

## GUARDIAN ANGELS RC PRIMARY SCHOOL IN COLLABORATION WITH THE HALF MOON YOUNG PEOPLE'S

### 1. Introduction

The Celebrate Diversity Residency programme has been designed by the Education & Youth Team at the Half Moon Young People's Theatre, in association with senior staff at Guardian Angels RC Primary School. The programme consisted of two clear phases: Research and Development, and Delivery. The residency was the first of its kind at the school, with particularly successful outcomes. We recommend that the structure described in this report be used as a basis for the development of any further residencies, taking account of the evaluation & recommendations highlighted.

This report will briefly outline the residency, and then reflect on each distinct area in detail. Each area will be reviewed, as evaluation is an integral component of the programme.

The overall aim of the residency was to explore issues of difference and similarity, with reference to various languages and cultures, through the creative mediums of drama, storytelling, music, visual art and video, culminating in a performance at the school.

The research & development phase took place between January & April 2001, followed by the delivery of the residency during the summer term (May to July).

The residency took ten days over twelve weeks, involving the Half Moon creative team working with one year 5 class and one year 4 class, supported by the class teachers. During these sessions, the tutors facilitated the creation and exploration by the children of a story about a community split apart by their differences, and culminated in a performance called 'The Rhythm Tree', presented to the whole school and to parents/carers.

A one day's INSET took place which involved teaching and support staff when they explored a variety of drama and story telling techniques which addressed issues of race.

### 2. Project Management

The research and development were carried out by the Half Moon Education & Youth Team, in consultation with senior staff at Guardian Angels RC Primary School, during the period January to April 2001. The research included investigation of a wide range of publications and documentation, including the school development plans and Ofsted reports, Equalities Commission guidelines and publications, and the recent DfE published document, All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture & Education. Four clear objectives were achieved during this period of Research & Development:

1. To review past and existing anti-racism strategies and related arts education activities at the school.
2. To propose new activities, to progress the aims and objectives defined within the Celebrate Diversity residency proposals.
3. To establish a team of artists, reflective of the ethnic groups within the school populations, to act as positive role models; and this team to undertake delivery of the Residency and to propose the series of arts-based activities, in collaboration with the partners.
4. To bring additional inputs by relevant organisations to deliver the defined aims and objectives.

**Delivery of the residency was facilitated by the team of arts education specialists from the Half Moon freelance pool, with two musicians, two drama specialists, a production designer and a video artist. The role of the video artist was to incorporate video recording and projection in the children's performance and make a video documentary of the process.**

**The Half Moon Education team maintained liaison with the school before, during and after the residency, to ensure smooth running of the educational and logistical elements of the programme and to maximise the involvement of the teachers in the work that their pupils were undertaking.**

**The residency involved 60 children, 7 Half Moon staff and 9 Teachers and School Support Staff. The audience included 200 children and 60 adults.**

### 3. The Structure

The research & development phase paid particular attention to the specific make up and history of the school community, and identified the following concerns:

- **Diversity of ethnicity & non-explicit racism**
- Undercurrent of bullying in the class
- Parental attitude ingrained
- Difference is devalued

**In response to these observations, the creative team formulated their approach on the basis of the following concepts:**

- Children tackle problems through symbolic play & the landscape of the imagination;
- creative collaboration initiates people into new ways of thinking and being;
- expressive Arts allow a framework for a safe environment to explore issues;
- *shared ideas form the basis for decisions & choices about the creative outcomes;*

- class to agree consensus for anti-racism to initiate the formulation of an anti-racist policy.

The pupils participated in a range of expressive arts activities, including drama, music and visual art. The team provided an approach, which fused these forms together, and used structures, which were new to the children and different to the consistent teaching practice of the school staff. The school halls were used as alternative spaces to the classroom. Drama games and circle time were incorporated into every session, creating an atmosphere of trust and an egalitarian approach to teamwork. A safe and positive working environment was established very quickly through the positive collaboration between the teachers, and the Half Moon Team.

