

# Joanna believes St. Helen's Primary School effectively utilises music and drama to support learning and to encourage children to be the best they can be

Joanna Lewis and Jo Raishbrook live in Ipswich with their children Noah, six in Year 2 and Molly, three.



## Passionate about the Arts

Joanna and Jo are professional actors and were keen for their children to attend a school with a strong grounding in the Arts. When they moved to Ipswich from London they specifically wanted St. Helen's Primary School for their family as Arts related friends had told them, from their own experience, that the school believes in the importance of involving children in music and drama.

## Exploring different ways of learning

"I know myself the enjoyment I get from looking at the world from the perspective of others. Going to the theatre, reading books and plays, have for me personally, been a wonderful way of learning."



Jo and I both felt it was an important addition to Noah's education. Reading and writing are obviously incredibly important but we believe these skills don't have to come from just sitting down with a text book. So much is learnt from exploring the imagination. We wanted Noah to have as many opportunities as possible to explore his own way of learning."

## A real knowledge of my child

When Noah started in nursery he was, according to Joanna, quite a shy little boy, but his confidence has grown during his time at St. Helen's. "He comes home excited about what he has learned. I think it has a great deal to do with the nurturing feeling within the school. He has strong friendships and strong relationships with the teachers. I remember reading Noah's first report and having a real sense that his teacher completely knew and understood him. It was a reassuring feeling."

## Parental involvement to support learning

The school encourages parental involvement and Joanna has helped rehearse some of the school's drama productions whilst Jo has been into school to play topical characters, like Kings etc. "There are regular theatre trips too, where the children have the opportunity to watch various theatre companies and talk to them about what they do. It's a wonderful opportunity for the children and you can see they get a lot of enjoyment from it."

## Making learning accessible and enjoyable

"When it comes to deciding upon their own productions they're incredibly bold in their choices! They've done 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' and 'Romeo and Juliet'. They make Shakespeare very accessible to the children, which is brilliant. Sometimes, by the time children discover Shakespeare at High School, there can already be a stigma attached so introducing it early like this, I feel, is really positive."

## A role for everyone

Joanna believes the success of the productions lies in the way the staff make them so enjoyable for the children. "The school is very multicultural and involves everyone. In Romeo and Juliet, they took all the different languages from within the class and used them to make the play even more colourful. It's a team effort with songs and music; they utilise the strengths of the children in the class as well as encouraging those children who will surprise themselves at the end of the production and have a real sense of achievement."

## A can-do attitude

Joanna believes the teaching team are passionate, creative and determined. "They're very innovative in their approach to teaching and invest their time in the children. I don't think there's a project that would feel too big for them to take on. They have such a can-do attitude!"

## A strong foundation to be a good human being

Joanna adds: "If you want your child to grow up being the best person they can be, we feel St. Helen's Primary School is somewhere they can learn to do that. The children are polite and caring and are always looking out for each other. If you want to give your child the foundation to be a good human being, it's a really good starting place."

## Children say:

**Noah says: "I really liked playing Big Bad Wolf 2 in the Christmas play. It was lots of fun!"**



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