

Young Designers

Interviewer: Good morning. This is Carolyn Peters for Channel One. I'm here at Aldercar School, outside Nottingham. With me is Alana, a student who was actively involved in an unusual project. Alana, can you tell me a bit about the project and how it started?

Alana: Sure. Actually this is only one of a few projects that took place in schools around the country. We worked with the famous clothing designer, Sir Paul Smith, and designed a new school uniform. The idea for the project came from an organisation which aims to encourage creativity in young people.

Interviewer: Could you tell me why it was important to have a new uniform?

Alana: Well, we just needed a change. Our school has had the same uniform for many years. In fact, our head teacher told us that he had worn exactly the same uniform when he was a student at the school! Styles have changed over the years, and we wanted something different.

Interviewer: So how did you begin this project?

Alana: Well, a group of students from our school were chosen to work on the project. We began by thinking about our dream outfit — what we would like to wear to school. We also asked other students in our school what kind of uniform they'd like to see. Our old uniform was a bit boring. We wanted something with more colour and style — something that would let us express our individuality. At first we thought of using current fashions, but we realised that they would soon look out of date too, and that we needed a more classic look. As a team, we drew up several designs.

Interviewer: And what did you do once you had the designs?

Alana: We showed them to designers who were working for the Paul Smith fashion label. The designers were great. They said that we'd done a wonderful job, and they only suggested changing a few things here and there.

Interviewer: So then were you finished?

Alana: Well, no. We decided to ask the other students what they thought of our designs. For a whole week, we put the uniforms on display. We asked students to complete a questionnaire giving us their opinions. I really wasn't expecting it, but in the end, very few students liked our first designs.

Interviewer: Oh no. What happened then?

Alana: We were pretty depressed, but the designers told us not to lose hope. They said that we had to continue working. After a lot of hard work, we came up with two designs — one for summer and one for winter. We used to have to wear a tie with the school colours. We kept the school colours, but not the tie, it was just too formal. The new uniform includes a great navy blue hooded top — it's so comfortable that some of us even wear it at weekends! The other students liked our designs and they were all approved.

Interviewer: Paul Smith clothes are usually quite expensive. Is this uniform expensive as well?

Alana: No, it's only a few pounds more than the old one. When the project first began, parents were very worried about the cost. But they were promised that there wouldn't be a big increase in the price of the uniform.

Interviewer: And what do you think you gained from being involved in this project?

Alana: Oh, lots of things. First, it was amazing to have the opportunity to work with a famous designer label. All the people from Paul Smith listened to our opinions and took us seriously. We felt like we were making a big contribution to the school. And I learned a lot about communicating and working with other people. We had to show our designs to the rest of the school, which meant we had to think about how to present our ideas. I had never really thought about that before.

Interviewer: And how did the designers feel about working with students?

Alana: I think they liked it. They said we were very honest. I guess most of their clients don't say exactly what they think! They also said that they were learning a lot from us and that we were very organised, focused, and easy to work with.

Interviewer: How did other people feel about the new design for the uniform?

Alana: Well, a government minister said that she liked it because it had a clear school identity. Mr Cooper, the head teacher at Aldercar, liked it because it was practical, and also, because we liked it so much.

Interviewer: Well, those certainly are valid reasons. I'm afraid we've run out of time. Thanks so much for sharing your story with us. For Channel One, this is Carolyn Peters.

Answers: 1. b 3. a 5. TRUE 7. complete a questionnaire 9. took them seriously
 2. c 4. c 6. it was boring 8. expensive / costly 10. honesty