



Rose Hill School



Celebrating diversity and inclusion during Black History Month

The staff at [Rosehill School](#), a special school for young people aged 4 -19, knew how essential it was to support their students well-being following their return to school after a Covid-19 closure. They quickly implemented their 'recuperation programme' to ensure the health and well-being of their students in a fun and creative way. The school has a strong history of picking timely themes that develop in an age-appropriate manner. This year the pupils wanted to explore Black History Month and equality, and raise awareness around the meaning behind this initiative.

The Project

Due to restrictions that were in place in the autumn, the staff had to think creatively about how they would be able to collaborate their usual whole school approach while being unable to share spaces to run their usual assemblies, workshops and projects. To achieve this, they approached the project on a class-by-class basis while sharing the same collective theme and vision. This process allowed students to share and discuss how their learning took place, and display their art.

"We found it was really bringing us together as a community and keeping a handle on how we were all feeling. The project was fun and exciting and gave us a real drive to be there for each other. It had a really good impact." - Cheryl Steele, Teacher, Rosehill School.

The chosen theme was Black History Month to align with current events that were happening around the world. The pupils were free to research any current or historical person who had contributed to the fight for justice and equal rights. The framework was kept loose to allow the students as much creative freedom as they desired, which allowed older pupils to delve deeper into issues regarding black votes and obstacles to equality. Each class had to agree on a role model and then each create a piece of artwork around this person, with the final pieces being displayed in a gallery to celebrate their role models and cultural heritage. The pupils' pieces were kept a secret until it was all displayed in the final show - which added an air of excitement!

One of the pupils selected Nicola Adams as their inspiration for young people in the field of sport, another pupil with autism selected Nelson Mandela and were able to share and express their reasons. The artwork really encouraged discussions around equality, diversity and discrimination between the pupils. There was also lots of discussion around the creative approaches implemented: examples included screen prints, watercolors, acrylics, and 3D models.

"I liked painting Nelson Mandela. We are learning about heroes in school. He is a hero." - Pupil, class 12, Rosehill School.

Rose Hill School



Most of the background information or 'fact-files' on the individuals were completed during school hours in History and English class. This was quite an achievement as due to restrictions pupils weren't able to stay before and after school like they might have done previously.

To select the winning pieces, an anonymous voting system was put in place with three judges. It was a difficult task as there was such an eclectic range of inspirational artwork, so everyone was acknowledged before choosing the top 3 pieces. First place went to the Nelson Mandela piece, the staff member who worked with the pupil was astounded by his independence, interest and motivation in doing it. The teacher leading the project saw the importance of the pupils getting recognition externally as well as within the school, which led her to apply for the Circle of Life Award.

"When I read the Circle of Life Award criteria, I thought it would acknowledge the fact that the children had been really creative. It also allowed total flexibility around activities and it fitted the title and ethos of what we did." – Cheryl Steele, Teacher, Rosehill School.

To commemorate receiving the Circle of Life Award, the staff wanted to have a celebration day and asked for feedback from the pupils on what they would like. It was decided they would all like to dress up as Disney characters for the day!



The Result

The [artwork](#) was displayed in the school café for all the pupils and visitors to see. The parents were amazed at the standard of work and said it looked so professional! The pupils really enjoyed seeing each other's work displayed and had a real sense of pride.

Another highlight was having the project published in Nottingham City's local magazine 'The Iris Magazine' which offers information, advice and support to parents and carers of children and young people with disabilities in Nottinghamshire. The school has also been asked by Nottingham City Council to display their Black History Month project in the city gallery or council building once restrictions allow.



Young Citizens
37 Heneage Street,
London E1 5LJ.

Phone:
+44 (0)20 7566 4141

Email:
info@youngcitizens.org