

FEATURE

'All the better to see you

Mary Kerrigan, of Walled City Partnership, talks about the 'Seeing Project' - a unique programme for schoolkids which aims to open up their eyes to the

My best day at school ever!, said young Charlie McLaughlin, as he made his way back to school after completing a Walled City Partnership 'Seeing Project' pilot workshop.

Designed to 'prop eyelids up on matchsticks', this unique, cross-curricular project opens the eyes of 7-11 year olds to the world around them.

Partnering with Culture Company and designer John McDaid, Walled City Partnership refined and expanded its 'Seeing Project' for the UK City of Culture 2013.

A fruitful collaboration with principals, staff and pupils at Fountain and Long Tower primary schools ensured solid foundations and an exciting, lasting legacy.

A sequence of four interactive workshops was delivered to both schools. These culminated in a new online learning resource and archive gallery for teachers, parents and children across the city and world.

Whether in New Buildings or New Zealand, the new resource provides everything needed to explore and share local built and natural heritage with that of cultures worldwide.

'Windows on Your World', Phase I for 7-8 year olds, involves lots of talking, walking, drawing, painting and collage. Young children recognise and describe two major international, architectural styles and five different types of old windows.

Fountain PS teacher, Mrs Nichola Robinson said: "The [Seeing] project educated the children in greater awareness and appreciation of heritage. They developed an appreciation of architecture, and the different windows and buildings from different eras".

By the end of these energetic, fun and creative workshops, the children described old windows as well as any architect.

'Appreciative Inquiry' is a basis for lively conversations about old windows in buildings in or near our schools.

This positive communication method encourages everyone - young and old - to inquire into and share things they already know: without judgement or fear of ridicule.

In this safe space, confidence to voice personal opinions about the world around them really grows.



Advance preparations for the 'Sunshine and Shadows' exercise in the dining hall of Long Tower PS.

A fifth workshop shares learning with two participating classes from different schools as well as offering an unexpected opportunity for time travel. With lots of learning about heritage past under their belts, this is a chance to create the heritage of the future.

Mrs Edel Connolly, P3 class teacher at Long Tower PS, said: "It was the first time I shared an art workshop with the children from Fountain PS and it was a great success. The children had a very safe environment to work in as the artwork lent itself to getting involved right away without the fear of feeling exposed in, for example, a circle time scenario. The children really enjoyed working together and no-one was

cast in the spotlight which can sometimes happen.

Emotional barriers were overcome and self-consciousness was eradicated very quickly.

"It is a great project for so many reasons. Get stuck in and enjoy it!"

This unique City of Culture 2013 legacy will interest primary school principals, P3 teachers, parents, and after-schools club leaders.

The use of Appreciative Inquiry has relevance for others, including second and third level principals, teachers and academics focused on education, heritage, environment and conflict resolution; as well as built environment professionals engaged in community consultation.

Funded by Heritage Lottery, Walled City Partnership became the first Townscape Heritage Initiative in Northern Ireland to take on a dedicated education role.

"The Seeing Project" is one small piece of a larger jigsaw of its innovative heritage education programmes designed to raise awareness and appreciation of heritage to all kinds of people from all walks of life.

■ 'The Seeing Project' online archive gallery and learning resource launches on June 18 at the Playhouse Dance Studio 12.45 p.m.-2.45 p.m.

Places are limited so, if this event appeals, reserve a place by contacting wcp.education@derrycity.gov.uk not later than 12 noon on Friday, June 14.



Kids learn to describe a 12-pane sliding sash window with Mary Kerrigan.