

EDUCATION

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City vicar given honour for school music project

A VICAR who is transforming the lives of inner city children in Cardiff through a ground-breaking orchestral music project has been recognised in the Queen's New Year's Honours list.

Reverend Jan Gould, who works with pupils from Hywel Dda, Herbert Thompson, St Francis, St Fagans, Windsor Clive, Millbank and Coed Y Gof primary schools and Mary Immaculate, Bishop of Llandaff, St Josephs, and Michaelson Glyn Derw high schools, received a British Empire Medal (BEM) for services to the community in Ely, Cardiff, in the honours published on New Year's Eve.

Jan, priest-in-charge of the Church of the Resurrection on Grand Avenue for the past 10 years, believes music plays a vital part in boosting aspiration, education and ambition among young people.

She set up the Making Music Changing Lives project seven years ago to give local children free and reduced music lessons and instruments to learn on.

The former professional viola player was inspired after hearing about a similar project, El Sistema, in Venezuela. Jan said she believed if it could work in Venezuela, then it could work in Ely too.

She has amassed an army of volunteers from the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff as well as professional musicians, to teach music to about 40 children in her church hall each week and believes music can help boost all areas of education.

Parents have reported their children are more confident, their self-esteem

has improved and they make new friends through learning music, she said.

Many of the pupils on the programme might never have played music without the project because les-

sons and instruments are so expensive.

Receiving her BEM, Jan said, "It is a real privilege to work with the people of Ely. I am very humbled by this award, and I look forward to many more years of being the Parish Priest of this wonderful community, where I see the Spirit of God at work in so many lives."

She was congratulated by the Archbishop of Wales, Dr Barry Morgan, who said: "The Making Music Changing Lives project is not just about music, it is about transforming children's lives and it would not have happened without Jan's drive and enthusiasm. She has opened up a whole new world to young children and this honour is well deserved."

Children taking part in Making Music Changing Lives can choose from a variety of instruments to learn and classes run every Tuesday for brass, strings and woodwind.

The students are also taught theory of music. The groups have been so successful that some of the children have performed their music on the BBC's Songs of Praise and a number have taken practical and theory exams with many gaining high distinctions.

Jan said she is keen to encourage as many children as possible to learn a musical instrument and hopes to see Making Music Changing Lives expand

across Wales.

Pre-school music classes for children aged two and over have also been launched, giving younger children their first introduction to live music.

Jan also runs Feel Good Fridays, where up to 120 children visit the church hall to enjoy a 40-minute concert of live music.

In 2015, Jan was presented with a Points of Light award by the Prime Minister at the time, David Cameron, in recognition of the project.





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