

CULTURE WEEK

Special Edition

OUR STORIES, OUR VOICES

Last week, our school community came together to celebrate **Culture Week** under the theme "Our Stories, Our Voices." Throughout the week, children explored the idea that culture is about much more than countries and costumes - it is about our identities, experiences, families, languages, traditions and the stories that make each of us unique. The week encouraged everyone to recognise that every person has a voice worth listening to and a story worth sharing.



The week began with a whole-school assembly focusing on Identity and Belonging, encouraging children to reflect on what makes them who they are and to celebrate both our similarities and differences. As the week progressed, pupils explored the importance of language, stories and voices, considering how traditions, memories and experiences are passed from generation to generation.



Throughout the week, every year group explored a different aspect of identity and culture through their writing and wider curriculum learning.

Our youngest learners in EYFS focused on "All About Me", creating posters and collages celebrating themselves and their families. They proudly shared special objects from home and learned the importance of listening to one another's stories and asking thoughtful questions.



Year 1 explored "What Makes Me", creating fact files and self-portraits that celebrated their favourite things, families, hobbies, dreams and aspirations.

In **Year 2**, pupils wrote poetry based on "When I Grow Up", reflecting on their hopes and ambitions for the future. Through interviewing each other and adults around the school, they discovered that everyone has their own unique journey and story to tell.

Years 3 and 4 explored "A Place That Matters to Me", producing descriptive writing and poetry inspired by places that hold special memories and meaning to them.

Meanwhile, **Years 5 and 6** drew inspiration from the Little People, Big Dreams series to write autobiographical and biographical pieces, reflecting on identity, aspirations and overcoming challenges.



Afternoon learning provided children with exciting opportunities to immerse themselves in cultures from around the world through geography, art, music and dance. Children explored different countries and continents, learning about traditions, landscapes, stories and artistic styles.

Highlights included experiences such as **Flamenco dancing, Peruvian textiles and weaving, Brazilian Carnival traditions, Aboriginal artwork, Kenyan mask making and exploring music and stories from around the world.** These enriching experiences enabled pupils to develop a deeper appreciation of the richness and diversity of our global community.



Another highlight of the week was the opportunity for children to experience culture through food. We would like to thank Chef Danny and the catering team, who introduced pupils to a wonderful variety of flavours and menus inspired by cuisines from around the world.

Throughout the week, children enjoyed themed lunches including an **African menu featuring Nigerian Brown Chicken Stew**; a **Taste of India menu with Chicken and Vegetable Biryani**; and a **Portuguese-inspired menu including Piri Piri Chicken, Tostas de Queijo and Paprika Rice**.

These exciting menus encouraged children to step outside their comfort zones, try new foods and develop an appreciation for the rich traditions and flavours that food brings to cultures across the world.



One of the highlights of the week was our vibrant Culture Day, where children proudly wore traditional clothing, colours representing their heritage or clothing that reflected something important to their identity.

They also tasted a range of wonderful foods brought from home so a big thank you to all our families for your support!



Families were also invited to contribute to our Community Art Wall during our Summer Fair, led by our very own Art Lead, Ms Smith.

Look out for the displays around the school!



The week concluded with our Friday Cultural Showcase and a wonderful celebration of learning. Parents and carers were welcomed into school to see the fantastic work that had taken place throughout the week.





The busy week culminated in a Dance Extravaganza out on the field led by Ms Chamberlain. It was kicked off by readings from our finalists who had entered our 'A Day in My Shoes' poetry competition.

It was such an achievement to stand up and read their poetry out loud not just to the school but parents and carers too!

Well done to our runners up: **Zoya - 6 Oak, Abdullah - 6 Hawthorne, Bonnie - 5 Wren, Izzy - 3 Adder and Roan 1 Fox. Congratulations to our winners: Nela -2 Bluebell and Sara -4 Dragonfly whose readings were fantastic! It was a tough decision - they were all brilliant!**



Inspiring Assemblies: Sarah Outen MBE FRGS

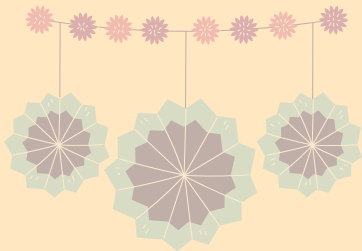
This week, we were delighted to welcome Sarah Outen MBE FRGS, British adventurer, author and motivational speaker, to our school. Sarah has been recognised for her remarkable achievements in exploration and is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.

Sarah led assemblies for both KS1 and KS2, sharing stories from her extraordinary adventures around the world. The children were captivated as they learned about her incredible journeys, which have seen her row across oceans, cycle across continents and kayak through some of the world's most remote locations.

Through her experiences, Sarah shared powerful messages about resilience, courage, perseverance and the importance of embracing challenges and learning from setbacks. She encouraged our pupils to be curious, to believe in themselves and to remember that even the biggest achievements begin with small steps.

Following the assemblies, a group of Year 6 pupils had the exciting opportunity to take part in a special Q&A session with Sarah. They represented the school exceptionally well, asking thoughtful questions and learning more about the determination and mindset needed to achieve ambitious goals.

Sarah's visit was both inspiring and thought-provoking, leaving many of us feeling motivated to step outside our comfort zones and tackle new challenges with confidence. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to Sarah Outen MBE FRGS for taking the time to visit our school and for sharing her incredible experiences with our pupils.



Ms Pugh's Message

As we come to the end of our incredible Culture Week, I simply want to take a moment to reflect on what has been a truly unforgettable celebration of our school community.

First and foremost, thank you to our wonderful children. Throughout the week, you embraced every opportunity with enthusiasm, curiosity and respect. You listened to one another's stories, celebrated each other's cultures, asked thoughtful questions and proudly shared your own heritage. You sang, danced, explored new traditions, tasted foods from around the world and, most importantly, demonstrated our school value of Respect in everything you did.

You reminded us that celebrating diversity is about so much more than learning about different countries. It is about understanding one another, valuing every individual and recognising that every story matters. We could not be prouder of you all.

To our parents, carers and families, thank you for your incredible support. Whether you came into school to share your culture, prepared delicious food, spoke about your experiences or joined us for our cultural gallery and performances, you helped make this week truly special. Together, we have shown our children the richness of our community and the importance of celebrating who we are.

A huge thank you also goes to our dedicated staff. From organising visitors, workshops and trips to planning inspiring learning experiences and supporting every event throughout the week, your enthusiasm and teamwork have been exceptional. Thank you also to our Senior Leadership Team, whose support behind the scenes ensured the week ran so smoothly.

A very special thank you must go to Miss Chamberlain, whose dedication and hard work brought our whole-school dance performances to life. Teaching cultural dances to every class across the school is no small task, yet she did so with endless energy, patience and passion. The spectacular whole-school performance was a wonderful celebration of culture, teamwork and joy, and one that our children and families will remember for years to come.

Finally, I would like to recognise Mrs Travers, whose vision and leadership have shaped and developed our SMSC curriculum over the past two years. Culture Week has been the culmination of countless hours of planning, creativity and commitment. Her belief that every child should feel proud of who they are while learning about others has shone through every part of the week. Thank you, Mrs Travers, for your outstanding leadership and unwavering dedication.

Culture Week has been a celebration of everything that makes Downsview so special—a school where everyone is welcomed, valued and respected. Thank you to every child, family, member of staff and volunteer who played a part in making this week such an incredible success.

As Maya Angelou so beautifully said:

"We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what."