

## The development and evolution of an Intergenerational Programme and its place in the National Curriculum

The **Burnham Intergenerational Programme** began in 2002 when children from St Peter's C of E Primary School in Burnham, Buckinghamshire began visiting residents at Perry House, a nearby sheltered housing scheme. At the time the Second World War was a major part of the History Curriculum for Key Stage 2 and the weekly meetings were organised to give children the opportunity to learn about many different aspects of the War, from men and women who had experienced it at first hand. The focus initially was very much on memory sharing with the older people in effect acting as teachers.

The Burnham Intergenerational Programme has continued to this day and to date at least 600 children aged 9 to 11 and 50 older people aged 55 to 95 have taken part. Over 18 years it has naturally evolved from its initial focus on the Second World War to include a very broad range of topics and activities on themes ranging from local history, local, national and worldwide customs and traditions to the four seasons and the world around us. Whilst the sessions continue to provide many opportunities for memory sharing, they have also increasingly become an opportunity for the children and older people to learn from one another and to learn together.

We are passionate about the many benefits for all ages that can come from building intergenerational connections and we would love to see our work taken up by schools across the country. But we are mindful of the many demands placed on schools and the overriding necessity to meet statutory requirements.

We believe that an Intergenerational Programme such as ours can help a school to provide a *'balanced and broadly-based curriculum'* which promotes *'the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life'* as required under section 78 of the Education Act 2002 (Ref.1) and the Academies Act 2010 (Ref.2) and reiterated in the National Curriculum in England Key Stage 1 and 2 Framework Document 2013 (Ref.3 <sup>Page 5</sup>).

In addition, we believe that our Programme can help schools to deliver many specific requirements of the National Curriculum in an exciting and stimulating way. Classroom learning is complemented and reinforced with many of the topics and activities in the Programme linking to the foundation subjects of History, Geography and Art and Design. But fundamental to all learning is the ability to speak, read and write fluently and it is in relation to the core subject of English and the development of language skills and literacy that we consider the Burnham Intergenerational Programme is of most importance in relation to meeting the specific requirements of the National Curriculum.

**For children in Years 5 and 6 the National Curriculum states:**

- *Teachers should develop pupils' reading and writing in all subjects to support their acquisition of knowledge...Schools should do everything to promote wider reading. (Ref. 3 <sup>Page 11</sup>)*
- *Reading widely and often increases pupils' vocabulary because they encounter words they would rarely hear or use in everyday speech. Reading also feeds pupils' imagination and opens up a treasure-house of wonder and joy for curious young minds. (Ref. 3 <sup>Page 14</sup>)*

**Through its varied topics and themed activities, the Burnham Intergenerational Programme provides the opportunity for the children to:**

- *Read aloud about a wide range of subjects*
- *Extend their vocabulary and broaden their knowledge*
- *Develop their comprehension skills, their curiosity and their imagination*

**For children in Years 5 and 6 the National Curriculum states that pupils should be taught to:**

- *Listen and respond appropriately to adults and their peers (Ref. 3 <sup>Page 17</sup>)*
- *Ask relevant questions to extend their understanding and knowledge (Ref. 3 <sup>Page 17</sup>)*
- *Maintain attention and participate actively in collaborative conversations, staying on topic and initiating and responding to comments (Ref. 3 <sup>Page 17</sup>)*
- *Retrieve, record and present information from non-fiction (Ref. 3 <sup>Page 44</sup>)*
- *Write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed (Ref. 3 <sup>Page 47</sup>)*
- *Proof-read for spelling and punctuation errors (Ref. 3 <sup>Page 48</sup>)*
- *Maintain positive attitudes to reading and understanding of what they read by continuing to read and discuss an increasingly wide range of fiction, poetry, plays, non-fiction and reference books or textbooks (Ref. 3 <sup>Page 44</sup>)*

**Working alongside older people in small groups, the children who take part in the Burnham Intergenerational Programme are encouraged to:**

- *Listen*
- *Question and discuss*
- *Interview and report back*
- *Summarise and write reports on a variety of topics*
- *Take pride in presentation of work, taking care with spelling and writing style*
- *Read, discuss, write and recite poetry*

**The National Curriculum states that in years 5 and 6:**

- *Pupils' confidence, enjoyment and mastery of language should be extended through public speaking, performance and debate. (Ref. 3 <sup>Page 43</sup>)*

**Through its varied programme of activities and methods the Burnham Intergenerational Programme provides opportunities for the children to:**

- *Debate issues of interest*
- *Entertain the adults with singing and dancing at special celebrations*
- *Gain confidence in public speaking (e.g. giving a vote of thanks at end of year party)*

## **Summary**

Over 18 years the Burnham Intergenerational Programme has contributed to the education of 600 children from St Peter's School in Burnham, complementing and reinforcing classroom learning through a variety of topics and activities and meeting specific requirements of the National Curriculum, in particular with regard to the development of language and literacy.

But the National Curriculum is "*just one element in the education of every child*" (Ref 3 <sup>Page 6</sup>) and the Burnham Intergenerational Programme also helps to meet these broader requirements. There are clear links with **Ofsted's guidance on Personal Development** for example. Ofsted inspectors evaluate the effectiveness of a school's provision for the "*personal development of learners*" with a requirement for the curriculum to provide for "*learners' broader development....equipping them to be responsible, respectful, active citizens who contribute positively to society*" (Ref 4 <sup>Page 11</sup>).

Ofsted inspectors also consider the extent to which schools are equipping pupils with *“the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life.”* (Ref 5 Page 43)

The **Relationships and Health Education Curriculum 2019** requires primary schools to be teaching *“the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships”* (Ref 6 Page 19) . The Intergenerational Programme can be seen to provide opportunities which fit with the statutory guidance to primary schools to:

i) *“help children to develop the ability to form strong and positive relationships with others through the deliberate cultivation of character traits and positive personal attributes (sometimes referred to as ‘virtues’)*

ii) *to provide planned opportunities for young people to undertake social action, active citizenship and voluntary service to others locally or more widely.”* (Ref 6 Page 20)

Also, since September 2007 schools *“have a duty to promote community cohesion”* (Ref 7 Page 1)

The Burnham Intergenerational Programme is now firmly embedded in the St Peter’s School timetable providing an enduring and replicable example of how all these different demands can be effectively brought together for the benefit and, very importantly, the enjoyment of all participants, young and old alike.

**Shirley Shaw, on behalf of Burnham Health Promotion Trust**

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## **References**

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- 2 Section 1A Academies Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/32/section/1A>
- 3 The national curriculum in England - Key stages 1 and 2 framework document Department for Education 2013  
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