



Stoke Newington School & Sixth Form is a successful Hackney comprehensive school. With a school population of over 1200 students, more than 40 languages spoken in school and over a third of students on Free School Meals it reflects the diversity of the local area. In an area such as Stoke Newington, the divide between those who frequent the shops and cafes of Church Street and those who do not/cannot is immense and the opportunities for interaction is minimal. We believe that schools can play a vital part in providing platforms for people to mix, to learn and to understand.

As a specialist Media Arts & Science College we have developed a strong reputation for the arts and we excel in developing long term partnerships to provide outstanding creative learning opportunities for our students. We have an excellent record of promoting cohesion amongst our diverse student population, using creative projects and themed days and whole school focus on things such as LGBT, to celebrate and increase understanding and tolerance of the differences that exist in our school and in society.

Meanwhile, our third specialism, Inclusion, awarded in 2008 supports our continued efforts to remove the financial, emotional, behavioural and circumstantial barriers which can hinder learning and participation to help raise the aspirations and improve the life chances of our school community enabling all of our students to participate as equals.

At Stoke Newington we believe the arts have the power to cut through differences, creating spaces where people can come together irrespective of background or status. In the same way we use the arts to bring our school community together so we wanted to use the arts to cut across ethnicity, faith, age, gender and socioeconomic status to bring the community together.

LGBT

by Elly Barnes, Year Curriculum Coordinator Year 11

Stoke Newington School & Sixth Form has celebrated LGBT History Month for the past five years. I began co-ordinating the celebrations when I was newly in post as Head of Year in 2005, firstly with an assembly to encourage the Year 7s into a discussion about the laws, rights, history, symbols of the LGBT community. Then, secondly, by studying the song 'Small town boy' by Bronski Beat in the music department, which the Year 7 students performed in a whole school assembly.

The aim of the celebration was to eradicate the use of the word 'Gay' being used by young people in the wrong context and rid the school of homophobic attitudes. The important aspect for me was that the message should reach the students, the staff, the parents and carers, and extend into the community in Stoke Newington and across the Borough of Hackney.

Developing History Month across Hackney

Up until 2008 we were the only school in Hackney to embark upon LGBT History Month celebrations, and thus the only school reaping the benefits of changing staff and pupil attitudes. My goal in 2008 was to work towards a borough-wide school celebration of LGBT History Month.

To achieve this I teamed up with The Learning Trust, Hackney Council, the Met liaison officers, Hackney Hate Crime Team and the Green Door project. After delivering a training session to staff at The Learning Trust, I went on to deliver sessions to students at Haggerston girls and Hackney Free & Parochial. These schools then embarked upon their own initiatives to tackle homophobia through their anti-bullying strategies.

With this newfound support, LGBT History Month was able to team up with Stoke Newington and Hackney Free & Parochial to hold an annual national pre-launch to re-enforce the solidarity between LGBT History Month and faith schools.

In 2009 and 2010 Hackney has continued to support LGBT History Month by hosting a schools event at Hackney Town Hall, and a professionals event and social at the Marie Lloyd bar. This year Hackney teamed up with Tower Hamlets to hold a joint celebration at St Leonard's Church in Shoreditch.



Developing History Month at Stoke Newington School

Integrating LGBT into the Curriculum

At Stoke Newington, we've continued our quest to change attitudes towards LGBT people through projects within the curriculum. In January I reminded staff of the imminent LGBT History Month, along with useful websites and resources. Shortly after this, ideas for projects came flooding back from departments. These are examples of the curriculum work:

- I.T. 'Alan Turing'
- Science 'Trans biology'
- Humanities 'James Baldwin', 'Stonewall riots'
- Music 'You spin round' - Dead or Alive, 'The weakness in me', 'Go West'
- Art 'Identity' - Andy Warhol and Keith Haring
- RE 'Social Harmony'

- D&T 'Rainbow Flag, Symbols and Carnival Costumes'
- MFL 'Ma vie en Rose'
- Media 'Civil partnership Film'

Over the last three years I have been given time in staff meetings to present ideas. Speaking to the staff as a whole was crucial in ironing out individual issues, sharing ideas and gaining staff support. Equally so was speaking at SDG (School Development Group) which consists of the Leadership team, Heads of Department and Faculties, and Heads of Year. This has been crucial in terms of gaining help and support to ensure solidarity of opinion from staff across the school, in that we would all tackle homophobia in corridors, in the classrooms and through our individual projects.



2009 - The staff sing 'Go West' by the Pet Shop Boys to the whole school to show solidarity.

