

Outstanding Arts in a Primary School – Netherton Moss

The starting point for so much of our work at Netherton Moss is the interests and concerns of the children, as they seek to relate their lives to the wider world. Never have global events been more real and their effects more tangible to the children, than during the coronavirus pandemic. From the early spring of 2020, as the children's knowledge and understanding grew, we worked as a school to help them make sense of the evolving events, to calm fears and manage anxieties. The lockdown when it came seemed surreal at first, and something we all felt would be but a brief interlude in the life of the school, but as days turned into weeks and then months, we had to begin to reimagine the way school worked, and the way the school community could interact with one another in a positive and sustaining way.

PRODUCTION BY
NETHERTON MOSS PRIMARY SCHOOL

As a school, we have always found drama and the arts to be one of the most inspiring and effective ways in which to bring together and support the school community. It has the capacity to both entertain and persuade as well as providing a vital tool in difficult times for emphasising the positives and helping everyone to keep the challenges we face in perspective.

As the children returned to school following long periods of national lockdown, we were very aware of the social and emotional impact these enforced periods of isolation would have had on the school community. We were determined to support the children by providing them with the structure and certainty of school life, whilst allowing them the space, time and opportunity to reflect and make sense of their experiences during the pandemic. With a national agenda very much dominated by the doom and gloom of the educational prospects of this generation of pupils. We were determined that our children be able to identify the positives, weave the silver lining of the COVID clouds into a personal archive of memories and experiences of the period, memories that were both honest but positive in tone.



The way I see it, if you want
to be the rainbow you gotta
put up with the rain.

- Dolly Parton

Mindful of the generation of adults who look back at their childhood during the second world war with a sense of affection and nostalgia, we explored with the children how this was something they could do. We wanted the children to be aware that they were living through a period of history that was both momentous and memorable and one that will most likely be recalled and reflected upon throughout their adult lives. We wanted them to be able to articulate their own narrative of their experiences so that it could be shared with future generations.

Discussions with the children themselves very quickly generated the idea of creating a time capsule in which they could preserve and pass on their experiences and emotions. The children were keen to capture the most important aspects of life during lockdown and quickly a range of key experiences and themes emerged. Each age group had their own thoughts and interests and so set to work to realise these ideas in dramatic and artistic forms. As always, a number of key texts were used to help inspire and support the children's creative thinking.



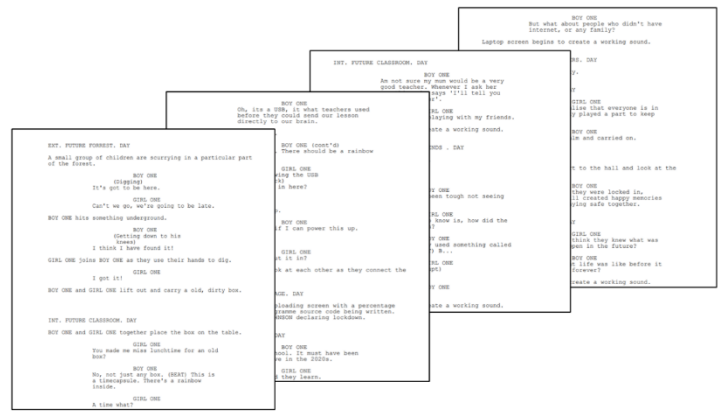
The hall mark of our arts work in school is always participation and inclusion, it is absolutely key, everyone must be involved, no question. From the 3-year-olds in Nursery through to the 11-year-olds in Year 6, all the children must have a role. The new normal of life in school however, one of separate bubbles in which children and staff do not mix but maintain a safe social distance, presented huge challenges to our usual ways of working together artistically! Gone were the meetings of children of all ages writing scripts and improvising together, afternoons spent with the whole school crammed in the hall rehearsing were no longer a possibility.

There was nothing for it, children and staff would have to learn new skills so that each year group contribution could be designed in such a way as it could be captured on film as individual performances and woven together into a whole. Ownership of every aspect of the performance has always been another vital element in our work and the involvement of



adults is kept to a minimum, particularly with the older children. Staff are there to facilitate and guide but never to take over, the children are at the very heart of the creative, decision-making process. Not unsurprisingly, in a world of Tik-Tok and YouTube, the children were much faster and more adept with the skills and technologies needed for creating and editing film sequences and in large part, worked to upskill the teaching staff!

The Year 6 scriptwriting team set to work to create a narrative that could weave together the different year group contributions. The idea that the film itself would form a critical part of the time-capsule they wanted to leave for future generations, came directly from the Year 6 creative team. The older children were involved in all aspects of the production, capturing the performances on film and then the editing and adding the effects used.



The result of all this child-led creativity is a film entitled '*Chasing the Rainbow!*'. The story charts the adventures of a small group of children, many years in the future, as they discover a long-forgotten time capsule put together by the children of 2021. Using the positive imagery of the rainbow as a symbol of optimism and hope, the contribution of each class provides future generations with the story of life during the pandemic, viewed from the perspective of the children who lived through it.

Finding a pot of gold?!

