

## **James Stretton – World of Brass**

James visited our school on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2012. Mowbray School is a Special School whose pupils have a huge diversity of needs and abilities. He started the afternoon with a presentation / concert during which he introduced a wide range of brass instruments to the children and staff. Everyone was immediately struck by his easy manner and his ability to communicate, inform and entertain not only an audience of over 100 children and young people from the age of three up to sixteen, but also a large contingent of teaching staff. This mix of multi-level humour and in depth knowledge of his craft made this one of the most enjoyable visits we have had by a professional musician. This was reflected in the many comments by staff and pupils which I received after the event.

Apart from performing, with a backing track, on every instrument from piccolo trumpet to euphonium, James also gave the opportunity for serious hands on experience - which was as much appreciated and enjoyed by those taking part as by those observing. There were several children for whom getting up in front of the rest of the school alone would have been a triumph, let alone produce a sound on a trombone and participate in a real performance. All participants were allowed to contribute at an appropriate level to well chosen material and made to feel at ease, each coming away with an obvious sense of achievement.

After the performance session James held a workshop with two classes during which he devised a number of performance based activities which reinforced the pupils' understanding of some of the basic elements of music, and which culminated in a presentation to the rest of the school at the end of the day. The session was a positive learning experience and all the pupils who took part were engaged throughout.

In addition to being an obviously experienced and accomplished musician, James was easy to get on with, extremely punctual, efficient and amenable, and I look forward to the possibility of working with him again in the future.

### **Eric Brown**

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