



## Blowers Green Primary School

### **Project description**

Everyone using the school hall at Blowers Green Primary School now gets the opportunity to enjoy the 16 large painted murals created by the Stage 2 art club and which depict the 'It's Good to be You' "Eat well and keep physically active" message.

Visual Artist, Michael Butler, was selected by the school to work with Key Stage 2 art club and teacher Margaret Bloomer. The children were tasked with researching and exploring activities and feelings associated with the phrase "Keeping physically active". They were then encouraged to create their own designs to reflect their research.

### ***Plan, design, create artworks***

The children worked as a 'creative team', alongside the artist and engaging with a wide range of creative mediums. They were tasked with designing and producing visual images, which they felt would have a lasting impact on their school friends.

As part of the preparation for the project, the group explored and analysed examples of Michael's paintings and artwork. The artwork became a tool to encourage dialogue, By reflecting on and responding to what they saw the children discussed a wide range of health and well being topics. This enabled the group to engage in discussion about the 'It's Good to be You' messages from an early stage in the project helping them to make informed choices about the issues that they wanted to focus upon.

The group decided to focus on the notion of being 'active'. Michael then worked on initial designs with the children and planned sixteen painted murals for the school's main hall.

In the next stage of the process the group decided what messages about being 'active' they wanted to convey and what images would communicate their ideas most effectively. The children used a range of activities to help generate ideas including role-play to explore different sporting activities and discussion around their own experiences of keeping active. These ideas were then discussed further by the group to agree the images that they would ultimately create.



A by-product of the process of exploring and experimenting with painting techniques such as blending paint, designing the background and foreground, was the creation of a relaxed environment where the children were comfortable in discussing the key messages and themes. The creative process required focus and experimentation, so as the children experimented with colour and shapes. In doing this the group were encouraged to think about how different people might respond to visual messages, and to take this into consideration in terms of the impact they wanted their designs to have.

Over four sessions the children experimented with active figures in the foreground before beginning their mural panels. During three further sessions the panels were drawn and painted by the children with encouragement and guidance from Michael. The children had opportunities to use acrylic paints, experiment with different designs. As part of the design process they had to consider how people engage in physical activities, ensuring this physiology was represented in the artwork.

The choice of bold colours and striking designs- even mid- way through the project could be seen to indicate the conviction that the children had in the messages and images they were creating. The artist built on this confident approach by introducing new creative challenges such as painting on canvas and encouraging the group to think about the composition of each work.

“There's energy shouting out of my active figure to show everyone to be active”, said one of the children.

### **The impact on participants**

Participants, artists and teachers observed that engaging in the creative process helped the children develop confidence. They learnt new creative skills and embraced the concept of spreading a key message to the school through art.

By choosing the message they wanted to focus on, they were able to instantly engage in the topic, as they felt ownership and responsibility for doing the job effectively. For example, once the decision to use an active theme was made, the young people were able to engage in a discussion about physical activities, which they felt were appealing to their peers, ranging from walking and golf to basketball and netball. The artist, also observed that the project was effective in promoting health messages,



Another positive outcome was the relationship the children developed with the artist. “One boy's confidence grew and he knows it's ok to be a boy and good at art now”, said Margaret Bloomer, teacher at the school. The participant also reflected, “it's good having a male artist because the boys now know its ok to be male and good at art”.

A combination of the children's enthusiasm and the visual impact of their artwork ensured that the arts and health project achieved its goal of reaching out to other children in the school. “It's been a very positive experience for our pupils and they will tell each other the message by showing others their work” said a teacher.

### **Install artwork and create a legacy**

By using digital imagery to plan their artwork, the children were able to instantly critique their work, refine their designs and reflect upon its likely impact.

The installation of their work provided an ideal opportunity for the children to review and use their skills they had learned during the arts and health project. By working together they were able to reflect upon the impact of their work and consider how they imagined people would respond to their images.

Michael ensured the pieces were completed and ready to be installed. With the help of the caretaker, the 16 panels were installed to form a mural on the wall of the main school hall.

The artwork was revealed at an opening presentation, which was attended, by parents and carers. The artwork is now a fixture in the school and viewed by children, staff and visitors on a daily basis. It is hoped that this will help to ensure the ‘keeping physically active message’ is sustained beyond the life of the project.