The children of *Scarlet Class – Year 6* imagine life years in the future, as they discover a long-lost time capsule containing a collection of apparently unconnected items and artefacts. The discovery of a long-forgotten piece of technology allows the children to access a series of films that explain the objects, and the story of life during the global pandemic of 2020-21 begins to emerge.



School's Out!

The children of *Daisy Class – Reception* share all the fun and happy times of lockdown home learning, times spent learning so many vital life skills as well as all the practical tasks completed at the kitchen table and outside in the garden. It turns out the school of mum and dad isn't too bad, although sharing the class with your brothers and sisters is a different matter?!!



Count On Me!

The children of *Sunflower Class – Year 2* recognise the vital importance of our friends at difficult times. Working and playing together helps us to overcome the time spent in lockdown as they explore the way our friendships and time spent having fun make treasured memories for the future.



One call away!

The children of *Clover Class – Year 3* explore the vital role technology played in helping friends, family and community to stay in touch and enjoy moments of togetherness even when forced to live and learn at a distance.



Ruby Reports!

The children of *Ruby Class – Year 5* create their own newsroom as they learn and celebrate the important role key workers played during the pandemic, to keep all the most vital aspects of life going, despite the difficulties and dangers many of them faced.



Be what you want to be!

The children of *Poppy Class – Year 1* were keen to look for the light at the end of the COVID darkness and share their hopes and aspirations for the future and imagine their place in the world that is to come.



Black Lives Matter!

With the pandemic dominating headlines around the world, the children of *Scarlet Class – Year 6* were very keen that some of the other key events occurring in the world should not be forgotten as they sought to illustrate the continuing struggle for justice and equality that continued through the pandemic and beyond.



Summer Holiday!

After months stuck at home or in just the one classroom, the children of *Jazz Class – Year 4* share their dreams of post pandemic holidays and all the fun they are hoping to have in the sun.



Capture the rainbow!

Finally, the three-year-olds from *Marigold – Nursery*, who have lived nearly half their young lives in a world of lockdown, both sing and sign the colours of the rainbow as the whole school celebrates the positives of the past and the future that is to come.

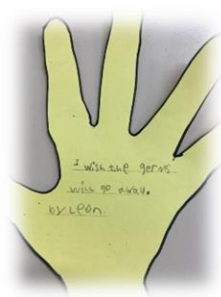


As one of the key aims of our artistic endeavours was to give all the children a sense of coming together despite the physical separation of our class COVID bubbles. It was vital that the completed contributions of both classes and individuals could be enjoyed as a shared and tangible artistic whole and the completed film does this really successfully.

To accompany and complement the film, a number of whole school art installations were completed and put together. A large rainbow was produced, made up of the hands of each member of the school community.



Each hand contained one hope for the future written by each child. The children were so excited, as over a number of days, the rainbow emerged and grew as each class added its contribution.



The second art installation was inspired by the work of the street artist *ThankYouX*. Each child, from Nursery to Year 6 produced an individual piece of cube art containing images on two positive themes, firstly their highlights from life during lockdown and secondly their hopes for life once lockdown comes to an end. Through this work we were able to continue to develop and support the children's positive and resilient mental attitude towards the pandemic and its effects.



Each individual cube containing the child's personal perspective was then joined together with all of the others into a cohesive and positive whole. A stunning piece of artwork that can be enjoyed by the whole school community.



