

News

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Great Cheverell school brings global culture to the classroom (and playground)



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In a small village in Wiltshire, the sounds of Zulu singing can be heard... Children at Holy Trinity C of E Primary Academy in Great Cheverell enjoy a rich sense of diversity despite their rural setting.

It is thanks in part to their headteacher, Mercedes Henning. Mrs Henning moved to Wiltshire from Johannesburg, and is originally from Zambia, and has made it her mission to ensure children in the village had cultural awareness.

She said: “Before lockdown we put in a funding bid in for a diversity project because our children belong to quite a narrow cultural society, we have little diversity in the community of Great Cheverell.

“We received a grant from the Wiltshire and Swindon Cultural Education Partnership and matched it with our own funds. I came to Wiltshire from South Africa and think it is so important for the children to know people who live in different cultures and parts of the world. They are brilliant at challenging prejudice and are incredibly aware.

“At lunchtimes, you can sometimes hear the children sing in a traditional Zulu way and also know Tswana. They do it joyfully, just like we would in Africa and it is a beautiful sound.”

Since receiving funds from the Wiltshire and Swindon Cultural Education Partnership, the school has worked with the Windrush Generation, been visited by an Afghani refugee, visited a mosque and also worked with Salisbury Museum to learn about ancient people who came to the UK.

And this week, (November 25) the school held a Diwali day hosted by Kalpesh of K'Z Dance, who told the children about Diwali traditions and stories, before launching into a Bollywood dance session.

Mrs Henning said: “It was a day of colour, brightness and fun, and everyone laughed, danced until they were breathless and learnt a lot. The Indian music was wonderful, the Diwali traditions fascinating.”

“We had to take all the usual Covid precautions, so we could not gather together as a whole school, but within the Bubbles, each class got to have really great day.”

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