

Author Visit Poet Kate Wakeling – A Celebration of Imagery, Curiosity & Voice

November 2021

Later in the week, we were honoured to welcome Kate Wakeling, award-winning poet and performer whose work is celebrated for its musicality, imagination and emotional depth. By 2021, Kate had already made a significant impact on children's poetry.

Her debut collection *Moon Juice* (2016) had won the 2017 CLiPPA Prize and been nominated for the Carnegie Medal, and her second collection *Cloud Soup* was published in 2021, quickly recognised as a beautifully inventive follow-up (and shortlisted for the 2022 CLiPPA). She also published poetry for adults, including *The Rainbow Faults* (The Rialto) before 2021. These books demonstrate Kate's signature blend of playfulness, sensitivity and a deep love of language, all of which she brought to our classrooms.

Kate's workshop with Owl Class was a highlight of the week. She began by performing several poems from *Moon Juice* and *Cloud Soup*, encouraging children to listen for patterns, unexpected images and musical effects. She discussed how poems can begin with a question, a memory, a surprising sound, or even something a bit strange - helping children understand that poetry is about exploration, not perfection.

Pupils were then guided through a series of creative exercises designed to help them "zoom in" on small details, stretch their imagination and take risks with language. Kate encouraged them to write lines that felt bold, curious or unusual, drawing on her skill as both a poet and an ethnomusicologist. Children experimented with metaphor, rhythm and free verse, and many wrote poems inspired by sounds, movement or everyday objects transformed through imagery.

Kate's warm, humorous manner meant children felt safe to share their ideas and celebrate each other's writing. She created an atmosphere that balanced high expectations with genuine joy in creativity. Several pupils commented afterwards on how much they enjoyed the freedom to "think differently" or "use their imagination in new ways."

Her visit contributed enormously to our school's culture of storytelling and expression. Through her workshops, children learned not just how to write poems, but how poetry can help us explore feelings, ask questions and view the world through fresh eyes. The impact on pupils' confidence and writing choices was clear in the rich poetry produced across the upper school in the days that followed.

