

# Winning the Mark Evison Award

Last term 3 groups of Year 12 students achieved a Mark Evison Award. This was the first time that Woodford had worked with Margaret Evison to allow students in the 6<sup>th</sup> form to participate. One team came up with an idea that appealed very much to the Foundation Trustees and was awarded a full award of £500. Their idea was to put on a pantomime for the children at Haven House. Here is their account:

## Winter Pantomime at Haven House

A challenge for us...a gift for others! When the idea of a pantomime was first brought up it seemed too ordinary to be funded by a foundation like Mark Evison. It is then we realised that just as this opportunity of being supported by the foundation is so rare for us, the pantomime should also be performed to an audience who might possibly never have experienced the spirit and joy of a pantomime before and so our plan was to bring a smile to the faces of a few ailing children at Haven House hospice.

It was not until we actually started carrying the project out that we realised the immense amount of organisation and planning that was needed. First things first, our pantomime, which was based on Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, needed a fun and lively script. With all the dragons and potions and dungeons one could possibly fit on to fifteen pages, this script had all the elements of a magical and mythical fairytale that was bound to get the children engaged. The challenging part of writing the script was to ensure that we did not contain any words or phrases that could offend anyone as the pantomime was ultimately going to be performed to an audience with particular needs.

The next step was to find a talented cast. The plan was to get students from our own school to perform. We aimed to produce a pantomime with elements of great acting and singing but what really intrigued us was seeing students enthusiastically interact with an audience. After choosing a talented cast we held continuous rehearsals at school during lunchtimes.

It was tough but we practised until all the actors got their stage directions, lines and expressions coordinated.

The challenging part of the rehearsals was achieving a balance between the quirky expressions, the soulful singing and cheerful actions as we desired the children in high spirits yet not frightened by anything over-the-top.

From spreadsheets to maps to project logs, we had also to plan where we could buy colourful costumes and props that would do justice to our pantomime. We also had to manage a budget. But the real challenge was to actually go on a long 2-hour trek to central London in the freezing cold in search for our lighting for the pantomime!

We knew the day had arrived when the whole group started getting butterflies. *Will the actors get here on time? Hope no one forgets any of their lines! Have we got all the props we needed?* All these thoughts kept rushing into our mind. We had a re-run of the performance an hour before, got all the scene changes smoothly coordinated and the lighting and sound neatly set up and we were all set and ready to go....

The narrators introduced the first scene. There was silence in the auditorium, *are they not liking it.* But then a laugh...and then another and then before we know it we've got all the nurses and children giggling at the cheeky dwarves, admiring the coy Snow White and gasping at the evil queen! The smiles of the children and the applause at the end were reward enough.

The experience showed us the kind of care the hospice provides for life limited children. The hard work we put into bringing the project to life was all worth it at the end.



By Mareeha Zaman 12MH