

# NEWS

## BEHIND THE SCENES AT A PRIMARY SCHOOL NATIVITY



P2 pupils at Euston Street Primary School Aaliyah and Eva who played the roles of Mary and the narrator in the nativity

# The greatest story ever told ... by class of 2017

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**It's that time of year when parents move heaven and earth to ensure they are in a prime position to watch with pride as their children sing their hearts out at school nativities across the Province.**

And yesterday the NewsLetter was given an access all areas pass at Euston Street Primary School in east Belfast to see what goes on behind the scenes in producing what for many families is the highlight of the festive period.

Sarah McCormick was there to see her five-year-old daughter Sophie perform in the P2 Nativity yesterday morning.

She said: "I knew all the songs before I came. Sophie has been singing them in the house for weeks."

Sophie's grandmother Sharon Toner was also at the performance. She said: "It was quite emotional to see her up on stage. She was great, they

all were. It was amazing to see how well they knew the words and the actions to all the songs."

Over the past week Euston Street PS has hosted nativities for P3, P2, and a joint performance for P1 and nursery children.

Principal John Armstrong said by breaking the performances down by year group it meant ticketing was not an issue and all parents were afforded a good view in the school assembly hall to see their children on a stage that was not overcrowded.

In terms of the religious sensitivities of putting on a nativity which features the story of the birth of Jesus Christ, Mr Anderson said: "Whilst we have a Christian ethos we are neither Protestant nor Catholic. Any child is welcome to abstain from taking part in the nativity based on their beliefs."

"We have over 30% newcomers at the school representing around 11 nationalities, which is fabulous."

According to the Department of Education the term 'newcomer' is used to refer a pupil who does not have sat-



**'It hasn't been too bad this year although some years it's stressful'**

**Gillian Kee**

Pictured (right) with fellow P2 teacher Tanya McNeill

isfactory language skills to participate fully in the school curriculum and does not have a language in common with the teacher.

Mr Armstrong said: "We think the nativity allows teachers to introduce important parts of the curriculum in terms of RE, music and drama."

Teacher Gillian Kee, who helped put together the P2 nativity said: "We kept it simple

and started rehearsing early enough during music time and personal development time.

"We built up gradually and then in the last few weeks it's been a bit busier. We've enjoyed it, it hasn't been too bad this year although some years it's stressful."

Classroom assistants helped with the sets and the costumes are brought in by children while some belong to school, a collection of outfits which has been built up over the years.

Mrs Kee said: "I've been told that a child has to use more cognitive skills when they're doing something like this than other activities because they're studying actively rather than passively."

"Their self-esteem is raised so much by being on stage taking part."

Five-year-old Eva, who was a narrator in the nativity, said she had lots of lines to learn but she did not find it difficult.

Aaliyah, also aged five, who played Mary, said she loved being on stage. "My mummy, my granny and people from my youth club Ledley Hall came to see me," she said.

## PRINCIPAL FASCINATED



The underground part of Euston Street school

## School's rich history in its underground rooms and corridors

Although relatively new to Euston Street Primary School, principal John Armstrong is fascinated by the school's rich history, including a series of underground rooms and corridors which once housed a public library.

Mr Armstrong, who joined the school in May of this year, said: "I might be fairly new here but the school has been here a very long time."

"This building was built in 1925 but we've got our hands on photos of the school dating back to 1909."

"We're trying to establish exactly where the old school was, whether it was on this site or somewhere nearby."

Euston Street Primary School is situated between the Woodstock and Castlereagh

Roads at Redcar Street and Ardgowan Street.

Mr Armstrong said: "Underneath the school used to be a public library which closed in the 1990s. The Northern Ireland Model Railway Club now meet here twice a week."

"It's great that it's still being used regularly."

"We use some of the rooms down below for storage but because it's below the ground it is susceptible to flooding. It can be quite eerie when you're down there on your own."

Euston Street Primary School has 360 pupils and 17 teachers from nursery up to P7.

"The school is growing rapidly to the point we are almost at capacity," Mr Armstrong added.



# Christmas

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