



Stockbridge Primary School held our third annual BookFest in March 2022, bringing our school community together to celebrate stories. Our virtual author and illustrator visits, thanks to our Parent Council, were among the highlights of this year's BookFest.

Serena Patel

Imagination, investigation and intrigue! Serena Patel's detective story masterclass was a huge hit with our mystery-loving P3, P4/3 and P4 classes. Serena is the author of the award-winning *Anisha, Accidental Detective* series of books. The children had read *Anisha, Accidental Detective* together in class, so it was brilliant to meet Serena, learn more about her characters and writing, and ask her all our questions! Serena joined us virtually from her Detective HQ in the West Midlands for a Mysterious Mysteries workshop, sharing some top-secret tips and inspiring the children to plot and write their own stories.

"I liked talking to a real live author! It was really fun."

P4

Serena began by introducing us to her characters, from Anisha herself to Granny Jas and Aunty Bindi. She explained that something always goes wrong in her books and there's always a mystery to be solved!

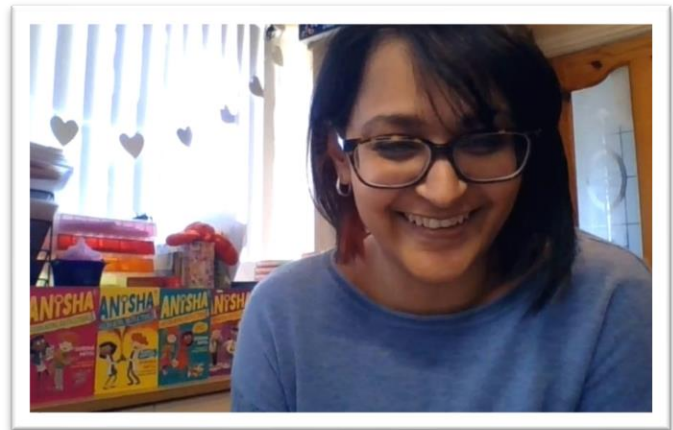
"I really liked talking with Serena. My favourite character was Granny Jas, cos she's fierce!"

P4



"I liked the base of the story because it's not that simple. Because 'girl from India becomes a mystery detective' is very interesting."

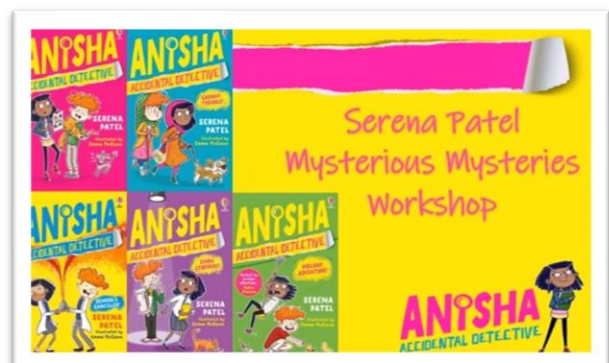
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Serena encouraged the children to think about the qualities that make a good detective, like determination and resilience. They had to use their imaginations to think which skills a character in a book might need to solve a mystery...

"It was very interesting and very exciting."

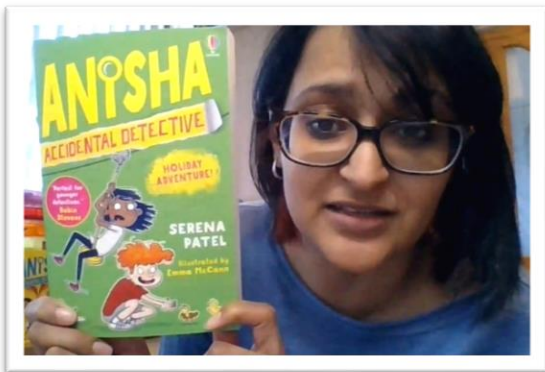
P3



Serena shared some tricks of the detective author trade, and explained some secrets to make our story ideas work. She encouraged the children to think about where a mystery could be set, and reminded them not to limit their imaginations – a mystery could be set in a forest, in space, in another dimension... absolutely anywhere!

"I really enjoyed it because she taught us all the detective words, like victim and red herring..."

P3



She also talked about red herrings and possible motives, but there was still something missing – a crime! Serena explained that she puts a funny twist on the crimes in her books. She also reminded us that mystery stories need a satisfying ending...

"It was very interesting and very exciting."

P3



Serena shared lots of invaluable tips on writing our own mystery stories, and encouraged our creativity with lots of imagination-sparking ideas. When we had thought about all the ingredients that go into a great mystery story, it was time for the children to make up their own mystery story plots.

Following Serena's 'Key Ingredients', they set to work, inventing their own detectives and working out their own intricate plots.



"I liked how you helped us do the plan, how you helped us plan our own mystery stories."

