

Music, textile, dance and art

RE leading on spiritual development



Identity masked and explored in dance and drama

The RE Department at Oldfields Hall Middle School in Staffordshire ran a spectacular RE experience for 30 pupils. Could your school do this?

Miss Merrick (PE teacher) and I attended the Spirited Arts course in October at Kingston. We both found the course highly interesting, motivating and at times amusing, due to being asked to work beyond our subject areas. The course encouraged us to link RE (my department) effectively with dance, music and art. Furthermore, and most importantly, we were given time to think about implementing excellent cross-curricular links within our own school.

The decision was made to focus on a group of 30 Gifted and Talented 11–14s and to hold a Spirited Arts series of workshops lasting one and a half days during January. The chosen starting point was the Christian/Jewish story of the Creation.

Spirited Arts began with a session led by a visiting speaker called Sam Phillips. Sam is from MYSN (Mid Staffs Youth Net) which is a project focused on young people in both churches and in schools. She has been a youth worker for 16 years and has a wide variety of experience.

Her workshop sparked a great deal of imagination and covered the biblical story of the Creation in an exciting way. Students were asked to reflect upon the beauty, awe and size of creation by listening to Street Bible, acting out the planets in our solar system and making playdough representations of themselves. In this last activity students were asked to create a model of one aspect of their personality. Students quickly modelled objects such as music notes (music ability), an ear (good listener) and a football (sporty). Sam cleverly used their creations to convey ideas such as individuality and also how human beings are only a small piece out of the creation jigsaw.

Following on from Sam, we also invited in Staffordshire's Art AST, Jenny Hilton. Jenny planned and led a superb textile-based activity which was inspired by influential artists such as Matisse and Gaudi. In groups, the students were each given one day of the Creation. Using fabric backgrounds, groups had to represent their allocated day using techniques such as mosaic and silhouette.

The afternoon then took an entirely new direction – dance. Miss Merrick chose a piece of music – William Orbit's arrangement of Barber's *Adagio for Strings* and created a set motif. Each group then had to create their own movements to represent their previously allocated day. Despite some students being anxious about this activity, all gave total commitment and produced amazing results. Students wore masks that were in keeping with their chosen theme.

The second day began with a workshop led by Mrs McBride (Head of Music). In their groups, the students were given a musical motif and then asked to represent their day of the Creation using instruments of their own choice. Yet again, the students excelled themselves.

Spirited Arts at Oldfields concluded with a wonderful performance to the other students within the school and then to parents. The performances allowed the students to link all of the workshops effectively and express how they felt about the project.

In order to evaluate the impact of Spirited Arts, both students and parents were asked to give us feedback. Despite some students feeling as if they were 'stepping out' of their comfort zones, all of them enjoyed the experience and learnt a great deal.

Vicky Gilbert, Oldfield Middle School, Uttoxeter

Examples of student feedback

'We have learnt many things such as the Christian view of the Creation, and how to work as a group to produce a piece of music, art and dance.'

'It was brilliant!'

'We thoroughly enjoyed this project and would recommend it to anyone who gets offered this great opportunity.'

'We are proud of what we have achieved and despite finding some bits challenging, have really enjoyed it.'

Examples of parental feedback

'A fantastic performance. My child thoroughly enjoyed the experience and it took him out of his comfort zone.'

'Wonderful performance. Very expressive with great energy.'

'I thought all of the children were very confident and spirited. Well done! I was delighted that my child took part.'

'Well done to everyone. Nice for the children to have the chance to try different aspects of subjects such as dance in RE.'



Art, dance and drama made an exciting week of RE



Audiences for your achievement are too rare in RE