



Heads join forces to help pupils step up to secondary school

By Frances Cooper

Six local schools are collaborating in an innovative literacy programme to help young pupils make the most of their last term at primary school.

The scheme will see Archer Academy teachers and Year 8 students working alongside colleagues and students from Brookland Junior School, Garden Suburb Junior School, Holy Trinity Primary School, Manorside Primary School and Martin Primary School to deliver a five-week programme, built around a classic work: *The Phantom Tollbooth* by Norton Juster.

The first of its kind in the area, it will support the students' literacy and language skills and help smooth the transition process between primary and secondary school.

Avoiding a learning dip

Academy headteacher Lucy Harrison has been shaping it with her primary school counterparts since last October. She said: "We know that Year 6 pupils and their teachers work extremely hard in the run-up to SATS and have a well-deserved, less intense half-term afterwards. My headteacher colleagues and I agreed that it would be great to find an enjoyable way to keep some momentum going, so that they don't have a learning dip which

then makes the transition to secondary school harder."

The programme is designed to boost their vocabulary and enhance their language analysis skills. Primary pupils joining the Academy will study the book in more detail in their first term there and those joining other schools will be encouraged to take their work with them.

Jenny Aylen, headteacher at Brooklands Junior School, said the dip in children's performance in moving from Year 6 to Year 7 was noticeable and that the new project would give them an engaging and familiar environment to carry their reading and writing skills with them.

Wendy Rennie, headteacher at Manorside Primary, added: "Outstanding teachers have worked together on ideas and activities that will capture the enthusiasm and talents of many young people as they grow and move on."

Magical journeys

The Phantom Tollbooth focuses on a bored child who is whisked off on a series of journeys to different lands: ideal themes for children about to start an exciting journey of their own.

High Road robbery and break-ins

Late one afternoon in early May, a masked robber broke into Nail Studio Designs on the High Road, N2. Brandishing a knife, he forced the only young member of staff present and two clients into the back of the shop, before stealing one client's handbag.

He made off by motorbike with an accomplice who was waiting for him outside. Police were alerted and, with the help of the mobile phone tracker in the handbag, pursued the thieves for some time. However, they lost the signal in Camden Town. In separate incidents on the High Road on 23-24 April, both the UOE Post Office

store and Nur Kebab, on the junction with Leslie Road, suffered break-ins overnight. UOE managing director Elliot Jacobs said police were on the scene within three minutes of the alarm sounding and missed the thieves by a matter of 25 seconds. The shop had been secured and nothing was stolen apart from a few coins from one of the tills.



The damaged door of the Post Office. Photo Mike Coles



Healing touch: Caitlin Smail with a care home resident's work. Photo Mike Coles.

The power of art therapy

By Daphne Chamberlain

Caitlin Smail's workroom in Fortis Green welcomes you with brightly coloured pictures and art materials, soft, strokable objects, and something very like a gingerbread house. But the only magic here is good. Caitlin is co-director of ArtTherapy4all, which helps people of all ages to find healing and emotional support through creativity.

The Lottery Fund is supporting a 10-week Art Therapy project in four care homes, including Springdene in Muswell Hill. It offers residents with dementia the opportunity to create their own pictures, working in small groups with the support of a therapist and a volunteer.

Raymond's picture

Caitlin showed me several paintings by people with dementia. One of them is the illustration for this article. It is the work of Raymond, who attends an art therapy group at the care home where he lives. In Caitlin's words: "He explained that his picture was of a blue sky and trees. There is a brick wall with a crack in it, and 'nothing can grow there'". He said that sometimes it feels to him like he has hit a brick wall. At the end of the session he decided to 'plant some flowers' by the wall, adding them to the picture. This helped him to feel better."

Beyond words

For all participants, this project is about empowerment and emotional satisfaction, pride in producing their work, and the chance to chat about their lives. Chatting is not always possible, of course, but feelings and memories can be expressed through creating art. Sometimes, other residents will come near and watch, which is supportive too.

Art therapists also work in schools, pupil referral units, hospitals, hospices and refugee centres, in small groups or one-to-one.

If you would like to support projects, suggest others, or find out more, visit www.arttherapy4all.co.uk, or call Melanie

Stevenson on 07837 394799 (for children and adolescents) or Caitlin Smail on 07939 406270 (adult mental health).

Beyond Words: The Healing Power of Art, coinciding with London Creativity and Wellbe-

ing Week, is showing at The Darnley Gallery, The Centre for Better Health, Hackney, E9 6QH, from 4-27 June. Gallery tour and talk Friday 8 June. Details at www.artherapyexhibition.co.uk.

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