

Cathedral fills with symbolic clay figures

LUCY Claridge ruined a t-shirt creating her clay model – but she felt it was worth it.

The clay figure made by the 11-year-old from Alverstone C of E Junior School is just one of more than 1,000 unique sculptures that went on display in Portsmouth Cathedral over the summer.

Year 6 pupils from C of E schools across Portsmouth and Winchester dioceses each created their own individual clay sculpture in the style of British artist Anthony Gormley. They then brought their figures to their local cathedral for a Leavers' Service to mark the end of primary school – creating mass art installations at both Portsmouth and Winchester Cathedrals.

The theme of the year-long schools project was 'Gamechangers', as pupils were invited to think about those who make a difference to our society – and how they could be 'gamechangers' too. Anthony Gormley was just one example of someone who had done so in the art world.

"I didn't wear an apron to make my clay figure, so I ruined my t-shirt – but I don't mind," said Lucy. "I love the fact that each of the figures is a certain height, and they all look so good together."

Our cathedral hosted more than 1,300 Year 6 pupils over four days of activity workshops and Leavers' Services during a week towards the end of term. Those services resulted in hundreds of clay figures standing in the ancient east end of our cathedral until the end of July.



(l to r): Abie Boursiquot-Coburn, Sasha Morgan and Kate Jenkins, all aged 11, from St Matthew's C of E Primary School in Blackmoor, with some of the clay sculptures that individual pupils left in our cathedral

Diocesan director of education Jeff Williams told pupils: "If you look at the statues, you'll see that – like us – every single one of them is different! On some of them we can even see your fingerprints. They have been moulded just like you. When people look at these statues, they will be inspired!"

The Year 6 pupils from church schools across south-east Hampshire and the Isle of Wight came to our cathedral for one of the four days during that week. They were given the chance to take part in workshops during the morning,

including creating wire angels and prayer pyramids, learning more about singing, and exploring the cathedral's heritage.

'Don't forget that you have been made to be a gamechanger!'

Then there was a Leavers' Service on each afternoon, during which pupils and school staff joined in worship songs, led prayers and received candles they can light



(Top left): individual clay figures were brought forward for Bishop Jonathan to bless as part of the Leavers' Service; (above): Bishop Jonathan tells the children about England star Jude Bellingham; (left): the Year 6 pupils took part in a series of workshops ahead of the service itself

during the next year when they gather for collective worship.

Bishop Jonathan led two of the four services, blessing clay figures as they were brought to the front.

He talked to the children about Jude Bellingham's role as a gamechanger for the England men's football team. He asked the 11-year-olds who might have been a gamechanger in Jude Bellingham's life, including his parents, friends and those who helped to develop his skills.

"I can't be a gamechanger like Jude Bellingham, but we can all

be gamechangers in our own way," he said. "Look at your hands and feet. I believe God gave us hands to act kindly towards others and feet to move to those who need help. When you move to your new schools, don't forget that you have been made to be a gamechanger!"

Eleven-year-old Amelia-Mae Allen from St George's C of E Primary School in Portsmouth, said: "I like how the statues are all different. I liked making mine a lot, as I like the feel of the clay. Seeing them all displayed here is great – they look like a real crowd!"

Martha Edwards, 11, from Alverstone C of E Junior School said, "My

favourite task was the 'Lego build challenge', where you sit back to back with your partner and one of you has instructions on how to build a model, and the other person has to make the model just off what you tell them. I had to give instruction to my friend. It was like what you have to do in real life – communicate."

Classmate Alfie Winch, 11, said, "I enjoyed the singing the most. My favourite one we're doing is 'You shall go out with joy' because it's so much fun to sing!"

And Bernie Jones, 11, from St Alban's C of E Primary School in Havant, said: "My favourite was the pyramid building, where we had to write prayers on the sides of your pyramid. I've written prayers for all the things I'm thankful for."

To see more photos from the Leavers' Services, see: www.portsmouth.anglican.org/leavers