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Hitachi helps teach children the importance of Universal Design

Maidenhead, UK, December 13th 2012 – Hitachi Europe Ltd. today announced that students at St Mary's Catholic Primary School, based in Maidenhead, England, have turned their hands to product design having spent the past few weeks learning about Universal Design from staff at Hitachi Europe.

Universal Design is an interactive primary school education programme run by Hitachi, which teaches 9-11 year olds the importance of designing products and services that can easily be used by everyone – as well as social inclusion. Over three sessions, students are introduced to Universal Design principles, receive presentation skills training and compete in a group TV remote control design challenge.

Years 5 and 6 students from St Mary's were tasked with the challenge of designing their own Universally Designed TV Remote Controls. The children got into groups to brainstorm the ideas for their remote, draw the design and then create a presentation to present their ideas.

Six groups made it to the final, held at the School on 5th December, where students presented their ideas to a panel of judges from Hitachi. Guest judges also included Jane Waring, Senior Adviser, Inclusion, Education and Child Advisory Service from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Janice Layock, St Mary's Headteacher.

After some fierce competition, which left the judges with a tough job in deciding the winner, Team EAHMAA were named victorious, each winning a Hitachi digital camera for their efforts.

Team EAHMAA came up with their own team name by combining the initials from their first names. They brainstormed the design for their remote by looking at an existing media remote control and thinking about how it could be improved for deaf, blind and physically impaired people. Each of the buttons on their remote design had braille and the remote even had a talking speaker. Other features included a motion sensor so that it could be found easily if lost.

Jane Waring, Senior Adviser, Inclusion, Education and Child Advisory Service from the Royal Borough of Windsor said: This has been a wonderful opportunity for the children to learn and think more about inclusion in today's society and to be involved in a project which focuses their minds on accessibility. The standard of their designs and presentations were extremely high and it's clear they all learned a lot from the programme."

Janice Laycock, Headteacher of St Mary's Catholic Primary School said: "This has been a fantastic example of a project which has great practical application. Not only has it made the children think more about how people cope with disabilities, but it has also made them aware of what it takes to design practical products."

Abi Price, Universal Design Programme Manager for Hitachi Europe Ltd. said: "It's been a privilege working on this project – the students at St Mary's seem to have thoroughly enjoyed themselves and at Hitachi we are delighted that we've been able to use our local connection in the community to reach out and help teach some important lessons about inclusion and design."

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