

Firrhill High School's Diversity Day

Following a visit by two of their pupils to Auschwitz earlier in the year, Firrhill High School held a Diversity Day to widen the experience and learning to the whole school, when they invited Holocaust survivor Harry Bibring to speak to them.

Candles burned brightly for Firrhill HS's first ever Diversity Day

The architect and event-manager for this special event was Sheila Watson, art teacher, who was inspired by her one-day visit with two senior students – Iona Wilkie and Calum Brickell – to Poland to see first-hand Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp. This was part of the [Holocaust Educational Trust](#)'s Lessons from Auschwitz project.

Sheila Watson explained: "The scene was set on the stage of the Assembly Hall at Firrhill where 70 handmade willow lanterns glowed with messages of hope for the future to symbolise the 70 years since the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. The aim of the Holocaust candles event was to show our young folk what can happen when racism and other prejudices go unchecked and instead encourage diversity and inclusion with tolerance, empathy and understanding of others.

"The highlight of Diversity Day was the presentation from Holocaust survivor, Harry Bibring to 300 of our S3 students and 50 members of the local community where Harry played a 'blinder' sharing his personal testimony with passion, drama and emotion.

"A warm welcome was extended to our friends from Braidburn Special School who enthusiastically took part in the day alongside their Firrhill peers.

"Harry particularly chose to speak to this age group as he was their very age when he had to flee from Austria from the Nazis via the Kindertransport.

"A reflection diary was given to all S3 students to record their thoughts, feelings and ideas during the day. Diversity Day was a whole-day event with eight external workshop providers and 2 student in-house workshops delivering 2 sessions to every S3 student at Firrhill HS.





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"The outside providers were Red Card, See Me, True Colours, LGBTYouth, Scottish autism, Jim Moser of CMS lawyers, Waverley Care and Holocaust Educational Trust.

"The in-house workkshops were delivered by our very own Anne Frank ambassadors and our two Lessons from Auschwitz ambassadors. Unstinting support, inspiration and encouragement for the event came from Diana Dodd, Principal Officer Equalities and Martin Hutchison, Senior Community Learning and Development Officer.

"Harry spoke for 2 hours(!) – 88 years young! – and seriously, you could have heard a pin drop in the assembly hall. Ian Cowie, parent of former pupil from Firrhill, is creating a Diversity Day film which will have its grand premiere in the New Year."

There will be a link to the film available on Firrhill website

in due course. Sheila Watson also arranged for Harry Bibring to share his testimony with Portobello High School and Drummond Community High School in November.

It is not uncommon for Harry to deliver this kind of talk. He speaks each year to 60 schools around Britain devoting his retirement to raising awareness and understanding of the Holocaust and its modern day lessons in order to help create a safer, better future.

The Holocaust Educational Trust has produced guidelines for teachers to use in planning Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) commemorative ceremonies in their schools. HMD takes place each year on 27th January, the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. The national theme in the UK for HMD 2015 is ***"Keep the Memory Alive"***.

