

Maksi's story

Christmas Carol(s)

Maksi A. Kozinska

In a small primary school in Thurrock, one December day was genuinely magical. Parents were invited to an outstanding Christmas performance, where all the children sang carols in all the languages that they were willing to share with their school community.

It started in the usual way, with children singing *Silent Night* beautifully; a little later, the accompanist began to play the same melody, but this time children sang fragments in German (*Stille Nacht*), in Polish (*Cicha Noc*) and in Lithuanian (*Tyli Natkis*), and in other languages that related to children's backgrounds as well as languages taught at school e.g. French (*Douce Nuit*).

When we asked how they had prepared for this performance, children felt proud that they had acted as language advisers to their teachers. They have been keen to help other children with their pronunciation, and supported everyone with explaining the new vocabulary.

This performance was a fantastic experience: many of the children on stage have relatives abroad, who most likely would not see them over Christmas, but we were allowed to film and share this performance with grandparents and other family members. This meant a chance for loved ones to share in the festivities, and the whole experience of the beautiful openness of the people of Britain. A whole school singing Christmas carols in their home or foreign languages is an extraordinary example of language awareness and unity in celebrating the season, which means a lot to so many. As a parent, I have never been prouder of living in such a beautiful country, and the memory of this experience will stay with me for the rest of my life.

This multilinguistic performance allowed bonding between peers at school by exploring the linguistic richness hiding in British schools. It also gave families living abroad a sense of gratitude for sharing the heritage of their loved ones by acknowledging their home languages.

Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens is about the realisation that life lived with closed eyes is not a life and that we are all better together – this was a modern *Christmas Carol* that set an example of good practice for others.