

Primary school children across Bristol are taking part in a range of art and music workshops which aim to help them explore new activities and develop their communication skills. Next month, a show will be held at the Colston Hall to showcase the range of work that will be produced during the next few weeks.

KIRSTY PUGH and **NATALIE HALE** speak to some of the people involved.

SOME LESSONS ARE ANYTHING BUT HUMDRUM

Pupils explore their creative side

HUMDRUM? Not in Bristol schools for the last two years. It's all about children improving their communication skills and exploring their creative side.

So far, the classes have received a tremendous reception from both teachers and pupils.

David Moore is the headteacher at Durnall Primary School, in Southmead. Last year, the children at the school took part in drum lessons, but this term they are learning about painting and printing.

Twice a week, teacher Sarah Peyton comes into the school to show the children how to make patterns using pastels and crayons.

Youngsters are split into different age groups, which allow them to work to their own abilities.

Although lessons have only been going two weeks, the aim is to get the children to make some African block prints that will be exhibited at the Re-Perkussion show next month.

Mr Moore said: "The children are really enjoying this new experience. It is still early days and they have been making patterns and using crayons and pastels."

Last term we did drumming and the children got a lot out of it. They learnt how to work together as a team, which is very important. This time we wanted to try something different."

Durnall Primary only has around 60 pupils left as it is closing at the end of the year, and merging with another local school, Embleton Primary.

Mr Moore believes it is important to give the children who are left the best possible opportunities for the rest of the year.

"This is something very different, and it is always exciting to work with visiting artists. The children are having a brilliant time. So far it has not been very messy, but we are expecting more mess to be made as we go on," he said.

"The work we produce will be on show when the concert takes place and all the different art forms will be in together. I think the children will be very proud to see their own work on display."

Other schools taking part in the Re-Perkussion sessions are Badlocks Wood Primary School, Southmead; Blaise Primary, Henbury; Brentry Primary, Brentry; Elmlea Junior School, Westbury-on-Trym; Embleton Primary, Southmead; Fentall Primary, Southmead; Henbury Court Primary, Henbury; Westbury-on-Trym Primary, Westbury-on-Trym and the City Academy, St George.



Material world: Above, teacher Sarah Peyton shows off the finer points of African block prints. Right, pupils display work of their own. Below, Durnall head teacher David Moore



MORE than 500 schoolchildren in Bristol are being encouraged to make as much noise as possible to earn a place in a show at the Colston Hall.

The youngsters, at ten city schools, will be part of a series of artistic workshops over the next six weeks to win the chance to perform with professional musicians at the Re-Perkussion Show next month.

Re-Perkussion is the brainchild of HumDrumstrum, a Bristol-based music organisation which harnesses percussion and rhythm to run motivational courses in the business and education sectors.

Over the past two years, Bristol City Council, together with HumDrumstrum, professional artists and musicians, has been introducing Bristol's schoolchildren to their hidden musical and creative abilities through the media of art, dance and music.

Jason Finlay, co-founder of HumDrumstrum, an established composer and producer who has more than 11 years' experience as a professional musician, including work on major motion pictures and television.

"HumDrumstrum was an idea thought up between me and my business partner, Simon Carter," said Jason. "We decided to get together and exchange a few ideas. Soon we started to write some songs — but we mainly into percussion whereas I was a songwriter — and we took them to a school. They loved what we played and asked us to turn them into some lessons."

So that's where it started. We got a lot of feedback from the school and said, 'That's good, can you do that at our school too?' and suddenly we had a business."

But it's not just music that HumDrumstrum is introducing in our children. The workshops aim to show them the cultural diversity of our planet, enhance communication and listening skills, build confidence and co-operation and promote team spirit and creative expression in a fun and informative environment.



Rhythm queens: Above, Henbury Court primary pupil Laura Patten, aged eight, keeps time at one of the Re-Perkussion workshops. Left, Jason Finlay leads a class

communication, listening, working together and having respect for other children and so forth. We're trying to develop the sort of team-building skills that children of seven or eight haven't always got a good concept of."

"When they're playing the drums, they can see and hear the immediate effects of compromise and communication."

But these are very important skills for the future. As in their social and their working lives.

The Re-Perkussion show at Colston Hall will celebrate the work that has been happening in schools throughout Bristol. It is designed to showcase the culmination of the children's newly-discovered talents with a professional show of singing and drumming from around the world.

Art's a source of confidence

ARTIST and sculptor Aiji Jane Cutler has been working with children for 22 years.

April, aged 47, teaches classes alongside running her own jewellery business, where she makes customised designs.

She is currently helping pupils at Brentry Primary School and 3D installations and sculptures to be exhibited at the Re-Perkussion show.

She said: "We are working on a number of installations which will be on show during the musical part of the show. I am making Mimi Giza masks with the other children and models and colleagues with the younger ones."

"It is really exciting. The children are making such progress in creating these art works. They are doing a complete job, starting with proper designs, then making templates and collecting materials. The work they are not just for playing about. The classes are helping the children to express themselves and work as a team. These sessions are a real confidence booster for the children. They are really enjoying what they are doing, and there is not one child who has not enjoyed something about my workshops."

It is a real pleasure to really hear them I have spoken to really appreciate of what we are doing, and wish they had more time to do things like this with their pupils.

The work in teams and the children have to learn to work together. It is all about team building and conversing with each other. The communication

aren't engaged enough to want to stay in school and we want to interest and stimulate them, as well as teach them useful skills for the future.

"Re-Perkussion is an event that aims to offer the best chances it can for these children, who in turn will benefit the city in years to come."

As part of their commitment to learning, Re-Perkussion has teamed up with two local charities, the National Trust and the Bristol Museum, to offer interesting experiences through the arts.

The workshops are funded by the art development unit at Bristol City Council, but businesses in the city still have the opportunity to get involved by helping to sponsor the project.

Crowning glory: Aiji Jane Cutler puts the finishing touches to a lizard

between them is fascinating. The work the children produce will decorate the stage, and Aiji, who is doing a complete job, starting with proper designs, then making templates and collecting materials. To see what the children are capable of is amazing, she said.

We are using different materials and we are going to create something fantastic. Re-Perkussion is about creating a number of different art forms. In other schools, children are learning how to play the drums, and about video production, tapestry and body percussion. At the final show in March, all these different talents will be combined to produce a spectacular show full of various sights and sounds.

Aiji said: "We are combining music with sculpture and art. The masks that we make will be part of the drum performance on the night. It is all very exciting."



But the event has another aim. Unfortunately the funding that allows organisations such as HumDrumstrum to work in Bristol's schools is coming to an end in March, but Jason hopes Re-Perkussion will encourage local businesses to get involved with present Bristol businesses with an opportunity to get involved in the arts at a local level by becoming sponsors. Jason said: "We want to reap the benefits of the music-making process for years to come."

We are inviting along the business community to show them what we can achieve," said Jason. "We want them to watch and enjoy the show and then we'll explain that the funding has dried up and ask them how they can help us continue putting artists in schools."

We need these artists in schools to encourage children to look at the other avenues open to them in addition to just science, numeracy and literacy. Lots of young people