

Young Lungs - Project Overview

The aim of the Young Lungs project I created for William Patten school was to give voice to the children's thoughts, anxieties, and solutions around air pollution in the local area. Like many inner London schools, William Patten is located on a busy street. Added to this, the school is also next to a busy bus stop where 500 buses pass every day, exposing children to illegal levels of pollution.

The two-part project involved working creatively with the whole school from EYFS to KS2 with children ranging from 4 - 11. The first part involved creating a soundscape - a portrait of the school in sound. The starting point was to assemble the entire school to record them breathing and chanting a series of powerful phrases including *Clean Air for Kids & Young Lungs Matter*



Working with sound designer Rob Szleliga, I spent five days in the school leading sessions and debates around air pollution recording discussions in class as well as going off-site with 60 year 6 children to interview local residents and businesses. The year 6 students worked in teams learning interview techniques, how to operate recording equipment, and how to use a boom mike.



Following on from our onsite work, we then went into the post-production stage working in the sound studio to edit the audio. The finished piece is a powerful 12 minute soundscape, which captures a very important issue through the lens of primary school children. [Here is a link to the sound piece.](#)

The second part of the project involved each child in the school creating a felt lung to be displayed outside the school on the ivy screen. For this part of the project, I collaborated with another visual artist, Angela Wright. As we were working across the school we provide age appropriate activities. Younger children in EYFS and Yr 1 & Yr 2 made felt which made into lungs by the artists. Older children were introduced to simple sewing techniques and decorated their own lungs. Over 450 lungs were made for display outside the school just by the bus stop.





"The feedback from children, staff and parents has been nothing but positive! The children and staff have thoroughly enjoyed working in such a cross-curricular way, debating current affairs, learning new skills, experimenting with new techniques and most importantly having fun! Parents have been very appreciative that current issues are being covered in our curriculum, in a creative way that truly compliments the ethos and values of the school."

Karen Law, Headteacher William Patten School, Stoke Newington, London

Since completing the project I have been invited by UCL to lead a workshop with children from William Patten at a conference celebrating Children's rights in November

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/events/2019/nov/celebrating-childrens-rights-ucl>

Photography by Jamie Smith and Jan Cullen