

When I first agreed to make Woodhall School a stop on the *Jazz Train* line, I really had no idea what to expect. Of course, I had met with Chris who had explained things how things would work...but the reality was an experience *far* surpassing my expectations and something that I cannot recommend highly enough to other schools.

There are only two things that you need for the Jazz Train magic to begin: a room and a group of children! The fantastic Chris, Orphy and Ilario arrive with everything needed. In fact, their arrival alone was a cause of great excitement for the children...what's in the huge black carrier? Ilario's keyboard! Why is Chris carrying a small black box? It's his clarinet! How many different hats does Orphy own? No idea!

From the very first session, Jazz Train had the children completely hooked. Over the weeks, we were taken on an incredible journey through jazz. Not just any old boring sit-still-and-listen-to-the-adult lessons, but workshops planned and delivered for maximum impact and engagement. Inclusive, interactive, all-join-in, hands-clapping, feet-tapping, totally infectious joy in music. We discovered famous musicians, amazing songs and learned the sorts of facts that are fascinating for children, such as why Dizzy Gillespie played a bent trumpet...

There is absolutely no expectation on the children to come to the sessions with anything except themselves, and certainly no expectations of the school adults (although none of us could help but join in!) The way that Chris, Orphy and Ilario presented each session naturally captivated every child and swept everyone away regardless of age, ability or situation. The kindness and empathy they showed, with the natural understanding that not every child likes to answer questions or stand at the front of a performance, was heart-warming.

Talking to Chris before the sessions had started, I was able to express my concern that some of our older children are, without doubt, still experiencing the longer-term effects of the Covid lockdowns (when they missed out on their early schooling) and the social and emotional impact that this brings. Chris, Orphy and Ilario then tailored sessions with our older class to ensure that there was even greater focus on building confidence and 'turning up that volume'; something that the children can be very proud of and take forward not only into future performances but so many other areas of life.

Our lovely school ticks so many boxes in terms of high deprivation, significant numbers of children with Special Educational Needs, a Pupil Premium percentage well-above the national average and so on but actually, the unique experience and priceless learning provided by Jazz Train transcends any such statistics. This is something that would benefit all children, *wherever* they live and *whatever* their experience...because they are CHILDREN and the experience of clicking in time to '*One O'clock Jump*', improvising to '*So What*', learning to scat, parading with joyful abandon behind Orphy, Ilario and Chris around the hall New Orleans-style and singing in rounds to '*Oh, When the Saints*'/'*I Wanna Sing*' and '*Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*' is a memory that every child will be able to hold onto for life. Barrier-breaking creativity at its best. If only there was a Jazz Train for adults!

I wholeheartedly encourage all schools to get on board the Jazz Train. You will not only unlock the door to a wealth of amazing musical experiences for your children but also access something that brings pure, unadulterated joy. Watching a line of children leaving the hall with big smiles, snapping their fingers in time and scatting as they headed back to class each week...there's something pretty special about that. Thank you Ilario, Orphy and Chris!

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WOODHALL SCHOOL

PASSION • RESILIENCE • RESPONSIBILITY • ASPIRATION
INCLUSIVITY • FAMILY

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