The series of carefully designed workshops took place each Wednesday during the summer term, exploring issues of difference and similarity. The story of 'The Rhythm Tree' was performed by the children in a high profile event at the school on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> July. An exhibition of the children's work was displayed in the foyer of the school hall before the performances.

The INSET used selected techniques from Image & Forum Theatre, to explore methods of using stories (myths & legends) to address issues of difference and similarity in the context of anti-racist education. Forum Theatre is an interactive theatrical form, originally devised by Augusto Boal in South America, but is now widely applied in a variety of communities as a tool for social change. A number of simple games and exercises around trust, confidence and group integration were introduced and explained, to equip teachers with strategies for use within their own classrooms.

#### 4. Planning & Evaluation

The Half Moon creative team devised a selection of drama strategies, that facilitate the exploration of the varying perspectives of the characters created in the development of a story. These methods stimulate and contribute to the emotional, behavioural and cognitive development of the participants.

Key objectives were followed and reflected upon throughout the course of the residency, including:

1. Development of the children's imagination, confidence and self-esteem;
2. creation of a safe, creative and positive working environment, within which the young people feel free to express themselves;
3. provision of positive role models, in order to challenge stereotyping;
4. facilitation of a shared experience, which reduces feelings of isolation;
5. celebration of pupil's achievements, with particular emphasis on the needs of different groups of children within the school community, and in anticipation of a smooth transition into post-11 education.

Planning was facilitated by the Half Moon Education & Youth Team, in conjunction with Guardian Angels School, as follows:

1. Two planning meetings took place with the Half Moon education & youth officer (taking the role of residency producer) and the head teacher to structure the residency.
2. One planning meeting took place with the link teachers (deputy head & English co-ordinator) and the Half Moon education & youth officer.
3. One visit to each class (Years 4 & 5) took place with the Half Moon education & youth officer and the drama facilitator employed for the residency.
4. Two planning meetings took place, involving the Half Moon creative team, and the Half Moon education & youth officer.

The Residency was Reviewed, Monitored and Evaluated as follows:

1. Every workshop was evaluated orally, with the pupils facilitated by the tutors;
2. tutors produced a written evaluation of every workshop, overseen by the Half Moon YPT;
3. this evaluation report was written and compiled by the Half Moon YPT, and drawn from feedback from artists in residence, teaching staff, children and the Half Moon YPT;
4. Documentation of the process and the performance in the form of a visual photographic and/or video record.

#### Outcomes - Creative Process & Production

Themes of harmony and conflict were used as stimulus for drama work and discussion with the children. Drama structures were used to identify shared commonalities between the different backgrounds and communities experienced by the children. Storytelling and story-building explored cultural history, migration, prejudice and stereotyping, bullying, changing habits and attitudes and peace (personal and political). Visual artwork and design provided opportunity for personal reflection on the themes raised by the story in development, and a vehicle for imaginative interpretation of the story in a theatrical, celebratory context. The pupils developed a high level of skill and achievement, through intensive music tuition with two African music specialists, focussing on the use of music in the dramatic context of the story. Musical harmony provided the metaphor for the harmony eventually found by the Community in the story.

## **INSET**

The INSET for teachers provided a way of reflecting on the shared objectives and maximising the positive outcomes. The INSET strand of the residency focussed on identifying ways of celebrating diversity in a dynamic way, incorporating techniques and strategies for use in literacy hour, PHSE and Citizenship.

### School's Anti-Racist Policy

Children's responses to issues of difference & similarity, and themes of harmony & conflict were explored during drama sessions in the early stages of delivery. Drama was the chosen tool for exploration of the themes, and was centred round ideas of Community. The children's responses were documented and became the basis for the Schools' Anti-Racism Policy to be implemented during the autumn term 2001.

## **Recommendations**

### **Project Management**

In order for any future initiative to build successfully on these foundations, there needs to be a greater level of two-way communication between the School and the Half Moon. Any partnership between an arts organisation & a school requires consistent dialogue in order to develop ways of working. This is the joint responsibility of both parties, and often this needs to happen outside of contact time. Therefore, efforts must be made to set up alternative effective channels of communication (i.e. through telephone calls, e-mail etc.)

