

Following the star

children, families and the local community celebrating Christmas

3 - 4 years old, Whitehills Nursery School - NORTHAMPTON (ENGLAND)

Since participating in the BRIC project the children have become a familiar sight as they go on their regular walks around the neighbourhood. One December evening, the children were especially excited to have the chance to lead their families and friends along one of their familiar routes –in the dark! Having come across a donkey, shepherds, kings and angels they finally found baby Jesus asleep in a manger in a neighbour's front garden, with Mary and Joseph looking after him. We all returned to the Nursery garden to warm up with hot chocolate and mulled wine round the fire pit whilst watching a slide show projected on the Nursery building of the children's experiences that term. It was a fantastic opportunity for everyone involved to interact in a relaxed and exciting environment- there was a great community spirit! When we first started BRIC we were enthusiastic, but as we already spent a lot of time outdoors we thought we would be further developing familiar themes. What we had not anticipated was how radically our perspective would change.



It was SO dark... I've never been on a walk in the dark before - can we do it again? Can we come back to nursery every night?



Being outside now had a different focus – we were outside but we were positively trying to engage with our local community. This had happened by chance in the past but now we and the children were feeling the need to make this more of the focus. As a consequence our local residents have become much more confident in engaging with the children and are showing a great interest in what we do. The children are feeling they are a real part of the neighbourhood in which they live. It is their territory too!



The first Lantern Walk in December 2015 was so successful that we repeated the walk in December 2016. This time children made invitations to hand out to local residents and shop keepers an idea borrowed from one of our Italian colleagues. It now looks like the Lantern Walk will become one of Whitehills Nursery School's Christmas traditions.



Local resident: it brought tears to my eyes to see all those children and parents with their lanterns- it was magical
Parent: we will still be able to come next year when he's at Primary School won't we?
Parent: just a wonderful evening - really special - it makes you feel good
Parent: the children just couldn't stop talking about it- even the older ones