

ONE WORLD LINK

The Day of the African Child, June 2024, at St Paul's Primary School, Leamington

St Paul's Primary School was a noisy place on 7th June as some five hundred children participated in the Day of the African Child. The day started with the sound of African drums as the children from fourteen local schools paraded around the school field holding up banners proclaiming their links with schools in Bo, Sierra Leone.

After the parade the children gathered in a large marquee and heard about the origin of the Day of the African Child as a commemoration of the tragic day in 1976 when school children were killed in Soweto when protesting about their poor education. The marquee was completely silent as the children sat for a minute's reflection. They were told how the day also serves to celebrate children of Africa and this was the theme for the rest of the day as the children went off to workshops with an African flavour.



The sound of enthusiastic drumming came from two classrooms where they learnt basic techniques and rhythms on djembes. There was music in the hall where they were learning African dance moves. The marquee was filled with the sound of singing as the children practised the three songs for the day: "Tel am tenki", "Today is the African Child Day" and "You are my brother". There were drama workshops in two other classrooms where the children walked, crawled and slithered as African wild animals. In the field they kicked footballs, did jumps and threw bean bags; activities that may be found in African schools. Finally, in the quiet corner of the forest school, they listened to traditional African stories about Anansi, a very smart but mischievous spider who always got into trouble.



The day ended with a grand finale in the marquee with the happy sound of the children singing at the top of their voices and dancing energetically. One of the groups performed a drum routine. St Paul's Year 6 children spoke about the 222 million children in the world whose education has been disrupted or prevented by emergencies. St Paul's School have been studying UN Global Goal 12 - Sustainable Consumption and Production – and a group explained practical steps we should all be taking at home. Representatives of all our linked schools presented petitions to Cllr Jess Harrison asking the government to support foundational education in Africa which she will present to our MP after the general election. We were fortunate to have the Mayor of Leamington (Cllr Judith Clarke) and our former MP (Matt Western) to witness the event. They spoke of the joy of the occasion and the importance of education and the link.



One World Link is very grateful to Leamington Town Council for a generous grant that enabled this event to take place. We also thank our workshop leaders in dance (Aida Diop), drumming (Vieux Bakayoko and Ronnie Kirya of Beatfeet Drumming), storytelling (Jason Buck), drama (Lizzie of The Little People Drama Company and Helen Newbold of St Paul's) and sports (Pete Hawkins and Ava Barnes of St Paul's). This is the second time that St Paul's has hosted the Day of the African Child and their collaboration with Liz Garrett, our Education Coordinator, in the organisation and management of this complex event have been exceptional, for which we thank the Head, Matt Bown.

