

An 'International Day of Peace' art project at Wheatcroft Primary School, Hertford

The International Day of Peace takes place every year on 21 September. Our school decided to mark it with a project to celebrate friendship, and we also thought about representing peace through art.

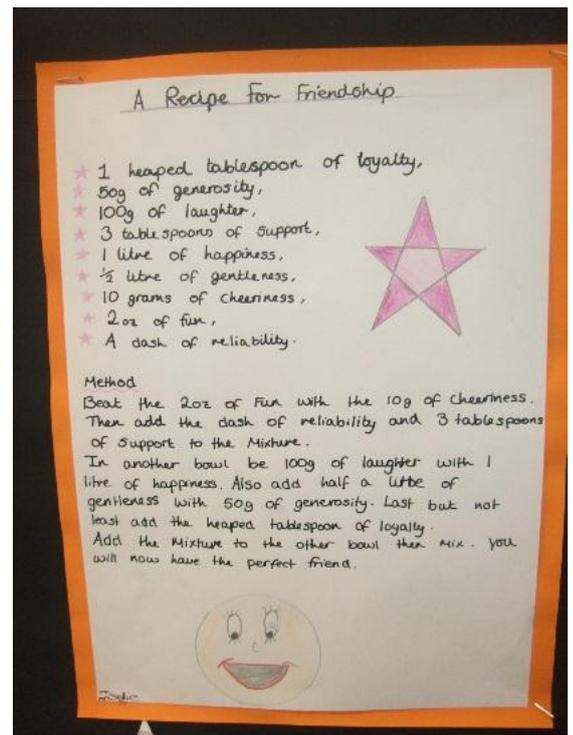
We worked with the whole Year 6 group – who are usually split across two classes – to promote friendship and collaborative working. Our aim with this project was to help pupils to understand the concept of world peace and disarmament, how that impacts on children around the world and how conflict in their own lives makes them feel.



Year 6 pupils proudly displaying their pinwheels

We started the project by finding out why there is the need for an International Day of Peace and learning a little about what the United Nations stand for. We discussed what images of war and peace we see through the media and what it means to live somewhere at war.

We moved on to conflict in our own lives and thought about adults and children we knew at conflict. We thought about what we could do to help others: we discussed contacting our local MP; helping charities; and simply being a friend to someone. This led us to look at the idea of friendship and what it means to be a friend. Each pupil wrote a recipe for the perfect friend with the qualities they as individuals felt were important. They also wrote these qualities onto a peace pinwheel and then planted them in the school field to represent a peace sign.



A recipe for friendship

We moved on to thinking about how we could celebrate peace and spread our own peace messages through art.

We studied three artists throughout the week: Andy Warhol, Andy Goldsworthy and Banksy. We practised their techniques, which the pupils then used to represent their own versions of peace symbols. The children particularly enjoyed discussing some of Banksy's ways of representing his views of conflict and peace.



The pupils represented peace using Goldsworthy's, Banksy's and Warhol's techniques

This activity helped the children to understand their role as global citizens and to explore strategies to help others. It involved critical thinking and discussions that didn't always result in a final answer. It raised awareness of the global issue of conflicts, related it to their everyday lives, and gave them a platform to express their own views.

The project also raised the profile of the work of the UN, gave a clear idea to our pupils of what the International Day of Peace is about, and helped them to be more reflective about their own lives and ways to help others. It also made them think about how peace is portrayed in the media and through art. A lot of discussion took place, especially about Banksy's views and how his message was being seen across the world.

Our next steps will be to display the work the children have done throughout the school and to talk about their project in assembly. We will also ask the children to suggest ways to celebrate the International Day of Peace next year. This session will also go towards our reaccreditation for the International School Award.

All pictures courtesy of Wheatcroft Primary School