

## CARJ LIVERPOOL ELEPHANT PROJECT

The Elephant Project was part-funded by the Fr Austin Smith Fund and the Catholic Association for Racial Justice, Liverpool Branch.

Our partner schools, St Clare's, St Vincent de Paul's, and St Vincent's School for the Blind were given 4 feet long model elephants. They were purchased from Wild in Art ([www.wildinart.co.uk](http://www.wildinart.co.uk)) who also donated paints and pens to decorate with the CARJ themes of racial justice & community.

### St Vincent de Paul's RC School, Liverpool

We began developing our ideas at the start of the academic year but explored the following areas first: Elephants' appearance, habitat, strength, intelligence, symbolism (in different cultures) and how they are represented in media (TV, film, books etc).

The children sketched elephants from photographs and images (we weren't able to go to the zoo or on safari!) and they also had a go at drawing the elephant sculpture itself as a blank canvas.

We discussed elephant textures and shape and how we might develop these into patterns in our future designs.

We found out lots of different and surprising facts about elephants which naturally led to the children making small fact file booklets.

We talked a lot about how to connect all this information with our school and a prominent theme seemed to emerge on the topic of family. After exploring and discussing how some existing elephant sculptures have been painted and exhibited, the children went on to create their own designs on elephant outlines.



They considered symbols that might represent elements of their school journey e.g starting school, growing, learning and eventually moving on, as well as school colours, school badge, faith and so on. You'll see from the pictures that this has begun to be shown through the image of a younger tree starting to blossom on one side of the elephant and a more mature tree on the other side. The elephant is still work in progress but it's getting there! Sooling Pickavance

### St Clare's RC Primary School, Liverpool

We chose the theme 'elephants live and work as a community'.

Some children from years 5 and 6 have worked really hard after school this half term to paint the elephant and have thoroughly enjoyed seeing it transform.

At the base of our elephant (his legs) we have painted different families as these are the stable core of our school community.

We also painted St. Clare's church to represent our community and the Wavertree sign to represent the part we play in our local community. Our wreath of hands represents working together and mimics how elephants follow each other, head to tail, across lands.



Our school motto is 'Let our light shine'. We shine as a beacon in our community and this is represented with the flames and words displayed at the front of the elephant.

## St Vincent's School for the Blind

The arrival of the elephant caused great excitement, the young boy who first encountered him was absolutely amazed, and with wide eyes, announced 'he's albino, just like me!'

And so, even though a great number of beautiful designs were submitted by pupils and staff, it was decided to keep the elephant white. For a while he stood in the classroom, and somehow began to be part of the class, he was included in the register, then was greeted every morning, and hugged good-bye every afternoon.

The pupils were drawn to sit with him during story times, and in PHSE when we discussed wellbeing. He became a calming influence when individual pupils became upset, they were comforted by his presence.

The time came to commence the decoration of the elephant, some worries were expressed that when he was done, he may be moved out of our classroom. This gave a perfect opportunity to explore the issues of dealing with change and moving on in a positive way. Then the concern of the young boy with Albinism, who was able to express for the first time in school, his feeling of being 'different' and 'odd', yet felt comforted by the elephant being 'the same as me'. This is the moment when the connection to the elephant made such an impact on the life of a child who had been struggling to deal with his identity. Without the white elephant this may have become detrimental to his mental wellbeing.

So off we went out into the yard, to splash the white paint about. Great team work and lots of fun was had, and a big mess made. The elephant was then named Snowy.

Within lessons the classes were learning about:

The types and locations of elephants

The habitats they live in

The vocabulary linked to elephants

The sounds they make

Their way of life

Being endangered

Their place in cultural beliefs

Stories from different cultures

Children's stories featuring elephants

Writing our own elephant stories

Elephant songs and poems.

How we can make a difference to the future of the elephants

Snowy was slowly and carefully decorated with a bright coloured blanket and head dress, and adorned with multi-coloured jewels.

The school and the curriculum were greatly enhanced by the introduction of Snowy the elephant. Being part of this project was of benefit to specific individual pupils, and brought a point of interest and shared involvement to the class. The fact that through this experience, difference was explored and celebrated in a positive manner, made it so very valuable. Mrs Janet Gallagher QTVI



**Catholic Association for Racial Justice. 9 Henry Road, Manor House, London, N4 2LH**

+44 (0) 208 802 8080 [info@carj.org.uk](mailto:info@carj.org.uk) <https://www.carj.org.uk/>