

# Why Book A Bigfoot PSHE Workshop?; A Case Study

Bigfoot has been proudly providing schools across the country with creative learning opportunities for nearly 25 years. We believe that the arts can have a transformative effect on pupils' experiences in schools, helping them to access areas of the curriculum imaginatively whilst encouraging teamwork, positive communication, improved confidence and key oracy skills.



## INTRODUCTION

We have a workshop to suit nearly every Key Stage and every topic. Our range of programmes include 45 minute assemblies or performances for large audiences, hour long workshops for class groups, PPA teacher cover sessions, day long programmes for selected pupils, week long performing arts courses, after school Teacher workshops and INSETs as well as breakfast, lunch time and after school clubs.

Schools use us a special visit to kick start or celebrate a topic, to provide deeper learning experiences for specific curriculum areas, or as regular opportunities for creative learning within their timetables. We also work with other organisations to create bespoke projects and training sessions in a variety of settings.

Whilst we deliver a range of storytelling, performance and literacy programmes, a large proportion of our work focuses on the PSHE curriculum. Many schools regularly incorporate our programmes into their Health and Wellbeing, Relationships, and Living in the Wider World programmes of study, and our assemblies and workshops are especially popular for Anti Bullying Week, Safer Internet Day, Children's Mental Health Week and Transition activities.

We appreciate that the funding constraints on schools have never been tighter, whilst simultaneously the expectations and breadth of responsibility are constantly expanding. We are truly grateful to every school that chooses to spend their limited budgets on a Bigfoot workshop, and we never underestimate the responsibility of working with pupils and the impact our Educators can have on their learning and experiences in school and the wider world.

To that end, we thought it would be helpful for us to explain more explicitly the benefits of working with Bigfoot; the range of opportunities and programmes available are easy to see on our website, but why should a school book a Bigfoot PSHE workshop? How do we work with schools? What is the evidence and benefit to our approach? And how is our work sustainable?

## OUR RANGE OF PSHE PROGRAMMES

***Schools should develop oracy and PSHE programmes which give children the chance to debate key topics which affect their lives. Children should be supported to learn about these issues and to debate them with their pen a regular basis.<sup>1</sup>***

Bigfoot began exploring PSHE issues back in 2005 in response to requests from a collection of Wandsworth schools to deliver Transition workshops, supporting Year 6 pupils as they prepare for Secondary school. Our various Transition programmes continue to be one of core PSHE programmes some 20 years later. As the years have passed, we have carefully built upon our range of programmes; every new programme is created in response to our communication with the schools with whom we work, and thoughtfully researched, piloted and evaluated before being delivered in schools across the country.

Our current Primary programmes include assemblies and workshops on Anti Bullying, Online Safety, Transition and Change, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Refugee Week and more recently Knife Crime Prevention.

We have a range of Big Debate workshops for Secondary Schools which explore Anti Bullying, Mental Health and The Refugee Crisis, with a range of new topics in development for 2025.

In the academic year 2024-25 we are developing Anti Racism and Diversity, Equality and Inclusion workshops for Primary Schools, and we are extending our Knife Crime Prevention work for KS3 pupils.

## OUR APPROACH

***Drama, as an art form, can be transformational for children, young people and their teachers. It is a process that explores what it is to be human in learning contexts that are relevant to local, national or global communities.<sup>2</sup>***

Dr Geoff Readman, Chair of National Drama

All of Bigfoot's PSHE programmes support areas of the PSHE curriculum, and in line with the Education Act 1996, enable young people to develop their values and beliefs by exploring a variety of issues with a neutral approach and without bias.

Our work is thoroughly researched and evidenced, in line with the most up to date curriculum guidance and policies. We are members of the PSHE Association and Associate Members of the Anti Bullying Alliance, regularly attending conferences, meetings and training to ensure that the content and approach of our work is relevant for schools and pupils. We regularly consult with specialist organisations to evidence and support our programmes.

Within all our PSHE programmes, we provide clarity for the legal context of issues being explored, ensuring that we promote healthy and safe behaviour throughout our work.

