

Netherton Moss Primary School Educate Awards 2023 – Outstanding Arts in School

As with so much of our work at Netherton Moss, the impetus for our whole school arts performance comes from the children, their interests and from what is going on in school. As the children returned in the Autumn of 2022, the practical challenges of the pandemic were rapidly and thankfully becoming a distant memory. Unfortunately, the prolonged periods of school closure and home learning had had a significant impact on the children's learning, and as a result, our focus was very much upon helping them to catch-up with what they had missed. In terms of knowledge and skills, we found that it was the communication skills of reading, writing and speaking that were most affected and so we were keen to prioritise teaching and enrichment activities that allowed scope for developing the children's opportunities to read, write, speak and perform.

As part of our work in this key area, all staff embarked on training for two new initiatives to be used in school. The first was the Open University *Reading for Pleasure* programme and the second was *Talk for Writing*.

Reading for Pleasure allows those involved to experience other worlds and roles in their imagination. For children, reading for pleasure is reading that goes beyond their teacher's reading expectations and fuels their curiosity and enjoyment. Essential in this work has been the need for everyone in school, teachers and children alike to read and tell stories out loud and for there to be high quality book-talk in which talking about texts and talking about reading is at the heart of our work, we wanted our book-talk to be informal and highly reciprocal.

Talk for Writing in turn is intended to help all our children develop into thoughtful readers and creative writers. Through its multi-sensory and interactive teaching, it is enabling our children of all ages and abilities to learn to write a wide range of story/text types using various methods including listening to and learning texts and stories; performing stories

through drama and role-play; drawing and story mapping and collecting words and language strategies through exploration of high-quality texts.

While our work in both of these initiative was drawn from the widest range of genre and text type, a strong and very enjoyable theme that ran through every age group during the year was that of the fairytale and more particularly the way in which these traditional and well-known stories can be twisted, merged, reimagined and brought up to date. With every age group engaged and inspired by this work during the year, the children in our scriptwriting team were motivated to plot a story and pen a performance script that could successfully draw together the different experiences and contributions from each year group in the school.

The resulting whole school performance entitled **'In Search of Cinders: A Twisted Tale'** saw children of every age collaborate and perform a combination of drama, dance, and music against a backdrop of props and set they designed and made themselves.

From our story telling and writing throughout the year, the children knew that every good fairytale has a Palace. Clover Class (Year 3) kicked off our performance with a visit there for the Prince's Ball and these characters certainly knew how to set the scene for our tale and were also very good at showing us how to party, fairytale style! Of course, there cannot be a fairytale party without a problem, as the Ball comes to an end, the Fairy Godfather makes a shocking discovery, Cinders is missing!

As the search for Cinders gets underway, our crack team of not one but seven dwarf sized rescuers, interrupt the shoemaking elves from Sunflower Class (Year 2) in their workshop. They've been busy working through the night from 5pm to 9am (cue for a song, surely) making shoes for all our favourite fairytale characters. Maybe they have seen Cinders, everyone knows that she is always in the market for a matching pair of shoes!

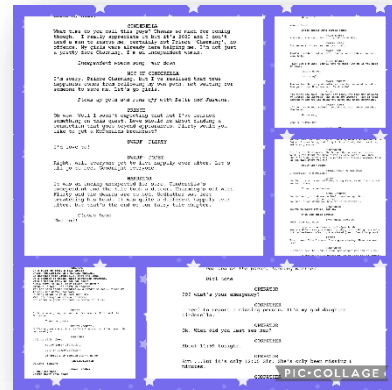


With Cinders still proving elusive, the Dwarfs set off to explore another favourite fairytale destination. As they wander through the woods to find Goldilocks, they know, that wherever she is, there will surely be bears and food! They are not disappointed as they stumble across our Daisy Class (Reception) teddy bears, enjoying what else other than a picnic?

With Cinders location still as yet unknown our diminutive search party decide that it is time to dig deep as Poppy Class (Year 1) entice them through the looking glass and down the rabbit hole to take part in an amazing Wonderland dance off.

With Cinders still missing, the dwarfs start to wonder if there isn't an element of foul play involved, and while they don't want to point any fingers, this thought does give them pause (or even paws) for thought. Is the traditional fairytale bad boy to blame? When you need to stop the Big Bad Wolf in his tracks, "Who you gonna call?" The Wolfbusters of Ruby Class (Year 5) of course!

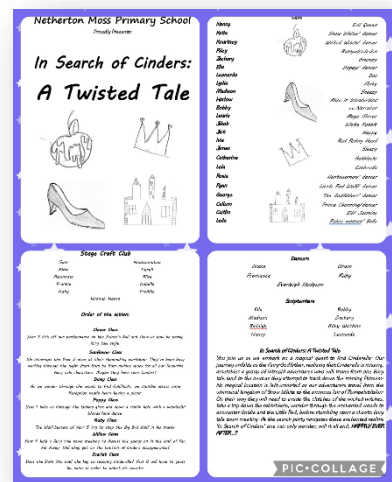
Despite their efforts and with Cinders still no closer to being found, Willow Class (Year 4) bring all our story book favourites together at a Fairytale Town Hall Meeting in order to discuss the goings on in the land of Far, Far Away. Will they get to the bottom of Cinders disappearance? The clues are certainly there! There is talk of a mysterious and nameless 'Dark One', a stranger who holds the key to rescuing Cinderella. Scarlet Class (Year 6) will have to guess his name in order to unlock his secrets.



Why of course, it is the evil Rumpelstiltskin who holds Cinders captive. With his name revealed, Cinders is released and free to marry her Prince, or is she? Cinders and her royal Princess sidekicks don't need any fairytale Prince to ensure they live happily ever after; this is 2023 and the smart girls are doing for themselves!!

The driving force behind our arts performance is always participation and inclusion, it is absolutely key, everyone must be involved, no question. From Reception Class to Year 6 all the children have had a part to play. The children operate in teams to produce every aspect of the collaborative work, with each year group creating their own contribution to the overall performance. Each element is woven together by the Drama Club who use the script to link all of the themes. Ownership of every aspect of the performance is another vital element and the involvement of adults is kept to a minimum, 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.

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In keeping with our key aim of participation, each class produced a range of stunning artwork linked to the performance in order to enhance the action; every child in the school contributed to this in some way. As a whole school piece, every child in school produced a book cover of their favourite fairytale and these were joined together into our very own fairytale mountain range. The stage space and projections were prepared by the stagecraft team who made the set and props; controlled the sound, and lighting. Last but not least the publicity team who designed and produced the posters, programmes and tickets to ensure that our finished work was enjoyed by a capacity crowd!

It was a great privilege this year to give a special performance to a large group of our former pupils from Litherland High School who returned to cast a friendly yet exacting eye over our latest performance. They were pleased to see that the performances they had so valued when they were with us, are still going strong and in such safe hands.