

They told her how a poster campaign and karate classes were at the centre of their drive to persuade fellow youngsters not to carry knives and guns.

The scheme is part of the Quest Initiative, run by the High Sheriff of West Yorkshire – currently Roger Bowers – and West Yorkshire Police to educate youngsters at an early age about crime.

A steering committee of six youngsters was set up to run the project and work with School Liaison Officer PC Brook.

During the project they ran a poster competition about anti-gang culture and respect. All 400 pupils from the school took part and three youngsters who won the competition will have their designs displayed at all community buildings.

The scheme also offers karate and other martial arts classes for children in a bid to keep them off the streets and out of the clutches of gangs.

Now, the steering committee has met Ms Smith to persuade her to roll out their scheme across the country.

Sharick Morton, 11, said: "I told her about how we made lots of posters and how gangs were bad for everyone and how

we need to get along with people.

"She said that they have tried lots of things to stop them.

"I have been doing karate since Year Six and go every Wednesday."

Zena Mahmood, 10, said: "It was fun. I was quite nervous as well before I met her.

"I asked her 'what ideas have you got about stopping gangs and what do you think about people already in gangs'.

"She said that old people and young people should get together more and talk."

Funding for the project was given by the Police Community Trust and the Royal Armouries Museum.

The children's teacher Saluka Saul said: "It was a fantastic opportunity for the children. We have been treated like royalty.

"Jacqui Smith was very down to earth.

"This is about saying there is nothing glamorous about gun crime and hopefully these kids will carry that message on when they go to high school.

"It should have an impact on the rest of their lives."

PC Dave Brook said: "She was very warm and approachable and listened to the messages from the children. She is certainly open to the idea."

The children were given a guided tour of the House of Commons by Leeds North East Labour MP Fabian Hamilton, who organised the meeting with the Home Secretary.

He said: "It was a really good meeting as the Home Secretary listened carefully to PC Dave Brook and more importantly to the children."

[lwn.editorial@ypn.co.uk](mailto:lwn.editorial@ypn.co.uk)

by Weekly  
News Reporter

## PLANNING A WEDDING?



**Village  
South Leeds**  
Capitol Boulevard West  
Tingley LS27 0TS

## Grand Wedding Fair

**SUNDAY 1st March 2009**  
**11.30am - 3.00pm**

**FREE Admission**

**See Exclusive Exhibitor  
Displays in Leeds'  
Brand New Hotel!**

- Fantastic Function Suites
- Village Health & Fitness Club
- Wedding Fair Special Offers

Organisers