Developing History Month Nationally

As the work has developed, we've been invited to take part in a lot of high profile activities and find new forums to get our message across. My students and I were invited to perform at the 'Department for International Development' as part of LGBT History Month celebrations in 2008, which led to us being invited to perform at the Foreign Office in 2009 to help them celebrate International Day against homophobia (IDAHO). Students performed songs by LGBT artists and gave presentations from subjects within the curriculum.

Community Cohesion – Case Study – Stoke Newington School

2010



So far in 2010 we have been invited to the Department for Children Schools and families, where we were very keen to demonstrate good practise and show how homophobia in schools is only caused by ignorance; once educated, students' attitudes do change. We hope to gain their support in encouraging all schools to take part in LGBT History Month and to reap the benefits.



I have now been to Downing Street twice to meet Gordon Brown as part of the government's celebrations to meet other LGBT professionals.



Elly Barnes, Sue Sanders (right) Co-Chair of LGBT History Month and Schools Out!

What have we achieved as a School?

- Students empowered to report bullying
- Staff empowered to deal with homophobic incidents
- Permanent displays around school
- Educated students and staff
- Message goes out to parents, carers and to the community
- Raise awareness through publicity: The Guardian, Hackney Today, Hackney Gazette, Teacher Magazine.
- Offer training to other establishments e.g. Goldsmiths,
- Formed links with Downing Street, Foreign office and the DCSF
- Formed links with businesses
- Safe zone for staff and students to come 'out'
- National TV: Teachers TV and BBC inside Out
- Stoke Newington School is a case study for the new Citizenship syllabus
- 'Celebrate' not tolerate diversity in schools
- Create a safe zone for everyone to be who they want and need to be - raising self esteem

There's always more that can be done and every year the work develops, our message is spread wider and more young people feel empowered to tackle homophobia.

Where do we go from here?

- Stoke Newington School & Sixth Form continues to lead on best practise in schools for LGBT History Month nationally
- DCSF recommends that all schools celebrate LGBT History Month
- Encourage all schools and workplaces in the community to celebrate LGBT History Month
- Provide training to schools and workplaces
- Continue to offer training to other schools and workplaces and continue to be an example of good practice

MONSTERS & MAYHEM: A community celebration

by Helen Wood, Specialist Schools Team



Through our specialisms and the more traditional primary liaison and transition, we work with our key feeder primary schools but, as a specialist school with its roots in the community, we believed we could do more and of course now have a responsibility to promote cohesion in our wider community.

To do this, in 2008, we developed 'Music, Monsters & Mayhem'. This was our first six week arts project, which involved over 300 children from five local primary schools and culminated in a carnival on a hot Sunday in June. Children, their families, friends and teachers came together to form a lively and colourful procession along Stoke Newington Church Street to Clissold Park to open Stokefest 2008. With the drums, costumes and puppet mascots created from recycled and recyclable materials it brought the streets to a standstill; people onto the street; shopkeepers to their doors and residents to their windows. The procession was cited by many as a highlight of the festival, seen as taking the event back to its roots in the community focusing on children and families.

Community Cohesion – Case Study – Stoke
Newington School

2010



“He can’t get out the door quick enough on the day that TARU is on” - Year 4 parent



“Everyone’s just so happy - kids, parents, me. And did you see all the people hanging out of windows

taking photographs? Absolutely brilliant” - A participating teacher

Why Brazil?

So why Brazilian carnival? Our engagement with Brazilian arts and culture began in 2006 when AfroReggae, a cultural group from Rio de Janeiro, first visited us. Using the arts to combat the gangs, guns and drug culture of the favelas, their work seemed an ideal starting point to create something that could bind people together, uniting young and old across school and community. We wanted to take on and adapt their approaches but needed to find the right partner to help us do it, which is where TARU, a London based Brazilian arts organisation came in.



Experienced in delivering community arts projects, the partnership between Stoke Newington School and TARU has been extremely successful with shared goals and ambitions for the project. Given the pressures on our own staff team, the engagement with an external provider was essential for a project on this scale.

The underlying lessons of this project were teamwork and mutual respect, and the project's focus on percussion is an essential component of the inschool workshops and the carnival itself. Like many art forms, percussion is inclusive. It enables children and young people who have not had access to instrumental lessons to participate quickly, providing space for people of all abilities and a good drumming group relies on teamwork and respect.

