

## Dyslexic boy in writing contest final

A 13-year-old schoolboy who has battled against dyslexia has made it through to the finals of a national writing competition.

Zac Welsh, who has recently left Calder House specialist school in Colerone, has been shortlisted in a contest organised by the West End hit musical *Wicked*.

It is being judged by the popular author and former children's laureate Michael Morpurgo.

The competition called for stories from young writers, written from an extraordinary, challenging or unusual perspective.



Zac Welsh

Zac, who lives in Frome, chose to write a story from the point of view of a Cat O'Nine Tails, the whip used in the navy to punish sailors in the 19th century.

It impressed the judges so much that it is one of only four to be selected to go forward into the final round of the competition in his category. He has now been invited to go to London for the final judging ceremony.

Zac said: "I was very surprised to be nominated but delighted."

Head teacher Andrew Day said Zac's achievement proved that children with dyslexia could still be talented writers. He said: "This just goes to show what young dyslexic writers can achieve. Anyone who still thinks dyslexics can't write had better think again."

Zac left the specialist school for children with dyslexia at the end of last term after two years there.

## Nursery wins gold award for listening to their youngsters



**GOLD STANDARD:** With some of the nursery children are Sonia Mainstone-Cotton, senior nursery nurse Mags Woods, Maf Jarvis, First Steps director Helena Thompson and nursery nurse Vicky Cloutman

PICTURE: Lloyd Ellington

A nursery in Bath has been recognised for the way it allows children to have a say in their development.

The First Steps Moorlands Children's Centre is the first in Bath and north east Somerset to be awarded the gold standard in the Children and Young People's Charter scheme run by the Children's Society.

The award was presented by Sonia Mainstone-Cotton from the charity, who said it was important that the youngsters had their views heard.

She said: "First Steps Moorlands Children's Centre has been consistently working hard to ensure they listen to their children and involve them in decision-making."

"It is fantastic that it is the first children's centre to receive the gold award, which demonstrates the high standard they are working at."

The scheme recognises efforts to provide an environment where children are encouraged to make decisions, in line with the United Nations convention on the rights of the child, which sees children having their say as an important part of their development.

Acting children's services manager at First Steps Maf Jarvis said he was delighted with the award.

He said: "Even the youngest of children are capable of expressing an opinion about what they like or dislike."

"We are really happy to be working with the Children's Society, who have helped us make sure that the children are able to make choices and have a voice within our setting."

## Quartet targeted by campaigners

**Paul Wiltshire**  
Deputy Editor  
news@bathchron.co.uk

Campaigners plan to protest outside the Assembly Rooms in Bath tonight – over a concert by a string quartet.

The Bristol branch of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign says the Jerusalem String Quartet has closely aligned itself with the Israeli military – a charge the musicians firmly reject.

The quartet will be performing at 7.30pm as part of the city's Mozartfest, playing pieces by Mozart and Brahms.

The activists say the demonstration will be peaceful, and will urge concert-goers to write to the Israeli embassy in London to protest at the country's restrictions on Palestinians.

Earlier this year, campaigners interrupted a concert by the musicians in London, while there have also been protests in Scotland, which led to the arrest of five people.

The PSC says the quartet has regularly performed for the Israeli Defence Force, which enforces the occupation of land claimed by



**CONCERT PROTEST:** Anti-Israeli campaigners are planning to stage a protest at a concert by The Jerusalem String Quartet

Palestinians, and say the visit is "part of an Israeli state charm offensive".

Spokesman Ed Hill said: "People coming here for the concert may be unaware that these musicians regularly perform for a brutal army of illegal occupation."

After the London concert disruption, the quartet accused those demonstrators of being "both mistaken and inconsiderate in their action".

In a statement, the musicians said: "We are not official representatives of the government of Israel. We are Israeli citizens, who have no direct

connection with or patronage by the Government. Disturbing music lovers in the middle of a concert does not enhance any of the rights of the Palestinians."

Mozartfest chairman Sir David Bell said he was very proud to present the concert, which he said would feature musicians of the highest calibre.

He said the Mozartfest and the Jerusalem Quartet welcomed audiences of all persuasions, nationalities and ethnicities.

"I very much hope that what promises to be a superb concert goes ahead without interruption."

■ Mozartfest reviews, page 63

  
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