

# Towards a Storytelling School

“I want a story”

Children love stories. They want to be entertained, to be taken out of themselves, to hear of new ideas and new experiences.

At St Patrick’s we have begun to develop a curriculum with stories at its heart.

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth...”

As a Catholic school, the stories from scripture, and of the saints feature frequently in our classrooms and these stories inspire writing, art and even music composition. The last two supported by our specialists.

Like every primary school the children enjoy being read to and listening to what visitors have to tell them. But unlike every primary school, we are delivering very special experiences of story listening to our pupils.

Our visitors this term have included Caroline Lawrence, author of the Roman Mysteries, who read from some of her stories and told the children the story of her own development as an author.

We also welcomed Valerie Bloom who shared her poems and told the children about her own childhood in the West Indies.

We have been collaborating with Bob Lister of the Cambridge Classics Project. Our Year 5 have been listening to War with Troy, a retelling of the Odyssey and there are skeleton plans for the storytellers Daniel Morden and Hugh Lupton to visit and perform for the children. Ideally I would like this to be part of a storytelling festival to which we could invite other schools.

During the celebrations of our parish’s anniversary, the children were told the story of our church and of some of the notable episodes in its history.

In our quiet garden, there is a mural depicting people from all over the world coming to London. I want to make the stories that those people, the parents who chose us and their children, bring with them to the heart of our curriculum. For our black history celebrations in October, I told the children the story of St Philip and the Ethiopian. One of the parents came up to me afterwards and told me how that story was interpreted in Eritrea and Ethiopia. The children (20% of them from Eritrean and Ethiopian families) need to know about that.

As one of the oldest Catholic primary schools in London, we have our own wonderful story to share with the children. The stories of parishioners and their families who have been associated with us are part of that.

Through a connection of the Chair of Governors, our Year six were taken around Kentish Town by blue badge Guides. The children loved it and were delighted to hear fantastic stories of the first elephants and giraffes that were ever seen in London, who came to Kentish Town.

The talking and the writing that all these experiences have stimulated is invaluable for promoting our children’s ability to express themselves, for realising the school’s vision to be among the best in the country (top 5%), for equipping our children for successful experiences at secondary school, and for ensuring that their memories of primary school nourish them spiritually, morally, socially and culturally for the rest of their lives.