

National Schools Film and Animation Awards 2010



A firm but fair
chair of judges

Children's TV presenter Lady Floella Benjamin is a superstar. She is also a great chair of judges as I discovered yesterday at the Bli National Schools Film and Animation Awards 2010 in Sheffield where a group of educators and journalists spent the day looking at over 40 shortlisted entries covering all the key stages.

We saw reworkings of familiar stories such as the Three Little Pigs and Tell Tale Heart, several pieces on internet safety and lots of entries focusing on environmental issues. There were some strong issues-based pieces covering teenage pregnancy, under age drinking and life in the run down areas found in so many cities in Britain. These would not have looked out of place on Channel 4 and were highly polished productions which avoided the sanctimonious preaching tone often associated with teenage documentaries. Other pieces were very school based and provided a little affectionate mockery of teachers, their habits and mannerisms.

As judges, we learned a lot about film making and animation as we got a crash course in what works and what doesn't. You could see where entries were under-rehearsed or needed editing. It was obvious where technology dominated and the focus or storyline had become obscured. We talked about everything from the colour of titles to the use of camera angles and sound effects.

Floella is passionate about encouraging children to be creative but she is also a stern critic," 'Good enough' is

just not good enough. They should be aiming for the best," she said of one entry. But she was also quick to point out where pupils had conveyed a story or communicated to their audience particularly effectively.

The results of the awards will be announced early in 2011 but you can be certain that whatever form the ceremonies and celebrations take, Floella Benjamin will be there, sharing her passion for creativity and encouraging children to try that little bit harder to be the very best that they can be.

<http://www.floellabenjamin.com/>