

Telling tales to aid integration.

Using intergenerational storytelling to support social integration and overcome educational disadvantage in mixed ethnic communities.

Chelsea Deanery Partnership of Schools Diocese of London

Context

The Chelsea Deanery Partnership of Schools is a group of three Church of England primary schools in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea: Christ Church, Chelsea; Holy Trinity, Sloan Square; and St Cuthbert with St Matthias, Earl's Court. The schools formed the partnership in 2017 with an aim to raise educational standards, promote staff development and achieve greater financial efficiency by working together.

The schools have differing cohorts with many pupils with special educational and other needs, pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and many from refugee backgrounds or those for whom English is not their first language. The number of EAL (English as an additional language) pupils at Holy Trinity and St Cuthbert with St Matthias are well above average with 52% and 83% respectively when the project was proposed. Each of the schools serves a diverse community with pupils of different faiths and ethnicities.

The schools recognised that they all had children who could benefit from further societal integration and from opportunities to learn about different people and build respect for other faiths, ethnicities, cultures, languages and customs.

The project

The Chelsea Deanery Partnership used their Unlocking Gifts grant to fund an inter-generational story telling project, bringing in a story teller and artist to help facilitate story sharing and art to reflect the schools' community tales. Year 5 or 6 pupils spent time with local elders – grandparents of pupils, members of the local church community and care home community. Prompted by an artefact, photograph, personal experience, music or poetry the elders and pupils spent time sharing stories about themselves and their lives.

In hearing about each other's experiences, the pupils were able to learn from and grow in respect for the older members of their community. Similarly, the elders were able to learn about the young people and in this way greater cross-generational links were created. Alongside this benefit, the pupils also developed their story telling and interpersonal skills,

as well as their reading, writing, the depth of their vocabulary and their typing skills through the drafting and redrafting process which was supported by the professional story teller.



A professional artist helped each school to create a piece of artwork to reflect the community tales. Pupils at Christ Church learnt about artist Grayson Perry and took part in mark making and portrait drawing workshops. They then created a papier-mâché urn decorated with illustrations based on the tales. Holy Trinity also drew portraits and sketched illustrations that were then used to create a

large class canvas using acrylic paint. St Cuthbert with St Matthias created an acrylic painting on a large wooden background.

To celebrate the end of the first year, the Partnership held an event at St Cuthbert Church, involving the pupils, artists, elders, parents, staff and governors. Special guests from the diocese also attended as well as author Sir Michael Morpurgo who is a former pupil of St Cuthbert with St Matthias. At the event, children and elders from each school were presented with copies of the books created from the stories. Some of the stories were read out by pupils and elders, including Sir Michael who enthralled the audience with a story of his life in the 1950s when he lived on the very street where the event was held. The printed books have been a huge source of pride for all involved, with pupils and elders alike sharing them with friends and family.

What worked?

Each school in the partnership saw an improvement in the reading and writing of pupils. Teachers reported that pupils are implementing the drafting skills they learnt from the project across their work, improving presentation standards and enabling them to attain well written final pieces of work.

Progress in reading and writing has been very strong in this year group and we do feel the Tales project and the oral to writing to the redrafting process has been an important contributing factor in this success...The celebration event and the related art project was also brilliant and really deepened the learning.
(Headteacher, Christ Church)

Even more important and longer lasting than any academic progress, pupils have developed a love of story telling and pupils and elders have built life enhancing relationships.

Arguably even more important than the reading and writing outcomes are the relationships developed between elders and children and those strengthened across the Partnership. Through sharing stories and exploring with art, a mutual understanding across generations has blossomed.

(Kate Roskell, London Diocesan Board for Schools)

The pupils took great joy in their stories being shared and celebrated, both in the book and at the celebration event.

Everybody made a story. It made me so very happy to see my story in the book because the book is so great.

(Pupil)

The inter-generational links have been strengthened through the project and the children have responded extremely positively to their meetings with the elders, enjoying their time together and growing in understanding and empathy. Listening to the stories of the elders, and hearing about past times in their community, pupils have gained local knowledge and history. In line with one of the aims of the project, this has helped pupils to grow in respect for the older members of their community and to develop greater understanding of difference.

I enjoyed telling the story of my object to James (elder). He was wearing red. He told us about the wars. I learned some new things. It was a long time ago and he was on a ship and he created some bombs to test. He told me he still has a teddy-bear!

(Pupil)

I spoke about when I was young and it was interesting to see the children's reactions to how we lived then.

(Kim, Elder)



In working with the elders, story teller, artists and pupils from the other schools, all the pupils have developed their collaborative working and interpersonal skills through both the creation of the published book and the group artwork. This culminated in the celebration event in which all involved came together and pupils were able to hear the stories from each of the schools.

The project has brought community members of different generations together, enabling each to value the other a little more and learn from each other by listening to the shared personal stories.

(Quote from the 'Tales from our Community' project book)

Tales from the community has been an inspirational project for all involved.

What next?

The Chelsea Deanery Partnership has already repeated the project with the second year of Unlocking Gifts funding. For the second year the celebration was held in one of the other



churches connected to the schools. In this way the Partnership have been further cementing community relationships and the schools have already been developing and improving the way the project is carried out. In the second year, pupils used iPads to record the discussions, enabling them to listen back when transferring the stories into writing. They also published a combined book for all three schools and images of the artwork produced have also been incorporated into the book.

The Partnership has also been successful in securing another source of funding which will allow them to continue the project. This project has been extremely successful in enabling a wide range of benefits and there is no doubt it will continue to have a positive impact on the pupils and wider community of the Chelsea Deanery Partnership of Schools.

