



Our fourth annual Stockbridge Primary BookFest in March 2023 explored 'Togetherness'. Hugely popular guest visits brought children together with some of their favourite authors, illustrators, storytellers and comic makers...

Elle McNicoll

Excitement levels were sky high as BookFest welcomed one of the most dazzling stars of children's fiction to Stockbridge Primary! The award-winning, best-selling author Elle McNicoll joined Primary 5 to Primary 7 children on her Scottish promotional tour to celebrate the launch of her new book, *Like A Curse*.

Elle's debut novel, *A Kind of Spark*, won the Blue Peter Book Award and the Waterstones Children's Book Prize, and has been adapted as a BBC television series. Her books *Like a Charm* and its brand-new sequel *Like A Curse* are particularly special as the central character Ramya lives in Stockbridge!

"My favourite author visit was Elle McNicoll, because I really enjoyed reading her books because her stories always keep you in suspense."

P6/5

Elle is an advocate for better representation of neurodiversity in children's books. Many of our children are huge fans of her work, especially after her powerful virtual event with our older classes last year. It was wonderful to welcome her to Stockbridge Primary in-person for this very special event.



Elle was given a warm Stockbridge welcome! She explained that her new book *Like A Curse*, the follow-up to *Like A Charm*, had only been published the day before, so we were some of the first children to see it!

"I really enjoyed meeting Elle McNicoll and getting a book signed by her."

P5



Elle began by talking about neurodiversity, and shocked the children by explaining that when she started writing, just 0.005% of characters in children's books were neurodiverse. She talked passionately about the importance of representation.

"I found her discussion around neurodiversity really inspiring."

P7



Elle then introduced the key figures in the books and chose volunteers to stand in for the central characters, Ramya and Marley, and a whole host of others from witches, a vampire, a troll, kelpies and the villain! There was great excitement in the hall as everyone got thoroughly into character!



"I enjoyed how some students got to act out a scene – it was fun to watch!"

P6/5

"I enjoyed when Elle McNicoll came and talked about her books and called up people to act as characters from Like A Curse."

P6/5

Although Elle holds events to talk about her books across the UK, she pointed out that this was the only place in the whole world that she could say that the central character lives "right here!"



Elle talked about magic, Edinburgh, seeing people for who they really are and much more.

Finally she opened up an engaging, approachable and wide-ranging Q&A in which the children were able to ask all their questions. She discussed the forthcoming BBC TV adaptation of her book *A Kind of Spark*, how the titles for her books are chosen, the jobs she had done, her favourite sport ("shopping!"), how she became a writer and much more.

"I enjoyed getting inside scoops about current books and new books to come."

P6/5

"I liked how she said the only exercise she did was shopping!"

P7



Elle then signed copies of her books for the children and met some of her biggest fans. She was so generous with her time. All the children received a free sticker.

We have gifted copies of *Like a Curse* and Elle's other books to each of the P5 to P7 class libraries.

Thank you for coming to Stockbridge Primary, Elle! It really meant a lot to us.



Thank You...

... to Elle McNicoll

- ... to Annabel Wright and EdPR, and the *Like a Curse* sales team for the badges and stickers
- ... to Julie Richardson at Ginger and Pickles Children's Bookshop
- ... to everyone who supported BookFest's 'Bakes into Books' fundraising bake sale
- ... to Mrs Ashbrook, and to Ms Fraser, Miss Devine, Mrs Priwitzer and Miss McMillen
- ... to Meredith and Hazel, our BookFest volunteer organising team, and to Jenny

Stockbridge Primary School

Stockbridge Primary School is a City of Edinburgh non-denominational local authority school and nursery, with approximately 275 pupils aged 3 to 12 years. Stockbridge Primary's Parent Council works in partnership with staff both to fundraise for the school and to deliver events and resources that enrich pupils' experience and the school environment. BookFest is organised by members of the Stockbridge Primary teaching staff, parent volunteers and members of the Parent Council.