

RWB Arts Festival - a Report for the Area Board meeting 21st March 2018

Music in State Schools in the RWB area

Over the years, one or other local music teacher has tried to form a children's choir in Bassett. Lisa Williams is the latest. After all kinds of attempts to recruit more children through schools and in the community, her Cantantini remains small. A discussion with members of the adult choir Cantini concluded that sport, dance, scouts, guides etc (which of course are all run by volunteers) seem to be preferred by parents rather than music and drama. WBlets draws from a wider area than Bassett. Both St.Bart's and the Methodist Church have small junior "choirs". Anna Friend with Quirky Bird has drama groups at the Methodist Church and at Wroughton. The RWB Orchestra and Bassett Brass try hard to attract youngsters.

It is obvious that, over the years, there has been little carry over into the community from music done in Schools, except where there is support from parents who pay for private lessons and membership of organisations like Young Musicians, choirs like the Janice Thompson Performance Trust, bands like Brunel Brass etc.

The local Primary Schools are large and full to capacity. A case has been made for a new Primary School in Bassett but no suitable land has yet been found. RWB Academy is huge. So staff and resources are stretched.

It is clear that Schools they give as much time and resource to music and performance as is required by the national curriculum and cannot do much more. The Heads and staff are aware of the Festival and how we are trying to create opportunities from beginners onwards but they cannot commit long-term to support of RWBAF. Even the logistics of attending an event are a problem because of Safeguarding. Whether or not the Adjudicator gives a mark and constructive remarks (maybe disappointing some) and awards a trophy has become irrelevant.

The smaller state schools that do support RWBAF, from outside the immediate area, seem to be able to do a bit extra with the support of numerous parents. The imminent Swindon Music Festival has exactly the same experience in spite of close ties to all the schools.

The North Wilts Music Cluster of teachers and others meets at 4.00pm Thursday 15th March at St.Mary's School, Purton. Wiltshire's Music Connect and the Music Centre at Bradford-on-Avon are useful resources, if teachers and others have time and funds to take advantage of them.

The cultural gap between what schools can do and what the community can do is widening. What, if anything can be done ?

John Davies for RWBAF 8th March 2018

