

Rathore

DOLORES MORGAN: Our motto at Rathore is "A chance for all", and through music we feel we very much provide a chance for all our children. From our children with the most complex needs, to our more capable children, we feel that music is a vehicle for them to communicate and to perform at their own level.

PAT MATHERS: In Rathore we try to ensure that all our students from varying abilities are able to avail off a range of music activities. And this comes from students that would listen and respond to music in music therapy sessions and Soundbeam sessions, right through to students who would be involved in performing and composing music as well.

SIMON SHERIDAN: Music therapy gives the opportunity to vocalise or to beat a drum and through that, to express whatever is going on at that time, in that moment, and share it with their peers as well.

In the session, I try to go in without any expectations for what they might offer. So it's very much led by the children themselves. And I try to create a space where their sounds can be heard whether it be vocally, or through playing an instrument, or reaching out. They experience their ability, their capacities, rather than being seen in terms of their conditions.

Their means of communication may come in different ways. For one child, this might mean actually pushing an instrument away, and it falling on the ground, and the reaction that he gets from that is meaning in the form of communication for him, I think. And I think that can be empowering for them to experience that, and to step out, and, "This is me, here I am. I can do this."

GEMMA GRAY: Soundbeam is an instrument that we can use with children and adults with loads of different types of disabilities. If they can move any part of their body even the slightest, they can create a sound with it. It's used by... There's an invisible beam comes out from it, and just by breaking that beam, it creates a sound. So if I were to put my hand over it and just...

(NOTE SOUNDS)

...move it around. You can hear just that sound. You can use your hand, an arm, a head, a foot, anything at all, anything the child can move. Even some children, we use electric wheelchairs, you know, and they can drive their wheelchair up and down in front of it as well, you know. All sorts of things, whatever, any sort of movement and it picks up a sound.

(NOTES SOUNDING)

A lot of children, when we use it with them, you know, the first time they use it, their faces are like... You know, they light up when they realise that this is something that they can do, and they understand that when they put their hand over it, or they move around and they can hear the music, the fact that they're able to create music using it. You know, a lot of them, they're not able to play a conventional instrument. And this is their way, you know, and it gives them a real sense of achievement and you know, feel like they're a part of a group, and part of a musical group that maybe they thought at one point, they couldn't be.

PAT MATHERS: I liaise with the likes of the SELB tutors, and teachers from our link schools, Mr. Shelaine and Mr. Doran from St. Colman's and St. Paul's. And I also would coordinate activities that happen in the classroom, from primary right through to secondary. And I'm also involved in working with the primary music group and also a secondary choir.

(SINGING)

In Rathore we've been very lucky that through music we've been able to establish a variety of meaningful and long-lasting relationships between staff and students from Rathore, and also staff and students from our link schools.

MARK DORAN: I want you to tell me what emotion is being shown by the image or conveyed by the image. And then I'm going to play a bit of music, and you're gonna tell me which piece captures that image.

So the work that we've done here really has been to try to open up the Rathore students through digital media but also to think about music and the importance of music in media. We talk very much about the elements of music. Things that I would do with my GCSE class we do over here with the Rathore students.

(MUSIC PLAYING)

We wanted to bring the music in with the digital media in the form of slideshows, and then producing their own slideshows for prize givings and for the Christmas concerts for anyone who can participate. Some students mightn't like to get up on the stage, mightn't be able to be on the stage, so they're on the stage in a real way in the slideshows. And these are students who maybe have never had the opportunity to really go into that much detail.

I think that's what this is really all about, giving the Rathore students the opportunity to have the same education as everyone else, but also giving our students the opportunity to interact with students of other abilities and giving them an understanding that we're all different, we all have different needs, but there's something that links us all. I think this is just the next step along where students from a special school come into our school, and students from our school go into theirs, and share experiences. And I think, as you can see from the students in the background, they really enjoy it.

MALE STUDENT: I like the St. Colman's guys because I get to make friends with them and learn more about the music and film industry.

FEMALE STUDENT: I'm a sixth year student in St. Paul's High School. I go down to Rathore once a week to help Simon and Ryan here prepare for the GCSE practical that they'll be doing the end of next year. And I just go up and teach them the drums, so, um... Do you want to play the basic sound?

SIMON AND RYAN: Yeah.

FEMALE STUDENT: Basic? Basic? One, two, three, four.

(DRUMMING)

PETER SLANE: The GCSE link with Rathore has been going on this past three or four years. Every Wednesday I would go up and assist and teach two pupils from Rathore. It's a 40-

minute session and if you bear in mind that the pupils that we have in our school have actually got four pairs of four 40-minute sessions, it's a limited amount of time. But in that amount of time the children show their commitment to the subject by doing a lot of work at home themselves in relation to the analysis part of the course.

How do you see it at the start of the piece?

STUDENT: Four crotchet.

PETER SLANE: Four crotchets in each bar, yes. On Friday, I am affiliated with the joint choir between Rathore and St. Paul's. I accompany the choir, and as well as that, in collaboration with Pat Mathers, we will be taking part in different chorale ensembles and different groups throughout.

(SINGING)

PAT MATHERS: Over the years we've also made great links with our local community: McManus Court, the wonderful people at Nouri Musical Fish, and Nouri Craddock Union, and we perform regular each year. And that gives our students a chance to mix with people from the local community and for those people from the local community to see how talented and how great our students are. And we have found that this has enabled our pupils to get to know each other and become part of something that is really, really special.

(SINGING)

DAVID LOUGHRAN: Music has made a tremendous change in Eamonn's life. It's been very important to him. He's been at Rathore School fifteen years, since he was five years of age. He's almost 20 now. For the majority of that time, till he was about twelve years of age, he was very sensitive to loud noises and sounds, music in particular.

The musical programme, especially at Rathore here, has made a huge difference to him. He contributes in the school to music, he contributes at home. He loves music. He loves singing. He loves singing with his brothers and sisters. And he's... at the drop of a hat, he's very likely to break into song in the house and it's made him much happier; a much more contented person, and it's helped him mature, and be the great man that he is today.

PETER SLANE: It's a very enjoyable place to teach in, and very rewarding. Whenever you go in through the doors of the school it's the sort of place that has a fantastic atmosphere, and it's just great learning throughout. And the teachers and other members of staff are very connected with the children. And it's always good to go to the place where music is thought to be very prominent and promising.

PAT MATHERS: Through our students' performances, we can truly see the power of music.