

MORE IN COMMON...

WITHINGTON GIRLS' SCHOOL CITIZENSHIP DAY 2022

WITHINGTON UNITES



Today we were delighted to hold our annual Citizenship Day fully in-person for the first time since 2019. Established in 2005 as part of the PSHCE curriculum, Citizenship Day promotes knowledge and understanding of current issues, as well as a sense of community. This year, the theme for the day was 'More in Common', a sentiment that acknowledges, challenges and seeks to understand social division. Our aim is to build a more inclusive and resilient society.

Pupils in Years 7 and 8 worked with Figen Murray whose son, Martin, was tragically killed in the Manchester Arena terrorist attack. Murray's mission is to spread the message that hate fuels hate through her 'Peace Bears' which our pupils enjoyed creating.

Some pupils had the privilege of meeting Ije McDougall this morning, who was shortlisted for the National Diversity Awards Positive Role Model Award in 2020. McDougall focuses on educating communities about xenophobia.

Year 9 and 12 pupils were involved in a wide range of community development projects in our local area. The 'Clean and Green' project in Withington village saw pupils litter picking and planting flowers and vegetables (the costs of which were generously covered by a Neighbourhood Invest Fund). Pupils also tidied the outdoor area, painted fences and cleaned the playroom at Old Moat Children's Centre. Another team wrapped books and read to Nursery and Reception children at our long-standing partner school, Old Moat Primary. Pupils

also painted an outdoor mural at St James' School in Rusholme. Year 12 pupils joined volunteers to organise donations and pack food parcels for our local foodbank.

Year 10 pupils and musicians remained in school to prepare for our Big Jubilee Lunch and Concert for local senior citizens. Described as a 'nationwide act of community', the lunches held over this past weekend helped people realise that we have 'more in common' than we know.

Pupils across the whole school designed and created their own 'River of Hope' to capture our aspirations for the planet over the next 70 years. These were shared with guests as part of our Jubilee Concert just as the national 'River of Hope' was shared with the world as part of the Jubilee Pageant.

The day ended with a spectacular final assembly from our media team, who did a wonderful job of documenting this very successful day.

Our local projects were chosen in order that we could work with and for our neighbours. We aimed to encourage positive change and create stronger community bonds. Projects in school have been developed to continue to make Withington a welcome, inclusive and safe space for everyone.

Our dedicated charity for this year's Citizenship Day is the Jo Cox Foundation. The late Jo Cox was an MP, who stated in her first speech to the House of Commons that "we have more in common than that which divides us."

AT HOME...

JOLLY JUNIORS

Junior School pupils took part in various activities throughout the day, including dancing, singing, and drawing. The day started with country dancing in the hall, then moved on to celebrating differences. Pupils completed drawings of different flags, cultures, and people. Just before lunch, they rehearsed for the Jubilee concert with Miss McLean-Hall leading them in 'Sing' by Gary Barlow. In the afternoon, they wore their special 'Jubilee hats' (which they had made by hand) and performed the concert. Their big smiles won over the audience, and our guests were moved by their performance. Finally, they reflected on the day and their memories of the Platinum Jubilee. One pupil said "some people can't manage on their own; if you help them, it would make life a lot easier."



PROMOTING PEACE

Figen Murray has been knitting teddy bears for a number of years. Due to her background in psychotherapy, she knows creativity is good for mental health and has always encouraged clients to take up a creative activity in the past. Since losing her son, Martyn, in the Manchester Arena terror attack, she decided to give the bears a new purpose and they have become her peace bears. The bears now travel to their new owners symbolising peace, kindness and unity. For Citizenship Day this year, Year 7 and 8 pupils created their very own peace bears, inspired by Figen Murray's impressive work. Our pupils hope their bears can equally spread the message of peace in their communities.



TIME FOR TEA

Year 10 pupils worked with the Food and Nutrition department to prepare food for our Big Jubilee Lunch. In true British style, they baked scones and Victoria sponge cakes in celebration of the Queen's Jubilee. These were placed upon Union Jack cake stands as a highlight of the lunch. Mrs Watson, the project's organiser, said that the department "selected food that represents British traditions." She also believes "food brings people together and connects us all," 'connection' being a key aspect of this year's Citizenship Day. Pupils in the Design and Technology department created table decorations for the lunch, featuring the symbolic red, white and blue. They created Union Jack flowerpots containing red and white begonias for tables, adding flair and elegance to the lunch.



LEARNING FROM OTHERS

Year 8 pupils received a talk by Figen Murray about peace and kindness amidst hate. Her son Martin was killed in the Manchester Arena attack, and ever since she has made over 2000 peace bears with individual designs and backstories. The Year 8s eagerly participated with the talk and asked many insightful questions. Ije McDougall's speech about xenophobia conveyed the key message that all human beings share something in common, and as a result no one should ever be excluded. McDougall used the mythological story of Medusa to highlight this idea, emphasising that physical differences are only surface level. We should try to understand those who are different to us, not label them.