We always use factual evidence to support the issues being explored; using audio and film excerpts where possible, as well as statistics and direct quotes from relevant reports and guidance.

Bigfoot's approach is to provide a safe, creative forum in which children and young people can openly discuss their views. The activities used are carefully curated and planned to ensure that pupils are never singled out, pressurised or made to feel uncomfortable. Our aim is never to shock or scare pupils, but to stimulate discussion and debate in a safe and supported environment with their peers. Our workshops provide opportunities for pupils to explore issues in small groups as well as a whole class, and we ensure that pupils are provided with balanced information to help them to form their own opinions.

All of workshops embrace and celebrate inclusion and diversity and our Educators make sure that bullying and discrimination are not tolerated in any form. Discussions and activities are managed carefully with a non-judgemental approach and ensuring that incorrect or hurtful assumptions are not made.



## OUR APPROACH continued...

Within our planning processes we refer to the PSHE Association's guidance on 'Handling complex issues safely in the PSHE classroom', ensuring that we:

***...approach all lessons with the assumption that at least one pupil could have direct experience of the topic being discussed, or find it sensitive for another reason and should plan their language use, resources and activities accordingly.***<sup>3</sup>

We are therefore always sensitive to the needs and experiences of pupils, ensuring that children's wellbeing is at the heart of all our programmes.

Every workshop is carefully researched, planned, piloted and evaluated to ensure that the range of activities that we use to explore issues have clear aims and outcomes, enabling teachers to clearly see how they enhance their classroom learning and whole school approach to PSHE.

At the beginning of every workshop Educators lay out clear, safe rules and boundaries to ensure that there aren't any inappropriate disclosures or behaviour towards other pupils. The nature of the issues being explored are carefully explained, with guidance for pupils about what to do if they find anything in the workshop upsetting or difficult.

Educators discuss with pupils the support systems within their school, as well as exploring how to identify trusted adults and how to have tricky conversations with grown-ups. At the end of every PSHE workshop we refer to helplines and further support for pupils, ensuring that all pupils are aware of how they access reliable support both inside and outside school.

All of our PSHE programmes use drama techniques and storytelling practice to enable pupils to safely explore and connect with sensitive, complex and sometimes unsettling issues. By using fictional characters and narratives, pupils are free to safely explore their understanding, views and opinions, allowing them opportunities to reflect on what they have seen and heard and how it has made them feel. Such 'distancing techniques' stimulate hypothetical discussion and debate, enabling pupils to engage more objectively with their learning.

## BENEFITS TO WORKING WITH OUTSIDE PROVIDERS

The PSHE Association states that:

***When used well, visitors can add interest and expertise to enhance an embedded PSHE education curriculum...They bring 'novelty' — we know the brain recalls novelty. Well planned sessions can therefore add emphasis to important learning elements.***<sup>4</sup>

Schools regularly use our PSHE programmes to enhance, challenge and extend classroom teaching, and teachers tell us that a Bigfoot visit can be fundamental to embedding pupils learning and understanding of complex issues. For example, Harris Primary Academy Beckenham Green shared the following after a Bigfoot workshop for Anti Bullying Week 2023:

This programme is a safe haven for creativity, where students can freely express themselves without fear of judgment and understand bullying comprehensively.

Within the Children's Commissioner's 2024 The Big Ambition Report, five outcomes are identified to ensure that children are safe, healthy, happy, learning and engaged in their community. The report sets out that in order to achieve this, the following ambitions must be supported 5:

- 1. Every child feels empowered to speak out about issues that they care about.***
- 2. Every child's thoughts, feelings, views, and ambitions are listened to.***





## BENEFITS TO WORKING WITH OUTSIDE PROVIDERS continued...

Whilst having outside visitors can add focus and novelty to learning, the overwhelming impact of a Bigfoot visit is to provide schools with an opportunity to find out what their pupils really think and feel about various issues, deepening and going beyond their classroom learning.

