

Press release: Outstanding Gateshead student awarded Lord Glenamara prize

A talented Gateshead student has received national recognition for achieving top school grades and making a stand-out contribution to her local community.

Sixteen-year-old Stephanie Taylor, who studies at St Wilfrid's R.C. College, Gateshead, is the seventh winner of the annual Lord Glenamara prize, which recognises gifted students in years 11 and 12 who are also making a difference in communities across the North East of England.

Stephanie, from South Shields, was among nine young people shortlisted for the Prize and has today (Monday 18 February) been honoured by the Education Secretary Damian Hinds, who described Stephanie as "an inspiration" at an awards ceremony at University College London.

The English, Spanish and Psychology A-level student plays an active role in the National Citizen Service, is a member of South Tyneside Young People's Parliament, and, in her role as a School Council Ambassador at St Wilfrid's, has driven forward the 'Make Your Mark' campaign to highlight the issue of body image and help fellow pupils access guidance and support.

Stephanie Taylor said:

"It's a huge honour to receive this prestigious award. I will be eternally grateful for my teachers, who saw potential in me and guided me to succeed, as well as to the judges for ultimately choosing me as the winner.

"I am looking forward to contributing more to my local area through South Tyneside Young People's Parliament, where this year's campaign is mental health.

"Experiences such as the National Citizen Service have been a major factor in helping me grow as a person, as well as working at baking classes for young children with learning difficulties. I will always be thankful for these opportunities."

The runner-up of this year's prize was Melin Sunil, an outstanding pupil who achieved a clean sweep of top grades across every subject in her GCSEs. She also takes an active role in mentoring younger students, as well as volunteering at Sunderland Royal Hospital.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

"Stephanie's commitment to helping other people is an inspiration, and it's so impressive that she is able to balance this with excellent grades. The Lord Glenamara Prize is a great celebration of the incredible talent in the North East.

"This stand-out talent is exactly what the Government is determined to

harness through the £24 million Opportunity North East programme, which is aimed at making sure every young person in the region can fulfil their potential – anyone looking for an example to follow should look no further than Stephanie.”

The Lord Glenamara prize was established in 2012 in memory of Ted Short – a teacher who went on to serve as MP for Newcastle Central from 1951 to 1975, including two years as Education Secretary.

The prize shines a spotlight on talent from across the region, and underscores the Government’s commitment to boosting social mobility and raising aspirations for children in the North East through the £24 million Opportunity North East programme launched in October.

Opportunity North East, which is led by Schools Minister Lord Agnew, was launched to address the fact that secondary school performance in the North East is significantly below other regions in England, despite having some of the best-performing primary schools.

On top of that, fewer 18-year-olds attend the country’s top universities than those from any other part of the country, and the North East also has one of the highest proportions of young people not in education, employment or training after year 11.

Minister for the School System Lord Agnew said:

“The variety of achievements among the nominees shows how much potential there is in this region – and I’m committed to helping even more young people fulfil their potential and find the right path to an exciting future.

“Delivering on that ambition is at the heart of the Opportunity North East programme and the board of local education leaders and experts that I chair are similarly determined to raise standards and aspirations for talented people in this unique part of the country.”

The programme will aim to tackle issues holding young people back in the North East by:

- Investing £12 million in targeted approaches to improve the transition from primary to secondary school, drive up standards – particularly at secondary level – and improve outcomes for pupils post 16;
- Working with secondary schools and colleges to encourage young people to consider university, degree apprenticeships and other high quality technical education options;
- Partnering with local businesses to improve job prospects for young people across the region; and

- Investing a further £12 million to boost early career training for new teachers and help improve the quality of teaching and raise standards in the region's schools, ahead of roll-out in other regions.

Opportunity North East is part of a government drive to improve education and boost productivity in the North of England, and follows on from investment in the Northern Powerhouse strategy.