UNITING HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

Pupils from all year groups designed a 'River of Hope' on blue fabric on which they recorded their hopes for the planet's future for the next 70 years. Ideas included how to improve our planet such as using alternatives to CO2 and other energy conservation plans to make Earth more sustainable. Plastic pollution is a topic that the school is extremely passionate about, and Withington pupils said "we need to urge all nations to take action". Suggested activities to form a green planet included: encouraging recycling, planting more vegetation, less deforestation and using wind turbines. The 'River of Hope' was shared with our guests as part of our Jubilee Concert just as the national 'River of Hope' was shared with the world during the Jubilee Weekend.



BEYOND...

PAINTING FRIENDSHIPS

At St. James CofE Primary School, GCSE and A-Level art students painted a mural in the playground based around the theme of 'Friendship'. Using brightly coloured images of nature and team spirit, pupils from different year groups worked together collaboratively. Groups of young and inspired primary students gathered to see the artists at work to observe children being painted on the background of the mural. WGS and St. James have long worked together on community projects, with Withingtonian Sixth Form students often volunteering at the school to read to students and support them in their lessons. Today was no exception to their brilliant teamwork.



A HELPING HAND

Year 12 pupils spent their morning volunteering at the Fallowfield and Withington Food Bank, organising donations offered by our school community. The Food Bank provides emergency food for people unable to provide for themselves. WGS has been assisting the food bank since 2014. The Project Manager for the charity said "the staff had met pupils from different age groups who came down and organised collections." Being part of the Food Bank project made WGS pupils more aware of the increasing number of people unable to provide themselves with essentials like food, gas and electricity. One pupil said "the volunteering has been very rewarding and [she] could not be happier to have this opportunity." WGS intends to continue this collaboration in the future.



THE RICHNESS OF READING

Year 9 pupils went to Old Moat Primary School to wrap books to give as gifts to Year 5 and 6 pupils. The purpose of the project was to raise awareness of the importance of reading and to provide a challenge beyond the primary school curriculum. One pupil said "I really enjoyed the communal activity of wrapping books and passing down some of my favourite stories." Another pupil commented "we hope that this activity will unite the community in the shared love of reading and add to the school's current collection of books." Overall, it was an experience enjoyed by all, and hopefully pupils will continue to be enriched by reading.



PLANTING AND PAINTING

At Old Moat Children's Centre, a group of Year 12 students helped to refurbish the grounds. One group of pupils repainted the older fences and benches with a fresh new coat of paint making the overall site more visually attractive. Additionally, pupils took part in the planting of herbs and vegetables (which are sure to grow over summer) contributing further to the sustainability of the site. This also provides the opportunity for children at the Centre to learn how to grow plants and gain independence with real-life activities. Our pupils took a hands-on approach towards the painting and planting saying "we're having a really good time. It's a great day." Overall, it was a productive day, and the Centre can look forward to watching the plants grow.



CLEAN AND GREEN

Our Year 9 pupils worked incredibly hard today by cleaning up a local alleyway. They were fortunate enough to work with a local resident and a member of the council, who said that the focus of the day was cleaning the area to make it more pleasant for residents. Our pupils worked on removing rubbish and de-mossing cobblestones to make the environment tidier and more inviting. Mrs Howling, who worked with the pupils, commented "the Year 9s did a fabulous job and they've really knuckled down. Even though some of them were unsure at first, they had fun with their friends and did a good job." We are very proud of the work they have done; the Year 9s have made Withington a nicer place to live.



JUBILEE JOY



The highlight of the day was the celebration of the Platinum Jubilee. We hope we fulfilled Her wish to unite the country through our concert, raffle and stalls, readings, and Junior School performances. Our guests arrived shortly after midday and enjoyed a Big Jubilee lunch. The concert consisted of ten songs performed by orchestras and instrument ensembles. Junior School pupils beamed with delight as they paraded

around with their homemade hats and performed country dancing to the delight of the audience. Pupils in Year 10 also read poems with uplifting themes of hope, which was inspirational. The concert finished with the National Anthem, and the guests left the arts centre full of pride and joy. In aid of Jo Cox and the Ukraine, pupils donated items for a second-hand stall and raffle.

CO-OPERATION

It starts with the pedals, whirring gently
 Then they pick up the pace as you move intently.
 The pedals set the gear in motion;
 It sings as it turns and delivers the notion.
 The gear nudges the chain with care;
 It leaps into action and begins to prepare
 For the back wheel to move and urge
 The entire bike to jump forwards with a surge.
 But without the handlebars there would be no aim
 And without the saddle there is no name to the game.
 The brakes are vital in case of danger,
 And the frame itself is no stranger
 To holding the bicycle and all of its parts upright,
 Supporting the entire system like a guiding light.
 From the spokes to the crank to the cable,
 Nothing can be amiss for this bike to remain stable.

