

Case Study: Norman Gate School, Andover

Who was the project for?

The Pageturners Project at Norman Gate School was run for a group of year 5 and 6 boys who attend this special primary school in Hampshire, for pupils with a range learning disabilities.

What did we do?

The school chose to run a themed Pageturners Project, The Hilarious Books Experience. A series of four one hour sessions were run for the group as an after school project. The aims of the project were to:

- To engage the group with some funny stories and as a result with literacy and books.
- To provide activities which promote self-esteem for the young people
- To develop group work skills through fun activities
- To develop emotional literacy in line with SEAL outcomes
- To provide a fun and creative after school experience for pupils
- To encourage the view that books can be fun
- To use a range of fun and interesting ways to bring the book to life for the group and to draw out their understanding of the story and its themes.

The group chose a book from a selection of three by voting. They were introduced to the three books by looking at the covers, hearing an extract and being introduced to the main characters. The four sessions were then based around the book they selected. The group chose Horrid Henry and as the book was made up of four short stories, a different story was read aloud each week followed by a range of related games, discussion and arts-based activities.

Some of the activities we undertook were:

- Creating comedy characters using some of the drama props.
- Hot-seating with a Horrid Henry puppet.
- Horrid Henry related discussion based games – linking aspects of the story to their own lives and thinking about what they would do etc.
- Creating some of the Horrid Henry characters from scrap and devising a new story situation for Horrid Henry.
- Creating a campsite from scrap (linked to the story “Horrid Henry goes camping”).

- Drama and role play.
- Collage themed around one of the stories.
- Horrid Henry pass the parcel with drama challenges and evaluation at the end of the project.

What were the challenges?

The group were very engaged and enthusiastic about the project which was a great start. The low literacy levels were a bit of a challenge, but it was easily worked around. They were mostly willing to give all the activities a go (although one boy was not so keen on making things) and they did struggle with team work on a few occasions. The group loved Horrid Henry and were very keen on drama and role play. One of the challenges was to encourage them to be just as enthusiastic about the other activities! Choosing short stories to work with each week was perfect for this group as they would have struggled to maintain interest in a whole book over the four weeks.

What were the outcomes/feedback?

As a group we read through the whole book and they all said they enjoyed it a lot. Some had read it at home too. One boy had gone on to buy more Horrid Henry books to read at home. The group engaged with the story every week and listened to it being read aloud whilst undertaking an activity (collage etc) to help aid concentration and not get distracted by each other.

The group particularly enjoyed the drama, dressing up and role play - creating stories and using their own imaginations. They loved the fact that the project was meant to be hilarious and they laughed a lot during the story reading and activities. They really liked when the Horrid Henry hand puppet was used and enjoyed asking Henry questions and also they enjoyed having a go at "being horrid henry" and answering the questions on his behalf.

In the evaluation at the end, the group said they had enjoyed everything but especially the pass the parcel, the drama and hearing the story. One boy said he'd particularly enjoyed choosing a book at the beginning.

Feedback from the school was that the group had really enjoyed taking part in the project.