

Getting creative

Students at our Sybil Elgar School have created an astonishing array of murals inspired by nature. Art teacher **Jo Noble** tells us more

How did the project start?

I met artist Ashley Davies when I worked in previous SEN schools. Ashley was an art educator at the Courtauld Institute, London, and I had taken my students to visit and take part in her inspiring workshops.

At Sybil Elgar School, we decided to start a project where the pupils would create large murals inspired by nature. Having got MDF board cut to size, Ashley 'primed' them, ready for the students to paint on their designs. Over several weeks, the students created colourful designs based on the topic of nature, using techniques such as stencilling, dabbing with a sponge and 'swoshing' with a brush.

What have the students enjoyed most?

They loved working on such a large scale... the boards were about 1.5m squared, so it was wonderful for the students to work on such a vast surface. They used acrylic paint, which has a vibrant hue and thicker texture. It is of a much higher quality than the poster paint used in the average art classroom. A lot of our learners have sensory issues, so the majority really enjoyed using these lovely thick paints in bright colours. I think, as well, they enjoyed having the freedom to 'make their mark' on the boards. Although the sessions were led by myself and Ashley, we let the students have a lot of freedom to express themselves.

Where will the murals be displayed?

Five will be attached to the walls of the playgrounds and two in the school front garden, on bespoke stands. The two in the front garden are double-sided, so not only can the staff and students enjoy the colourful designs, but passers-by can admire them, too!



Watch our video about this project and find out more about Sybil Elgar School at autism.org.uk/our-schools/sybil-elgar



New website resources for you

As part of our ambitious Autism Help programme, we are working on transforming our digital information and support so that we can reach more people and offer guidance on a greater range of subjects. This has been led by our Moonshot Vision and strategic aim of supporting all autistic individuals and their families to live a fulfilled life on their terms.

Over the summer, please visit our website and social media channels for details of new digital resources on: diagnosis; 'Ask Alice', the social care chatbot; an upgraded Online Community platform with new features; and - thanks to funding from Autism Central - a more comprehensive and accessible Autism Services Directory to help source local support.