

## **Shared Education in Practice: Ballynahinch**

Today's event was about four schools' coming together to work on a project to make a book about Montalto Estate. There was a chance to meet with other kids, a chance to do something special. Most importantly though it was a chance for children to work together to do something they haven't done before and producing a book is a tremendous goal.

From the start I was very enthusiastic to try and get all of the Year 8 pupils in all four schools to work together to form a project that enabled them to showcase their creative writing talent. With that in mind I had thought really long and hard about what project I could do that was going to be meaningful to all of the schools involved and to all of the pupils and teachers involved and I came up with the Montalto Magic project.

We're encouraging pupils to read and try to enhance their literacy skills and stimulating the creative writing process, and I thought it would be a great idea to enthuse the kids by getting a book published. That they would be their own authors and they could see their finished article at the end of the day. Today's book launch event was a great experience for the pupils, they were able to showcase their book, read extracts from their book and then actually dramatise extracts from the book as well. So they were fully immersed, they enjoyed showcasing all of their hard work, showing their talent and their creative writing ability so it was an absolute wonderful experience and also to have that experience in the location where the book is set really brought the whole story to life.

As you can see, from the event today, young people played a key role in not just bringing together their peers from different schools, but today we had a wide range of age groups attending the event. So that shows how young people can be instrumental in bringing their communities together so we see the project as an example of how young people can be ambassadors for peace in their community, they can help bring together both parents, grandparents and the wider community in one space, a shared space to promote peace.

### **MUSIC**

I learnt that this community was a lot different than I thought it was because everyone has different opinion on the way we do things as well, so like, people like to do it one way, other people like to do it another way but we all came together and it worked out perfectly.

It was quite fun writing the book together and stuff, and having our own ideas and it's quite fun having a published book.

This story is the story about Montalto Estate Montalto Estate belongs to all of these children, it's off equal claim and it's their shared history, it's a shared space so that was vital, we were working in our schools, I mean undoubtedly there was a parts of this project you were working with your class, that had to be, but we were doing that in the knowledge people were simultaneously working in other classrooms and we were all part of the story and it's a true story.

## MUSIC

I've been working in my school for 26 years and I do remember times when there was a lot of conflict so I see it that it's a really positive thing that we have many pupils from other denominations in our school now and really proper friendships and a lot of children, it's a good thing, they don't really have an awareness of a dark past so it's actually a very good thing that they just see it as normal.

The pupils' feedback was overwhelmingly positive about the experience, they really enjoyed all of the events but the thing they really enjoyed most was working with the other pupils, and lots of them have told me they have made lifelong friendships. I feel like it's really good that like we are all from different backgrounds and like we're not all like the same religion and all so like we can meet other children our age. It doesn't really matter where you're from or what you're doing, it's just that you're making friends and that makes the world a better place.

The opportunities that this project has given our children to be together has been just amazing, and to me today was one of those golden nugget days in teaching where you see it's all worthwhile. This is what we're about. We are about bringing children together and I think it's really about sharing good practice and if you have those relationships established you build on those relationships and you can share good We don't want this to be the end of this project, we want these pupils when they go into year 9 to still be meeting up, so this is just the start of a very, very exciting project and an exciting way forward for Shared Education within our group.