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H2O
HOPE 2 OBAN

“Check It Out”

Oban 2009



Introduction

The idea of a 'Christian Focus Week' with Viz-a-Viz Ministries was initiated by Scripture Union Scotland's Argyll area Regional Worker, Martin Boyd, towards the end of 2008. Martin was introduced to Peter Bain, the Head Teacher at Oban High School, who agreed to hold a Christian Focus Week at the school.

The week of 9th November was finalised when the required £2,000 funding for the week was pledged through a combination of donations from the local ministers' fraternal fund, Oban church contributions, local businesses and Scripture Union Scotland.

The week's events were planned and timetabled between the 'Hope to Oban' (H₂O) team and Oban High School staff, including the Senior Leadership Team, the Religious and Moral Education Department, Learning Support and the Performing Arts Department.

The planning group constructed a wide-ranging programme for use in the high school and with primary 7 pupils, as well as putting together sessions for use with H₂O groups and at Glencruitten Hostel, a weekday home for young folks who live on the islands and remote, outlying rural areas.

What follows is an overview of the week's activities in Oban.



Assemblies

Throughout the week, pupils in S1 - S4 attended year group assemblies led by the Check It Out (CIO) team. Through music and drama, pupils engaged with themes like 'checking out the Christian faith', 'decision-making' and 'valuing each other.' Songs and sketches were always explained and were performed professionally. The team were flexible in their delivery and responded to feedback from staff and pupils. The team demonstrated a positive attitude throughout, both friendly and transparent, and both pupils and staff warmed to their presence in the school.

Religious and Moral Education

Throughout the week, the team led five RME sessions with S3 and S4 pupils. Alongside music, the CIO team presented a dramatisation of an auction house featuring the sale of an apparently valueless and damaged garden gnome. This was followed by a discussion on the worth of a person and question time where pupils could ask the team about their beliefs as Christians. The sessions went well with responses both real and challenging.



"I thought they were excellent in their presentation and professionalism. Before each lesson I spoke to them and told them what we were covering in class and they pitched it well and at the right level – very impressive. I also thought the message was clear and to the point. Interestingly, at the start of the week the pupils seemed to be suspicious of the group but by Wednesday all of my classes wanted to go see them – even the ones that had already done so. Would have them back in an instant!"

John Cassie, RME Teacher, Oban High School

Learning Support Session

Potentially the most challenging aspect for the CIO team during the week was being invited to lead team-building and drama with six young people from the Learning Support Department. The team spent time with the class teacher who explained the particular needs of each member of the group. This is what the class teacher thought of the team's session:

"They adapted their programme to suit the needs of that group and gave them an excellent mix of music, drama and team building. I appreciate that they were probably not used to working with such a small group, nor with such wide ranging abilities, but felt they overcame the challenge perfectly. The fact that we agreed to leave the session open ended, but used all the time available is an indication of how well the group were kept active, engaged and interested. From my point of view, much of the benefit came from having the group work with other people that they are not familiar with, so all in all, a great success – thanks for devoting an afternoon to such a small group."

Andy Thornton, Support Department teacher

Higher Music Group

Twelve pupils from S5 and S6 worked with the CIO team over five sessions, developing their musical skills and participating in small group work. Students divided into three distinct performance groups, combining traditional and contemporary sounds. The groups, each presented with the same chord sequence, worked together to compose their own performance piece. The distinctive end results created were both original and inspired, leaving a strong and positive impression on the members of the CIO team.



S1 / S2 Drama

Engaging with a cross-section of age groups is always a challenge, but was one which the CIO team took in their stride. They worked with pupils from music and drama classes from within the Performing Arts department, encouraging them to work in groups together to make themed 'snapshots' such as, 'on the beach' and 'the wedding'. A great time was had by all.

The sessions from the junior and senior school presented the team with their own sets of challenges, but with thorough team preparation and constructive use of review time, the sessions delivered confidently and effectively.

"All of our guys had a really good time last week. It was great how the Check It Out team were able to work across the year groups and adapt their delivery to suit whatever age/ability was with them at that time.

I really enjoyed the junior workshops and they were able to involve so much into the 50 minute workshop from drama to music to literacy to RE whilst delivering a powerful message. As we all embrace curriculum for excellence it was an excellent example of sharing and experiencing the four capacities and it certainly hit them all. Thanks again for a wonderful week.

Morvern McKerrel , Head of Performing Arts



Primary 7 Sessions

Working with P7s from the associated Primary schools, the Check It Out team used music and drama to encourage groups of more than forty children to consider the value and worth of each of us as individuals, and to think of that value in the context of a loving and creative God.

The team used a quiz as an effective means of engaging pupils in sessions with two local primary schools. Action songs were interspersed with chat and facts about the physiology of humans, all pertaining to the theme of the value of the individual.

These P7 events are often used as a helpful part of the transition process for P7 pupils with introductions from the secondary guidance staff and quizzes about the hopes and fears related to coming up to the secondary school.



Evening Sessions

H₂O were keen for the CIO team to share the experiences of their Christian faith with the young people in Oban. Some evening sessions were set aside for this, and these could be considered to be the most successful part of the week.

On the Tuesday evening, CIO joined the GFG (Games, Food and God) group, consisting of fourteen young people from P7 – S4 from a mixture of backgrounds. One GFG member asked the CIO team when and how they had become Christians. The team, one-by-one, shared their stories of how and why they chose to become Christians. The GFG folk sat and listened to these stories very well, showing a real interest in the accounts that were shared.



As the week progressed at the school, the CIO team's presence in the boarding hostel for island pupils was much-anticipated by the young folk. On one occasion, a crowd gathered around the team as they relaxed in the hostel; a guitar appeared and this was followed by some singing and music making from pupils and team. It was great to see the young people connecting with the team like this, and this was an important part of building upon the work that had already gone on at the high school during the week.



Concert Night

The young people looked forward to the concert all week, though it was a bit of an unknown to the H₂O team. The event had been well-promoted in the school throughout the week, but no-one was quite sure exactly how many people would show up on the night.



H₂O's Xplore group (with young people from S5 and S6) helped with some of the organisation on the night, assisting with door entry and half-time refreshments.

The queue started forming from around 6.15, and by the start of the concert, over 130 pupils had poured into the hall, all extremely excited. The team performed a few songs, such as 'Check-It-Out', 'Sitting on the Fence' and 'Free Runner', now well known to many in the audience from throughout the week. The 'Diversion' drama team also performed.

The Check It Out team set fun challenges, like challenging the young people to eat an After Eight mint from their head without using their hands, and they also gave people the opportunity to find out more about the Christian faith for themselves if they wanted to.

Post-visit, the H₂O team is now working with the young people who expressed interest to find out more about the Christian faith for themselves.

Contact Details

For more information about how 'Check It Out' weeks can help in the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence in Scottish schools, please contact your local SU staff member, whose contact details you can find on our website at <http://www.suscotland.org.uk/regional>.

Alternatively, you can contact Gordon Roy, SU Scotland's North Team Leader, by emailing him at Gordon.Roy@suscotland.org.uk, or phone 01577 842 006.