### The Structure

1. Contact time with children should increase in order to ensure a total focus on each day of the residency, instead of working around the normal classroom timetable.
2. The number of tutors should be reduced and the timetabling increased, with the aim of creating working partnerships between teachers and artists, so that planning takes place more inclusively of teachers, and delivery is collaborative between teachers and arts tutors.
3. Programme the INSET day early in the residency, for the purpose of extending practice in a supported environment.

### **Planning & Evaluation**

1. Early planning to produce overall aims and timetabling etc. should involve input from deputy head & key class teachers, to ensure ownership of the programme of activities by all staff involved.
2. It is recommended that the tutor team engage in a practical skills sharing session (half or full day), in advance of planning activities for the children, in order to share practice, & find ways of working that cross forms (e.g. music & drama).
3. Greater use of visual art structures (possibly the engagement of a visual artist) to involve more making and doing within the residency activities.

### **Creative Process & Production**

The production (although highly successful) left the process behind a little, towards the latter stages of the residency. It is recommended that the style and scale of the final production be reconsidered, for the purpose of allowing the learning outcomes of the process to remain a priority. A possibility would be to explore the use of Forum Theatre as a style of performance (using image techniques to simplify the process), to create a piece of drama that involves the audience in the shared exploration of issues.

## **INSET**

The skills within the INSET should be put into practice with the children during the residency, and facilitated jointly by the teacher and arts tutors, in order to create greater connections between the work the children are engaging in, and the practice of the teachers.

### **School's Anti-Racist Policy**

Future initiatives must focus on ways to ensure continual implementation of the policy and 'felt' understanding of the policy by the pupils. It is recommended that teachers adopt structures to refer to the policy and its purpose within the context of daily classroom/playground activities.

### Feedback from Year 5 Children

*"It [the residency] helps us to be like a team, and to know what things might hurt other people who are different."*

***"Sometimes you have conflict with other people, but there is always a way to work it out."***

*"[During the Residency] we shared our different talents, which helped us get on in the classroom and the playground. There can be conflict and there can be harmony, and when you know this, it helps you be friends."*

*"If I saw someone treating someone else badly because they're a different colour or religion or if they wear different clothes or come from a different place; I would say 'Stop It, we're all equal, we're not the same and being different makes you more beautiful."*

*"Everyone's your neighbour and we need to work like a community."*

*"If someone's done something bad to you, there's no point in doing it back."*

If you see someone who isn't popular, you can still go up to them and say 'would you like to play?'

#### **About the Performance:**

*"I really liked the story we made and when the children and the parents came to support us. I liked playing the drums with Sandra & Pauline and the other children, and I liked the Tree."*

*"We saw everyone's talents, it showed us how everyone has different skills."*

*"I saw my Dad and my brother dancing around in the audience."*

*"I felt excited. I liked everything, I liked it that my mum liked it. After the show, I felt happy with myself."*

#### *7. Feedback from Tutors*

*"Our initial approach included exploration of what Diversity meant to the children, finding positive ways of recognising differences and similarities and feeling proud of this. The notion of Community was discussed, and how best to live harmoniously in one."*

*Orlaine McDonald, Drama Facilitator*

*"A positive group identity was established, enabling the group to work collaboratively throughout the process. The children embraced the themes of conflict and harmony. Clear facilitation of open whole group discussion enabled the group to break down boundaries and gain insight into relevant themes and issues, which we were then able to incorporate into working process."*

*Matthew Billson, Drama Tutor*

*"The use of music and rhythm in game playing encouraged the children to be freely expressive in a safe and non-threatening environment. The teachers were extremely supportive and the residency was a challenging and rewarding extension to our working practice."*

*Pauline Madden, Musician (Drumhead)*

*"Design and artwork with year 4 was an integral part of the process, and was a positive way of creating a shared product with the year 5 group. The children engaged in discussion around the issues of race, and connected their experience of the school community with the themes and content of the story. We fused storytelling with the construction of emblematic props and set."*

*Emma Jones, Production Designer*