

## Autistic sixth formers put an enterprising foot forward.

Students from Autism Unlimited's Portfield School Sixth Form in Christchurch left their stamp on this year's Young Enterprise Dorset competition with their innovative range of 'Spectrum Socks.'



**BEST FEET FORWARD** – Portfield School Sixth Form teacher Hayley Morris with students Jazz, Oliver and Robbie modelling some of their 'Spectrum Socks'.

Young people at the Sixth Form on Airfield Road, came up with the idea to make and sell differently coloured tie-dyed socks which signify their wearer's emotions.

The sixth formers showcased their socks at the Young Enterprise Dorset Trade Fair in April, earning themselves a place in the Showcase Final, held at The Grange School two weeks later.

The group's teacher, Hayley Morris explained, "This was the first year we have entered the annual Young Enterprise Competition and everyone wanted to build their company around a product they could enjoy making as a team and that would appeal to, and hopefully help, other people - what better product than gorgeous, brightly coloured socks?"

The bright idea was inspired by The Zones of Regulation - a globally recognised educational framework which categorises emotions and states of alertness into four

colour-coded zones, each representing a different level of emotional intensity and self-regulation.

The blue zone represents a low state of alertness or when people might feel sad, tired, or ill and need to calm down and regain energy.

Green signifies an optimal state of alertness when someone is focused, calm, ready to learn, feels happy, content, or relaxed.

Yellow represents a heightened state of alertness. People might feel frustrated, anxious, or excited and need strategies to help them stay in control and make appropriate choices.

The red zone signifies an extremely high state of alertness when people might feel overwhelmed by intense emotions such as anger, fear, or panic, and require immediate support to calm down and regain self-control.

Hayley went on to explain, "for neurodiverse people, who might find it difficult to communicate, the zones can help them to express how they are feeling to others and also to identify tools to manage their emotions"

"Our Spectrum Socks are red, blue, green, and yellow and can be worn as matching pairs, or mixed to signify the wearer has mixed emotions. By wearing our socks people can let others know if they are struggling and need support, if they want to be left alone, or if they want to engage. They have been a huge success, with orders quickly outstripping supply.

"The enterprise project has also been hugely helpful for our students in enabling them to meet and be inspired by students from other schools, and to take on responsibility and push themselves in their communication and presenting skills."

The group competed against products from a range of schools across Dorset, with eight schools making it through to the final. Overall winners Bournemouth School for Girls now go forward to represent the county at the competition's south west final in June.

Trophies were presented in the award categories of Overall Dorset Winner, Best Presentation, Technology award, Sustainability award and Creativity award and the Portfield Sixth Form team all received participation certificates.

Team member Oliver was also thrilled to be presented with the Outstanding Individual Achievement Award for his exemplary effort during the process.

Ends

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