P4

The children were super-inspired and bursting with ideas. They worked incredibly hard to create their detectives, plan out their settings and decide Whodunnit!



"I LOVED when there were twists in the story and you kept putting cliff-hangers at the end of each chapter."

P3



"I really liked doing the plans and I really liked talking with you."

P4

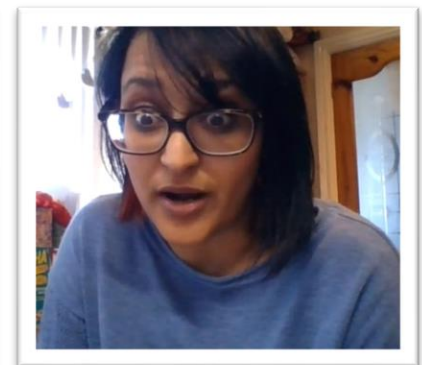
There were some brilliant story plans, full of excitement, intrigue and mystery. Some children even hit upon ideas that Serena has used in her as-yet-unpublished next book!



"I loved your event because your books really inspire me to become a detective."

P3

Children then shared their plots with each other and with Serena. Serena was shocked and bamboozled by the fiendish plots, exciting twists and dramatic cliffhangers that the children came up with! Look how surprised she was at our amazing story ideas!

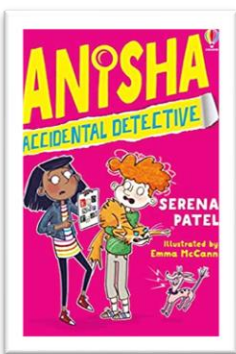


Serena was so encouraging and gave the children some great feedback on their ideas and storylines. She thought they had the makings of being great detectives!

"Your book inspires me so that when I'm older I can be an author like you. My favourite bit about the book is that you wrote it."

P3

The event finished with a fantastic Q&A, in which the children put their toughest questions to Serena and got some interesting answers. We asked why she had chosen the name Anisha, and Serena explained that she had originally called the character Saffron! We also asked how she writes so well about Hindu culture, why she decided to write about an accidental detective, how she writes incidents from her life into her stories, whether she had always wanted to be a writer, and much more.



Thank you for visiting us at Stockbridge Primary, Serena! We loved meeting you!

"I really liked all the books and I like how you answered all our questions."

P4

Thanks to the Parent Council, we have gifted copies of *Anisha, Accidental Detective: School's Cancelled* and *Anisha, Accidental Detective: Granny Trouble* to the P3, P4/3 and P4 class libraries.



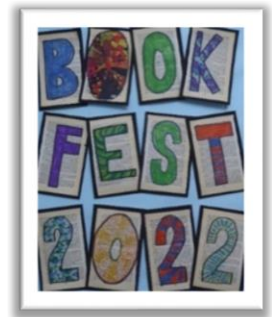
Stockbridge Primary School BookFest

Stockbridge Primary School's annual BookFest is packed with diverse and innovative ways to celebrate reading – whatever the circumstances!



After two years of the covid pandemic, and against a distressing global backdrop, BookFest brought brightness in dark times. It added excitement and sparkle, lifted spirits and celebrated our international community. BookFest encouraged children to share experiences, to learn and understand more about other countries and other children's heritage, and to revel in our school's diversity as a source of strength. We aimed once again to bring some literary magic to children living through unprecedented times.

BookFest 2022 was a hybrid festival, but we seized the chance to turn the limitations of pandemic restrictions into opportunities. BookFest reached out to authors and illustrators across the UK, with virtual events enabling connections we could never hope to make in person. And just as this year's BookFest drew to a close came a glimmer of hope for the future, as we were able to invite our first illustrators and authors to the school in person.



This year's BookFest was underpinned by our longstanding aim of ensuring that every child can see themselves in a book. We drew upon the school's theme for the year of Diversity and Inclusion, with events championing neurodiversity and dyslexia, celebrations of our multitude of languages, and, as always, a focus not just on the written word but on telling stories through images. We're committed to making sure that not only can every child recognise themselves in book characters and in book illustrations, but that they also see themselves in the authors and illustrators we bring to BookFest.



Thank You...

- ... to Serena Patel
- ... to Stockbridge Primary Parent Council for funding
- ... to our local independent children's bookshop, Ginger and Pickles
- ... to Mrs Hagart, Miss Cowe, Miss Judges and Miss Jones, and to Mrs Ashbrook
- ... to our BookFest volunteer organising team: Meredith, Hazel and Jenny

Stockbridge Primary School

Stockbridge Primary School is a City of Edinburgh non-denominational local authority school and nursery, with approximately 270 pupils aged 3 to 12 years. Stockbridge Primary's Parent Council works in partnership with staff both to fundraise for the school and to deliver events and resources that enrich pupils' experience and the school environment. BookFest is organised by members of the Stockbridge Primary teaching staff, parent volunteers and members of the Parent Council.