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ARTICLES

Learning from Children



Learning From Children

Today I had the privilege of working with a wonderful group of school children on a play about World War One. The children at Sedgeford Primary gave me a beautiful lesson in humanity. One hundred years on from the outbreak of what was supposed to be the ‘war to end all wars,’ one could not help feeling that the very soldiers who were being commemorated in the play, *Archie Dobson’s War*, would have been so proud of the children of Sedgeford.

Two happenings were particularly touching. One pupil with special educational needs was confined to a wheelchair and unable to talk to his peers. However, this did not mean that he could not communicate with his friends. Through a combination of sign language, eye contact and the gentlest of touches one young girl seemed to speak to him with such simple love and friendship that my heart seemed to miss a beat. The young girl, no more than eight years of age, seemed completely unaware that her friend was in a wheelchair, that he couldn’t communicate as the other pupils did – all she saw was a friend. It was as simple and as beautiful as that. The child in the wheelchair smiled the broadest smile and his laughter echoed through the school hall like an elegant, sonorous melody.

Another wonderful moment came when one boy, who needed help from the stage, was in tears. Once again a young girl came to his aid and offered a hug and loving companionship.

Finally, this remarkable collection of young children displayed the utmost reverence and respect as they read out the names of those from the village of Sedgeford who had died in battle during the Great War.

How we could learn from these children. Today they became the teachers. They demonstrated how to love and care for one another, they showed empathy, sympathy and compassion so naturally that I doubt they were even aware they were giving a lesson – but what a lesson it was. I was however left with one question. The capacity to love without reason, to offer understanding without a particular insight; what happens to it?