



Our fourth annual Stockbridge Primary BookFest in March 2023 explored 'Togetherness'. Hugely popular guest visits brought children together with some of their favourite authors, illustrators, storytellers and comic makers...

# Neill Cameron

Robots! Jetpacks! Inspiration! Awesomeness! Bookfest could not believe our luck in being able to welcome the hugely popular comics writer and illustrator Neill Cameron to Stockbridge Primary School. Neill travelled all the way from Oxford to lead two brilliantly funny, hands-on comic workshops with our Primary 4 to Primary 7 children.

Neill is an absolute favourite of many Stockbridge children thanks to his work in *The Phoenix* weekly comic. He's the creator of the super-exciting *Mega Robo Bros* graphic novel series, the *Awesome Robot Chronicles* books and many more.

*"He made everyone laugh with his jokes."*

P6

This was a chance for Stockbridge children to meet, draw with, learn from and be inspired by one of the top comics creators in the UK – and they really made the most of it!



Neill explained that one of the many brilliant things about making comics is that you don't need a degree, fancy equipment or a multimillion pound budget. You can just do it, as long as you have a pencil, some paper and a brain full of ideas. Luckily Stockbridge children are bursting with creativity!

*"It was a fun and funny workshop."*

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Neill's advice was to base ideas in real life – even if a story is set in the future, or in space, or is jampacked with aliens and explosions, it will feel relatable if it's based on something real and true.



*"He's really creative and inspirational."*

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*"He was really funny!"*

P6



Neill explained that when you're writing a weekly comic you need to come up with ideas all the time. He shared his amazing comic formula: take a thing that is awesome, and 'smoosh' it together with another thing that is awesome, and you will end up with something that is totally SUPER AWESOME!

*"It even had maths in! We had to add one awesome thing to another awesome thing to make something super awesome!"*

P6

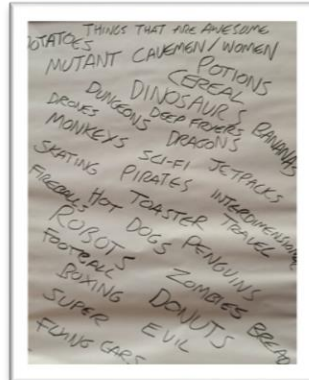
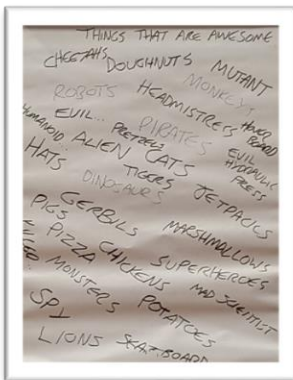
Neill showed us his drawings of dinosaurs with jetpacks, and pointed out that not only was this now super awesome but there was now a character. How did the dinosaur get the jetpack? The children had tons of ideas! What about this pirate monkey? There was a sea of hands up as children shared their brilliantly creative theories of how the monkey became a pirate, or a pirate became a monkey...



*"I felt like he really listened and cared about our ideas."*

P6

The children then brainstormed all the things that they count as Awesome.



After whittling down these amazing ideas to a shortlist including evil gerbils, toaster cars and donuts fighting evil chickens, the children picked their favourites. Neill drew the winning ideas with lots of input and creative ideas from the children. Meet Bob, the Marshmallow Spy and Frank, the Hot Dog Boxer!

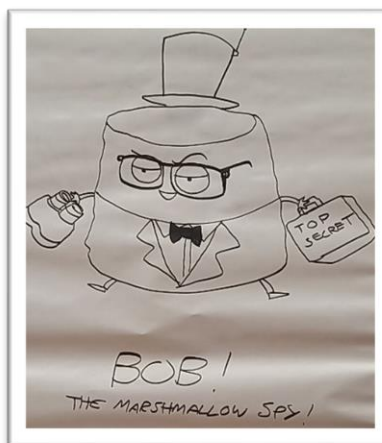
*"He took our ideas and drew them. He drew a hot dog boxer!!"*

P6

Neill shared some drawing tips about how to convey character in just a few details – for an example an eye patch and a cutlass are all it takes to create a pirate, or wings and a wand to make a fairy.

*"It was silly! I liked Frank the Hot Dog!"*

P4





Then Neill suggested that children pick two things from the list, or from their own ideas, and have a go at drawing a comic character of their own.

*"I had lots of fun drawing a pizza that shot hot cheese from a pistol with Neill."*

P4

*"I drew a bagel movie critic in a top hat riding a skateboard."*

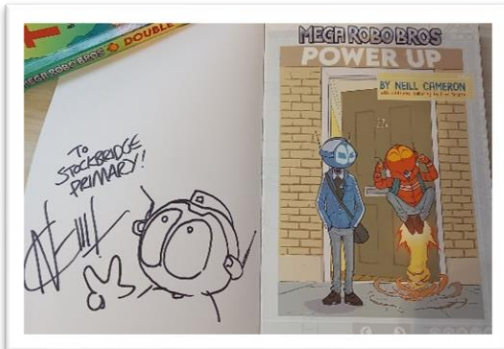
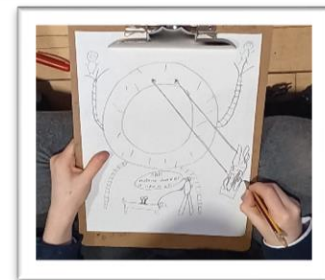
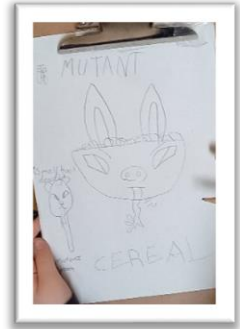
P4

Everyone got straight down to drawing – sharing their ideas, chatting about their characters and comparing notes on back stories.

*"I enjoyed being able to have a piece of paper in front of me and draw along. We created many funny characters and shared them all in class later on."*

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Finally Neill answered children's questions in a Q&A and signed huge stacks of books. And each child got some Mega Robo Bros stickers as a souvenir of a wonderful morning.



**Thank you so much for coming all this way to see us, Neill! We had a truly awesome time!**

Bookfest have gifted a copy of Neill's book *How to Make Awesome Comics* to every class from P4 to P7, plus a complete set of the *Mega Robo Bros* series to Support for Learning.

*"There's a group of upper-primary pupils who have, until this point, been reluctant readers. Since exploring Neill Cameron's books at BookFest, they are approaching reading with a completely different mindset. They love the graphic novel format and the content of these books. Parents have also reported how pleased they are seeing their children wanting to read for the very first time. It's just lovely to witness!"*

*Support for Learning teacher*





## Thank You...

- ... to Neill Cameron
- ... to Julie Richardson at Ginger and Pickles Children's Bookshop
- ... to Meggie Dennis and David Fickling Books for the brilliant free stickers for every child
- ... to Stockbridge Primary Parent Council for their funding and support
- ... to Mrs Ashbrook, and to Miss Campbell, Miss Eckersley, Ms Fraser, Miss Devine, Mrs Priwitzer and Miss McMillen
- ... to our BookFest volunteer organising team Meredith and Hazel, and to Jenny

### **Stockbridge Primary School**

Stockbridge Primary School is a City of Edinburgh non-denominational local authority school and nursery, with approximately 275 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.