

Powerful Choices



Knife Crime Project Case Study

Bigfoot were thrilled to have worked in collaboration with the Federation of Heavers Farm and Selsdon Primary Schools earlier this term, to create a new assembly and workshop programme, **Powerful Choices**, for KS2 pupils.

Aims, objectives and outcomes

The overall aim of the project was to work with KS2 pupils and their teachers through an early intervention approach to understanding key messages around the topic of knife crime, gang violence and keeping safe. Bigfoot worked closely with the Federation to ensure that the programme had carefully planned aims and outcomes, allowing pupils to explore this important topic within a safe and supportive framework.

The project supported pupils to:

- Understand how to keep themselves and others safe
- Recognise and manage risk and difficult situations
- Manage friendships and peer pressure
- Understand respect and how to have respectful relationships
- Understand the law around and consequences of carrying knives
- Explore the immediate and far-reaching consequences of knife crime and gang violence on the victim, the perpetrator, their families and the wider community
- Identify how to access support and who can help them
- Have difficult conversations with their peers and adults

Learning Outcomes:

- To be able to demonstrate a basic understanding of the consequences of knife crime
- To be able to put into practice how to show respect for others and themselves through a variety of communication methods
- To feel confident how to have difficult conversations with their peers and adults
- To know where to access support and help about issues concerning knife crime and other, wider issues

The Assembly

Bigfoot worked with Josephine Starte, an award winning script writer and member of BAFTA Connect, to create a powerful and impact narrative that used a sensitive and creative approach to explore the aims and anticipated outcomes. All KS2 pupils at both schools participated in the resulting 45 minute interactive assembly, facilitated by the brilliant Adrian Benn, Bigfoot's Lead Educator. The objective of the assembly was to introduce sensitive issues and subject matter in a safe and creative environment. It was our intention for the assembly to be a starting point for future conversations and in-depth work around the issues explored, allowing the whole school community to have a shared understanding and topic knowledge.

The narrator, Adrian, introduced pupils to the fictional story of 11 year old Gabriel, who has recently struggled with making some difficult choices about the friends he is spending time with. He has been feeling pressure to join in on some behaviour he doesn't like, especially as his friends have started talking about knives, and he knows the pressure will only get worse. Sometimes Gabriel finds it hard to talk about his worries to the grown ups in his life; he doesn't know where to start and he doesn't want to let them down.

As Gabriel considers these decisions, suddenly a Magical Phone appears! It has the power to provide messages and advice from the future, from the important trusted grown ups in Gabriel's life. In one message Gabriel will hear from a future where he chooses to stay in the group, and in the next message he'll hear from a future where he makes a different choice. This help Gabriel choose what to do, perhaps?

Pupils were encouraged to reflect upon and discuss key issues throughout, working together to explore the various choices Gabriel has to make. The assembly included spoken word, brilliant character illustrations and voiceovers, bringing the story to life. We were overwhelmed with how maturely and carefully the children responded to Gabriel's story, offering thoughtful suggestions about the choices Gabriel could make. You could hear a pin drop!

Bigfoot Adrian evaluated that:

The reception from the young people to the assembly and workshop was phenomenal; how quickly they invested into the main characters journey but also in discussions afterwards about how they would help themselves and others make positive choices for their own futures. Programmes dealing with these issues have traditionally been targeted at teenagers and of course that's important, but having a programme like Powerful Choices that talks directly to younger people in a honest but sensitive way is a crucial part in reducing the problems connected to knife crime.

The Workshops

All Year 5 and 6 pupils in both schools then participated in follow up workshops. The workshop gave pupils the opportunity to explore the key issues raised in the assembly in more depth, consolidating their understanding of the laws surrounding and consequences of knife crime. They worked together to explore some of the situations raised in the assembly, considering Gabriel's choices and possible consequences. Activities encouraged pupils to explore how to have positive, respectful relationships with their peers, as well as how to have difficult conversations with adults and how they could access support.

The workshops used a range of drama skills as vehicles to explore the key issues, including vocal and physical warmups and games, tableaux, hot seating, role plays, devising, physical theatre and movement.

The INSET's

Staff from both also schools also participated in two 90-minute twilight INSET sessions with Bigfoot's INSET Educator, Christie Peto. The aim of the INSET sessions was to give all staff members an insight into the work explored during the assembly and workshops and to enable appropriate and impactful work following Bigfoot's input.

During the first INSET session, staff had the opportunity to practically experience, and discuss the methodology and facilitation of activities included in the assembly and workshops. The session explored how to continue the work in the classroom and the wider school community, considering practical and achievable follow up work. Throughout the session staff were signposted to further guidance, information and resources.

Christie planned the second INSET session in response to staff's feedback from the activities explored during the first session, which highlighted topics and skills which staff would find most useful to take back into the classroom. Aims included:

- To workshop further activities that can be facilitated with young people about how to have difficult conversations with their peers
- To consider activities and methods that can be used to engage less confident pupils
- To identify how a range of drama skills can be adapted for different ages and abilities
- To explore the use of puppetry in tackling sensitive issues and conversations

Staff responded very positively to both INSET sessions, with teachers telling us that:

The drama activities showed that teachers are able to be more creative and that they can do it. They were beneficial and adaptable for different key stages.

Bigfoot Educator Christie reflected that:

Many of the teachers seemed to gain a lot by exploring sensitive issues through the medium of Drama. It was really interesting to see how they were thinking that of applying the various creative activities to their area of work, and for them to see that it's perhaps not as daunting as they first thought it might be.

Planning and Research

Bigfoot put together an experienced and skilled team of writers and Educators to realise the schools aim and intended impact of this project. We liaised with the school at every stage, sending drafts of scripts and plans for edits and approval, to ensure that the pupils and staff would have the most beneficial experience possible. We carried out extensive and thorough research from key organisations including [Fearless](#), [The Ben Kinsella Trust](#) and [Childline](#), to ensure that content was appropriate and relevant.

The Resource Pack

Bigfoot put together a comprehensive resource pack to accompany the programme, enabling staff to continue the work with the pupils following our visit and ensuring that the projects impact was sustainable and long lasting. It included the workshop plan, the story

synopsis, detailed information about the law surrounding knife crime, gangs, the Bystander Approach, helpline information and further information and links to a range of information and organisations. We also included a range of ideas for follow up activities in classroom as well as printable spoken word extracts and visual character templates.

Finally!

Collaborating on this project with The Federation of Heavers Farm and Selsdon Primary Schools has been a wonderful experience for everyone involved and we are looking forward to the possibility of extending the project next year. Watch this space!

We are delighted to be able to be invite more schools to book this programme next term - we have a very limited number of dates available with our Senior Educator Adrian Benn, so please [get in touch](#) if you would like to find out more. Download the programme flier [HERE!](#)

If you would be interested in finding out how we could create a similar bespoke project with your school please don't hesitate to [contact us!](#)

