

Schools inspired by our creative sheep project



It was a surreal moment for passers-by as they saw a flock of colourful, fibreglass sheep appearing to munch the grass outside our cathedral.

It was the climax of our Ewe Matter project, which saw the decorated sheep flock to our cathedral after being painted in our C of E schools.

Around 60 lifesize sheep had been distributed to church schools across Portsmouth and Winchester dioceses at the start of this year. Children and staff were asked to decorate them over the past few months in a way that reflected their school's identity and ethos.

They were then asked to bring their sheep back to Leavers' Services for Year 6 pupils in Portsmouth Cathedral, Winchester Cathedral and Christchurch Priory.

So that's why hundreds of 10 and 11-year-olds from C of E schools in south-east Hampshire and the Isle of Wight came to three separate services in our cathedral during a week in July.

They enjoyed a day of sheep-related workshops and a child-friendly service as a way of giving thanks for their time at their C of E primary school and preparing themselves to move on to secondary school.

The decorated sheep arrived at the cathedral via cars, school coaches and minibuses. Five came across the Solent from Isle of Wight schools on the deck of a Wightlink ferry.

And Baa-bara from Alverstoke C of E Junior School came across Portsmouth Harbour on the Gosport ferry. She stood in a pen with mock grass, which was created by carpenter Paul Dight, father of Year 6 teacher Sammy Swainston.

"We needed something so that we could bring the sheep over from Gosport and my dad designed a sheep pen on wheels," she said.

"There's a picket fence around it and Baa-bara stands on some fake grass. The children from our art club designed the decoration for her, which reflects our school's values of Love, Hope and Grace, and every Year 6 child got involved in the decoration."

Headteacher Graham Cutter said: "It's great for our pupils to see that their sheep is part of a whole flock. They can feel part of the Gosport school community, but they don't always feel part of the community of C of E schools locally, and this project has helped with that."

Dominika Gumiela, 11, from Oakfield



Above: Dominika Gumiela, 11, from Oakfield C of E Primary School, in Ryde, with the 22 sheep brought to our cathedral; (left, from top): Bishop Christopher with some of the sheep; Eleanor Warringer, 10, prepares to bring Baa-bara on the Gosport ferry; pupils from Alverstoke C of E Junior School enjoy a workshop in the willow dome; and the Rev Richard Wharton tells the Parable of the Good Shepherd with the help of pupils from St Blasius C of E Academy in Shanklin

C of E Primary School in Ryde, on the Isle of Wight, said: "We've decorated half of our sheep, and next year's Year 6s from Arretton St George's School will complete it. Next year's Year 6s at Oakfield will complete the sheep that Arretton St George's started."

Over the course of the three days the number of decorated, fibreglass sheep at the cathedral increased, until all 22 were there for the third of the three Leavers' Services.

Each service followed a similar pattern, which included a procession of school banners, pupils explaining why they had decorated their sheep in a specific way, and children acting out the Parable of the Good Shepherd.

Bishop Christopher led the service on the Tuesday, while other senior clergy led the services on the other two days.

The sheep-related workshops before the services each day included a sheep trail around the cathedral, craft activities, a singing workshop

with choristers, and a visit to the willow chapel outside on Cathedral Green.

Jacob Compton, 11, from All Saints C of E Primary School in Freshwater, said: "I liked making our own sheep, and I liked the session when we made a shepherd's crook."

Ewe Matter was devised by Jeff Williams, director of education for Portsmouth and Winchester C of E dioceses. It's a way of linking parish churches and C of E schools across both dioceses.

The fibreglass sheep can be used by churchgoers who lead school assemblies on Biblical themes, and can be brought by schools when they visit local churches. They can even be used as part of science, English and RE lessons.

Education staff from Portsmouth and Winchester dioceses have devised Ewe Matter resources that can be used by schools as part of assemblies and the school curriculum.

The decorated sheep have now gone back to their schools so they can be used in future. For more details, see www.portsmouth.anglican.org/ewematter.



Sheep spends summer around town

THE sheep decorated by children at an Emsworth school spent the summer holidays travelling around the town.

Meadow, from St James C of E Primary School, visited churches of different denominations around Emsworth. And pupils were told to look out for him over the summer.

Headteacher Erika Biddlecombe said: "The Ewe Matter project was such a good idea. Our collective worship team actually decorated Meadow, but the whole school has been involved."

"It inspired us to have



St James Primary pupils read a poem in the service a 'sheep day' when all the classes did sheep activities. They learnt about sheep and made models they could take home.

"Our staff and pupils

were bowled over by the Leavers' Service. It was a really spiritually fulfilling experience, especially to see all the other church schools coming together like that."



Pupils from Horndean C of E Primary School tell those gathered for the Leavers' Service why they decorated their sheep as they did



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