

Jodie James:

I am a children's author based in the North East, and part of my job means that I get the pleasure of touring schools to work with children to encourage a love for stories, and for reading in general.

Whilst this part of my job is always a real pleasure, there are certain schools that stand out for various reasons. Pegswood Primary is one such school.

I have visited Pegswood on several occasions over the last two years, and have gained a wonderful insight into how the school operates, and I have got to know the staff and pupils rather well.

It was striking from day one how much the school in general has a warm and friendly atmosphere; you can feel it as you walk in. Children playing so many different games at breaktime, in such diverse and well-designed spaces was the first thing I spotted and gave a good indication of what was to come.

The number of special clubs and activities available for the children was really quite remarkable, and the most heart-warming thing about this was the fact that there was something for everyone... from sports activities and challenges, to a 'poetry and biscuit club', it was all just so lovely to see, and the children were always buzzing to talk about these things. I chatted with the children on many occasions about how *'there is always something happening at Pegswood!'*. It is a great testimony to the staff there that they recognise and encourage the different interests that **all** children have.

When I have carried out my author-work at Pegswood, I noticed that the children were always so keen to show-off their own work and tell me about the things that they had been learning (always a great indicator of how much a child is enjoying school). It was so nice to see that every child was so keen to do this, regardless of their own tastes and 'style', and the confidence that staff had given to all pupils really shone through in this. **All** pupils and their work are celebrated at Pegswood!

It's no small thing to say that the success of a school like Pegswood, is in part due to the way that they connect to the community. In recognising and celebrating the village where they are based, the school achieves something special – a real and genuine place for growth and learning for all of their pupils. A good example of this is the wonderful Story Centre – created with the extra dedication and commitment of staff, which is a space for pupils to use as 'their own'. The Story Centre also welcomes in the wider community on lots of occasions, and adds to the wonderful family-feeling at Pegswood.

It's amazing to see a school which goes above and beyond for their pupils, and views children as far more than just a 'statistic'.