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LESSON LEARNT: Characters Princess Leonora of Lyonesse, *left*, and Foreign Office mandarin Mr Brown, *above*, from the Alive and Kicking Theatre Company, teach Leeds children about the effects anti-social behaviour has on their community.

Drama new way to teach kids respect

BY PAUL ROBINSON

HOUSING bosses have hit upon a dramatic new way of keeping kids on the straight and narrow.

Aire Valley Homes Leeds recently began a programme of school visits designed to teach youngsters about the impact anti-social behaviour has on their communities.

Staff from Aire Valley, which manages 15,000 council properties in the south of the city, soon realised that firing the children's imaginations would help get their message across more effectively.

And they have now tried to do just that by commissioning Oakwood-based theatre company Alive and Kicking to lay on interactive projects in primary schools.

Alive and Kicking's sessions feature quirky characters like troublemaking Augusta Grimknicker, Foreign Office mandarin Mr Brown and the beautiful-but-troubled Princess Leonora of Lyonesse.

Their stories have already proved a big hit with pupils at schools such as Cottingley Primary, Swardcliffe's Grimes Dyke Primary and Belle Isle's Clappgate Primary.

Aire Valley's chief executive, Merran

McRae, said: "We're delighted at the positive impact this project has had so far.

"Both teachers and pupils have been very enthusiastic."

Alive and Kicking's Martin Riley said he had been "overwhelmed" by the response to the sessions, which cover themes such as the importance of communities and the benefits of creative play.

"We hope that the project can go some way to improving children's attitude towards themselves and their environment," he said.

Aire Valley is one of three arms length management organisations (Almos) which run Leeds's council housing stock. The not-for-profit company's patch includes Holbeck, Beeston, Rothwell, Morley, Middleton, Garforth, Kippax and Methley.

Its link-up with Alive and Kicking is part of its efforts to improve the overall quality of tenants' lives as well as looking after their houses.

Schools who miss out on a visit from the theatre company can still explore issues raised in the sessions with the help of a DVD. For more details ring Ian Montgomery at Aire Valley on 0113 214 1798.

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