

”GENDER NEUTRAL SCHOOL“

”NO MORE BOYS & GIRLS: CAN OUR KIDS GO GENDER FREE?”

This engaging and provocative series poses some of the most profound questions facing society today. Is the way we treat boys and girls in childhood the real reason we still haven't achieved true equality between men and women in adult life? And could stripping away the pink and blue – and the other more subtle ways that boys and girls are shaped to be different – be the way to raise kids with abilities and attitudes that are the same regardless of their gender

This entertaining but enlightening series sets out to find answers in a bold but simple experiment - taking over Year 3 in state primary school. For six weeks, the experiment aims to remove all differences in the way boys and girls are treated and to see if, after a term of 'gender neutral' treatment, he can even out the gaps in their achievement across a range of important psychological measures – from self-confidence to .emotional intelligence/

FORMAT DESCRIPTION

GENDER NEUTRAL SCHOOL was commissioned by BBC 2's Specialist Factual Department as a 2 x 60 social experiment examining whether the key to reducing inequalities between men and women in adult life might be in removing differences in .the way boys and girls are treated in childhood

The main narrative spine of the series an experiment in a main stream primary school in which we take over the teaching of one class of 7 year olds to see whether making their education 'gender neutral' will close gaps in attitude, outlook and outcomes .between boys and girls

Episode one of the series keeps a tighter focus on school life, while episode two broadens its focus to examine the influences on boys and girls from outside school – .family life and the influence of clothes and toys and how they are marketed

The issues of gender education are told through the experiences of our class of seven year olds – straight to camera interviews give the kids the chance to express their .feelings which serves to bring humour and warmth to the heart of the experiment

Several of the children become more prominent characters within the arc. Focusing on their personal set backs and triumphs adds to the warm documentary feeling of the series, while also providing the best evidence for our viewers that treating boys and girls the same helps both genders achieve more

The main experiment is supported and supplemented by an investigation in the science of gender and an examination of the ways that the adult world upholds and enforces stereotypes about boys and girls.

SERIES ELEMENTS

Main school experiment

The school experiment was filmed at Lanesend Primary School in the Isle of Wight during the Easter Term of 2017

The main subjects of the experiment were children in Year 3 – aged 7-8. Year 3 at the school had two classes and we focuses our interventions and our filming on one of the classes, while using the second as a soft ‘control class’ (we recorded data about them but didn’t change the way they were taught or include them in our interventions, so that we could offer some proof that changes in our main class were the result of what we had done rather than the consequence of normal schooling or simply growing up over the time frame of the experiment)

The intervention took place over a six-week filming block, that started with half a week of recording testing of the kids, and that ended with a repetition of the same tests and a reveal to the school of the results along with a performance by the kids celebrating what they had achieved

The end of the series brought viewers up to date with how the kids had continued to change and grow with an on screen coda of photos and captions put together in the last week of the edit schedule.

Metrics

The series aimed to look at differences between boys and girls and to see if creating a more gender-neutral environment could close gaps in their attainment and attitudes

The tests were devised in consultation with an expert who had experience devising psychometric tests for children. She also featured on screen explaining the testing to the children. These tests were primarily multiple-choice questions, and so the team also devised a range of more visual tests that could be included in this sequence

These included a version of the 'marshmallow test' as well as a range of tests conducted by voting and answering questions on camera

These metrics provided strong and persuasive evidence that gender difference has emerged by the age of 7. And also provided us with a guide to the key issues we would need to target with the interventions – confidence for girls and emotional literacy for boys

We structured the story arc of the series around the metrics – each intervention or sequence was pegged to something we had learned in the metrics and wanted to change. This helped create narrative building blocks for the overall arc and allowed us to establish a sense of jeopardy around each scene, rather than relying solely on the overall jeopardy around whether the experiment would give a positive result in the end.