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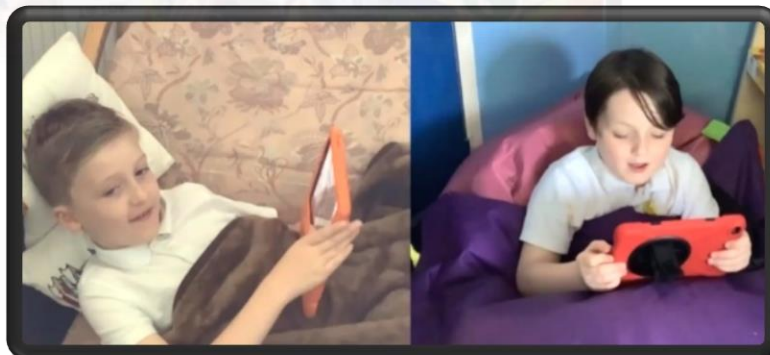
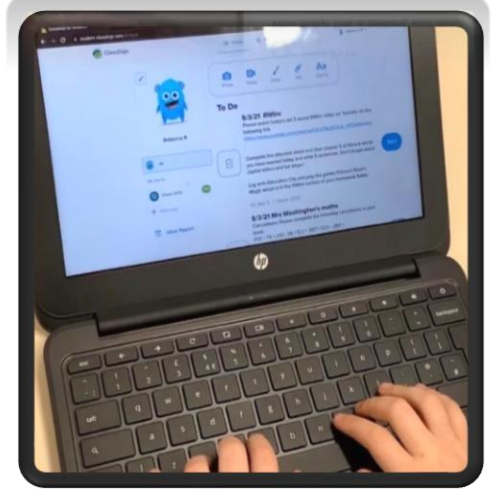
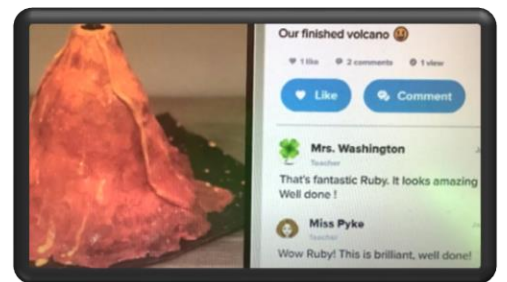
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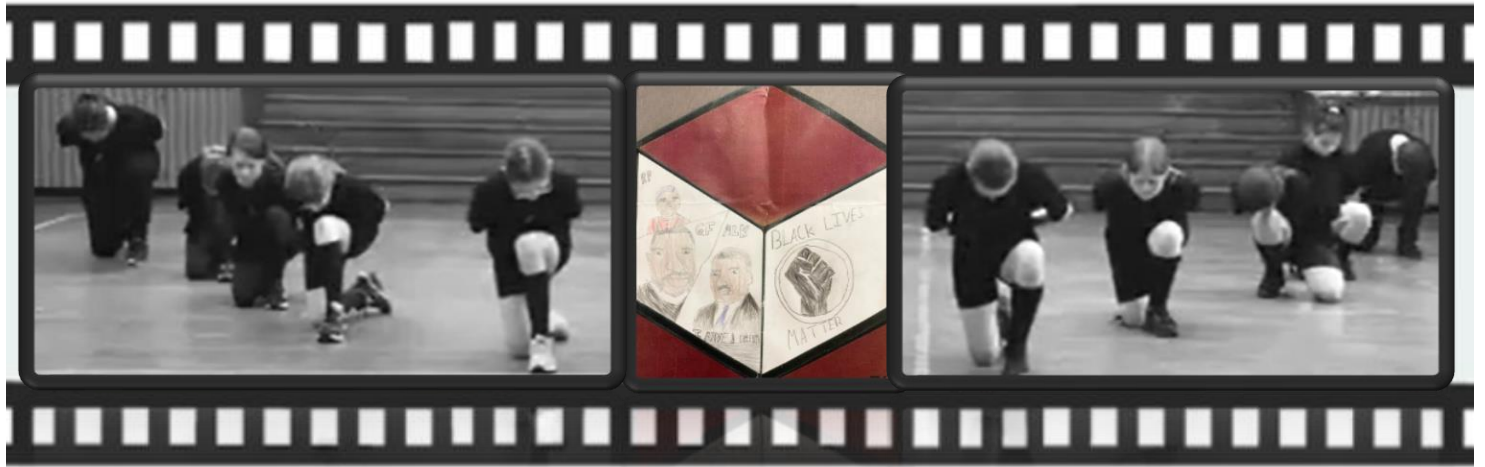
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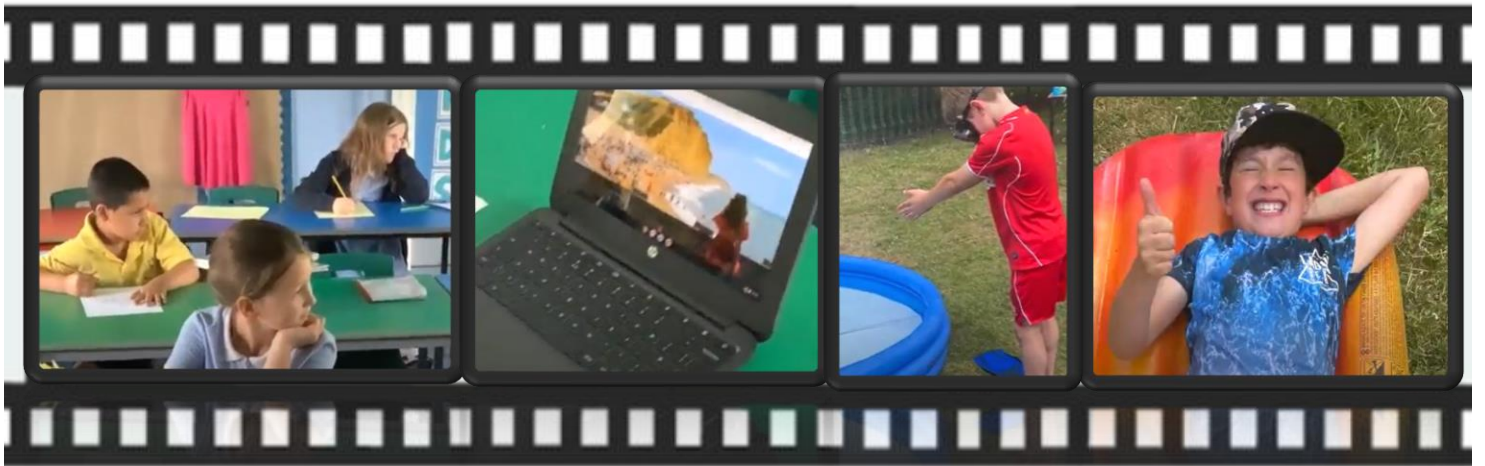
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