We work carefully to ensure that teachers and support staff are very much included in our workshops, by giving them a creative lens through which to listen to their pupils' worries, thoughts and feelings. For example, St Edmund's Catholic Primary School recently said of our Powerful Choices Knife Crime Prevention programme:

***The children left feeling empowered, informed and that they had been heard...The programme gives the children a voice that it is essential for adults to listen to. It is informative, sensitive and empowering....***

Following our visits, teachers are then able to identify areas for further work and targeted support both within and outside of the classroom.



## WORKING WITH SCHOOLS

Bigfoot work closely with schools to reflect their ethos, ensuring that our workshops enhance the aims and objectives of every school's PSHE schemes of work.

We take great pride in collaborating with pupils, teachers and schools to deliver relevant, sustainable and effective content, adapting and differentiating our programmes and delivery to meet the specific requirements of each school, ensuring that our work is as impactful as possible.

We work carefully to work within each school's safeguarding and confidentiality protocols and policies and provide excellent communication with schools before and during and after our visit.

We evaluate our work thoroughly and are exceptionally proud of the outstanding feedback that we regularly receive. We publish feedback and termly round ups of our programmes on our website, enabling schools to gain a greater insight into the value of our work.

## OUR EDUCATORS

Bigfoot PSHE Educators are experienced facilitators who are trained and skilled in exploring sensitive issues safely. Educators attend induction and training courses and are fully vetted and DBS checked. All Educators regularly attend Safeguarding training and also participate in specialised training to support their delivery of specific programmes, such as the Anti Bullying Alliance CPD training and NSPCC Online Safety training.



Educators are skilled in creating rapport with pupils so that children and young people can have discussions and share their feelings in a safe learning environment.

They are practised at engaging pupils in activities which help pupils to explore their values and attitudes and to share their feelings and opinions, whilst also considering those of others.

We regularly monitor and assess Educators practice and evaluate their programme delivery to ensure the highest quality of provision.

## SUSTAINABILITY

A Bigfoot visit can be an integral part of a rich and varied curriculum, as indicated by Ofsted to contribute strongly to a pupil's personal development, supporting pupils to:

***...become responsible, respectful and active citizens who are able to play their part and become actively involved in public life as adults. 6***

We view our PSHE programmes as an opportunity to open up a conversation between pupils, classes, teachers and the wider school community. We encourage pupils to use their voices to share with their peers and families the work they have explored and created in our sessions.

The majority of our programmes are accompanied by comprehensive resource packs or handouts, which include useful information and signposting to a wide range of support and information services. A range of follow up activities are provided that can be implemented in the classroom to consolidate and further learning, with practical tips for teachers about how to explore issues creatively.



**For more information about our programmes or to discuss how your school can work with Bigfoot Arts Education please visit our website [HERE](#) or email us [HERE](#) or call us on 0800 448 0864. We'd love to hear from you!**

## WHAT SCHOOLS SAY ABOUT US...

***"An excellent, age-appropriate programme to introduce difficult issues. Takes a very challenging subject and pitches it at just the right level - takes into consideration transition from Y6 into 7 and is very honest about the "human emotion" impact on the choices we make." (Yardley Primary School)***

***"Outstanding! It was a programme that was straight speaking, boldly honest and full of respect. The children are encouraged to share what they think and mean in a way which took all the adults who work with them by surprise." (John Scurr Primary School)***

***"Incredibly entertaining with lots of learning opportunities. The children thoroughly enjoyed the assembly and the workshop after, they were able to demonstrate their hard work and teamwork skills with the support of the programme leader." (St Edmund's Catholic Primary School)***

***"This exceeded my expectations. It was engaging, high-quality, exciting, accessible." (Holy Trinity and S. Silas Primary School)***

***"The sessions we had this week were outstanding - possibly the best we've ever had. I was lucky enough to catch the Y6 session at the end of the day and I am so glad that I did. Both Bigfooters were fabulous; the humour and energy they brought to every minute of the session was infectious. They were so relatable to our pupils and valued every comment made by them. The pupils were left feeling empowered to make a change - we can't thank you enough." (Beaver Community Primary School)***

***"The anti bullying programme was humorous and entertaining. Both children and adults were very engaged with it!" (Rushmore Primary School)***