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BLOG

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM CENTRAL SOUTH WALES AND BEYOND

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Goldies Cymru: Developing Relationships Across the Generations

By Elizabeth Berry, Deputy Headteacher at Thornhill Primary



Goldies Cymru or as we more affectionately call them, 'Goldies' are a group of up to twenty elderly people who visit Thornhill Primary School once every half term as part of our intergenerational programme of events that we run as part of our Family and Community engagement. The 'Time After Time' project which was set up by this national charity runs sessions across South Wales working in partnership with schools and libraries from across the region.

The main aim for Goldies is to put smiles on the faces of the elderly and vulnerable people through a daytime singing and activity session. For the school, it is to further develop community links and improve younger and older people's experiences of living together in our community.

What we didn't realise when we launched this project was the positive impact it would have on whole school wellbeing, personal and social skills and the development of speaking and listening skills.

For our school the outcomes are clear. Children (and staff) skip down the corridor, excited about the prospect of the Goldies session on a Friday afternoon each half term. We have kept it simple: Year 5 and 6 children sing, talk and share a drink and a snack. As a result, we have all developed positive, happy relationships with the elderly people and the children now see how important

it is to spend time with these people. The project has helped to bring the generations together and give everyone a chance to laugh and smile as they listen to each other's stories. Honestly, I can't think of another opportunity where there are so many smiles – it is infectious! Staff often head down to the school hall to join in! The fun and enjoyment of Goldies sessions are clear to everyone; children and adults alike value the companionship and the opportunity to sing with others.

In the summer term, Thornhill Primary was asked by the Goldies Charity if we would like to write an Armistice Cantata to commemorate the end of WW1. Our more able and talented writers from Year 4 and 5 spent a day at Glamorgan archives immersing themselves in letters and artefacts acquiring a huge amount of knowledge and understanding before returning to school to work in groups of three to write the lyrics and the narrative. The children selected themes such as the role of women, life in the trenches and the relationship between mothers and sons. They even wrote a part for a Grandma!

For those hearing it for the first time it was extremely moving, we were all surprised by the level of sophistication produced by children as young as 8 and 9.

The performance at Chapter Arts Centre felt very special for the children, it was something that

would stay with them for life. It was theirs! They wrote it and performed it. They owned it. They performed it with such commitment and passion. It was a hugely proud moment for everyone involved.

For colleagues across the Consortium who are looking to develop community engagement it would be worth you contacting Goldies Cymru and being part of the <http://www.ourmemories.org.uk> project and if you want to see it in action, come and visit us!