Community Cohesion – Case Study – Stoke Newington School

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Also key was the environmental message - recycling, recycling, recycling! Families were asked to bring their recyclable material into school to be used to make costumes and the giant puppets. In the first year that we ran the project we also ran a half term family activity, based at William Patten and supported by Hackney Extended Schools cluster A, that aimed to provide the opportunities for whole families to contribute to their 'schools' mascot. Whilst successful, the space required for five enormous puppets and the recyclable materials meant being outside in the William Patten playground which made it difficult to manage given the vagaries of the British weather.



“My kids go to Grazebrook but I’m here helping on the William Patten Puppet - it’s what it’s all about - mucking in and working together” - *A participating parent*

The carnival procession and the provision of staging facilities by Stokefest meant that we were also able to extend the activity to include other music and dance groups from Stoke Newington and Hackney Free and to involve some of the artists from AfroReggae who extended their visit to participate. With the sound of drumming reverberating across Clissold Park, peoples’ interest was piqued. By 3.30pm our workshop tent was full of parents and carers, children and ‘Stokey’ types who came together, learnt a simple samba rhythm and within half an hour they too were off for the second parade of the day!

On top of all of this, Stoke Newington School also ran a number of stalls. Sixth Form students launched YoungN16.com, the Girls’ Group encouraged visitors to create messages and statements supporting gender equality, and a lively group of Year 10 students, “Doing it for Pete”, raised over £400 for the Pete Brennan Memorial Trust, a registered charity set up in memory of a much loved teacher, to help disadvantaged children in the school.



We had been determined to make a huge splash with this project and with the help and enthusiasm of children, young people, teachers and the community, it was.

“It’s really helped build my confidence” - *Year 9 student*

In the second year, with the cancellation of Stokefest, the project was a low key affair - projected costs of infrastructure for a small event had proved too much for us and so we held the procession and had a group performance on the grass in the park. Without the presence of the Stokefest organizers, the local police stepped in to deal with the procedures of road closures, and community officers gave up leave to man the rolling roadblock. After what seemed like weeks of rain, the sun came out for the event which saw 800 people process down Church Street with many more, drawn by the sound of the drums, watching from buses, windows and shop doorways.

“She’s absolutely loving it, it’s the highlight of her week” - Year 5 parent

As in the first year, the procession involved Stoke Newington School students who supported the percussion leaders and helped some of the younger children. Some of the Stoke Newington students had been part of the original 2006 AfroReggae percussion project. The project has now become iCAN, an afterschool group which is now supported by the Barbican and Guildhall School of Music & Drama. Through it some members have transformed their lives and widened their horizons - and those of their families along with this. The format of the project provides performance opportunities and free tickets for Barbican events for them and their friends and families. It’s helping the Barbican inform its programming, seeing its audience profile change and removing barriers to participation. Parents and carers who were once dismissive of percussion, and would never have visited a venue such as the Barbican now attend events, are recognised by the staff, and can begin to engage and feel ownership of cultural London.

Year 3: 2010

Now, as we move into our third year, the project is shaping up nicely. The effort put into previous years’ events has paid off. With a push on increasing the numbers of people using the borough’s parks, the Hackney Parks Department have elected to support the event, providing guidance and advice through Hackney bureaucracy, promoting it and best of all funding some post carnival entertainment aimed at families and young people. Carters Steam Fair who pay an annual visit to Clissold Park with their old fashioned fairground rides have offered free tickets for all participants, providing more opportunities for all families to take part in. Subject to the weather, it promises to be a lovely afternoon.

The Future

With the gap left by Stokefest there is space for the carnival project to grow, with possibilities for further community engagement, and development within and across the schools. There are many aspects still to be developed and we are keen to develop curriculum work using the Brazilian carnival links as a starting point.

Transition - Afterschool

If a recent funding application is successful we will work with a group of disadvantaged Year 6 children from five schools on a two year afterschool percussion project. Targeting disadvantaged Year 6

students in challenging circumstances who have shown enthusiasm and/or talent for drumming, we will provide the same level of support and opportunities for them and their families that our own iCAN group receive. By enabling them to participate in a well-constructed project we will build confidence, self-esteem and pride in participants and their families, easing transition by creating bonds before arrival at Stoke Newington.

Grassroots

The carnival itself has the capacity to become an annual event that celebrates the achievement of our whole community. However, for that to happen it needs to continue to be ‘owned’ by the schools themselves to ensure the integrity of the event and avoiding a top down approach or the introduction of commercial interests.

2012

And with the biggest party due to roll into town in 2012, we hope we’ll be a part of it. With Carnival being one of the core themes of the cultural Olympiad, we are in a good position to not only join the party but to have our own.