



Essence of rising creativity

By **Shannique Smith, 16, Bianca Manu, 15 and Antonio Akue, 15**

WITH street dance rising in popularity after the success of dance groups Diversity and Flawless on Britain's Got Talent, Hackney-based dancers Ebonessence could soon gain similar exposure.

Ebonessence are an example of the rising creative force of young Hackney. The dance group, which was founded seven years ago, could potentially follow in the footsteps of Flawless and Diversity. Though they admit they're not as good as them yet and this motivates them to want to achieve more.

With a buzz among local young people in Hackney and some of their dancers having a featured in Bashy's

'Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?' video, they continue to impress many through their YouTube videos and live performances.

“When I got into dance everything became easier”

We went to Ebonessence rehearsals at the Stepping Up Youth Club in Homerton to see for ourselves what all the hype was about.

Ebonessence's tutor Michelle is classically trained in jazz, contemporary and ballet dance styles. She has also worked with the likes of Whitney Houston, Robbie Williams and Mel B, so many of her students aspire to be like her.



Shannique, Bianca and Antonio on their visit to Ebonessence at Stepping Up Youth Club

Even though Michelle wasn't a high achiever in the school system, she found a way to prove people wrong through dance. She said: "I didn't get good grades so I think I was the underdog, I suppose. They didn't think I would go to uni or anything like that.

"When I got into dance everything became easier. I went to uni and got a

degree. All of that I achieved because I was so in love with dance."

This shows that you don't have to be an academic to achieve, and it is a good example for those who aren't doing well at school.

Ebonessence have an open door policy, which encourages young people to join without the pressures of being rejected. They also have a structure for their

young dancers to progress through different stages. The group is split into beginners, intermediate and advanced categories. This is like a well organised dance school providing a learning experience.

As one young dancer told us, being part Ebonessence has given her 'confidence, dance ability and winning shows'.

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Food for thought

By **Marcel Reinard**

PUPILS from the Petchey Academy are to sell food grown on their allotment to a celebrity chef's London restaurant.

Oliver Rowe – whose BBC programme The Urban Chef aimed to source food created within the capital – and the Academy have set up an agreement that will see the school's produce bought

for the chef's Konstam at the Prince Albert Restaurant, WC1.

Another deal has been formed by the E8 Academy, which will see its food exchanged with medicinal herbs from an Austrian monastery.

Petchey assistant vice-principal, Fiona Hattersley-Smith, said: "The children really enjoy coming down, getting their hands dirty and going home with home-



Pupils from the Petchey Academy on their allotment, which was officially opened by chef Oliver Rowe (centre)

grown, organic produce. It's about trying to educate young people about where their food comes from."

She added that they are now looking to work with other Hackney schools to create a £300,000 natural food initiative.

The deals have come about following on from the launch of the Petchey Kitchen Garden Project, a Big Lottery Local Food funded £10,000 venture, jointly run with Hackney environmental charity ecoActive.