

SCRIPT

Stage set as follows: Centre stage, 'classroom' with children sitting on floor at feet of teacher. Sign on wall (eg- Class 5); Stage left, 'staff-room' (label on wall), teachers sat on comfy chairs with mugs, pens and paper. Both groups mime 'normal' classroom/staff-room situations.

Enter through audience, two Ofsted Inspectors (looking official) with suits and briefcases. Labels on backs, reading 'Ofsted' and 'Inspector' (Inspector 1: Isabella, Inspector 2: Felix). Face audience, but address each other:

INSPECTOR 1 *(Looking round room) Ah! This is it. South Cave School! (Referring to clipboard) The Head Teacher is a Mrs. Derbyshire and they have 320 children in total. They certainly have a good reputation. (Reads) Last inspected summer 2016, highly commended for enthusiastic children and positive learning environment.*

INSPECTOR 2 *(Less convinced) Well! They won't be expecting us so lets see for ourselves how well they are doing. (Both exit, making notes as they go)*

A teacher from 'staff-room' stands up and walks to front of stage to address audience.

MR RITCHIE *(With coffee cup in hand) Hello there! I'm Mr. Ritchie – one of the teachers here. I'm the lucky one who gets to oversee this year's nativity play! It's always the same this time of year – we're SO busy, I sometimes wonder why we bother to do a play at all. Still, no time for chatter, I must get back to the planning meeting...*

As he returns to 'staff-room' and sits down, 4 children from 'classroom' walk to front of stage to address audience. Miss Hoey begins handing out letters to class.

ANNIE *(Excited) Hello! Guess what? We've just been told we're doing a nativity play for Christmas and Miss Hoey says I might even have some lines to say!*

WILLIAM R *Our teacher says she's got a letter for us all to take home about what we're going to be and what costumes we need.*

ANNIE *I want to be Mary, 'cause I'll get to look after the baby Jesus.*

DAISY H *I want to be an angel, 'cause they get to wear pretty dresses and learn to fly!*

WILLIAM R *I want to be the donkey, because I like plodding!*

LUCA *Well I want to be Joseph, 'cause I could marry Mary. (Nudges his mate)*

Teacher from 'classroom' stands up and announces:

MISS HOEY *Children! It's home time! Make sure you've all got a letter before you go home.*

Children from front of stage join the others in class to put on their coats and get schoolbags, then line up by the teacher who hands out letters to a few children as they exit stage to go home. Miss Hoey takes position on stage for solo spoken chorus. Enter Mum (Sophie) and Dad (Charlie H) with 2 of school children¹ in coats with bags and letters.

MEGAN Mum! Miss Hoey gave us a letter for you to read. She said it's really important.

MUM (Grace) Not another one!? *(Takes school bag from child)* Go and hang your coats up while I see what all this is about. *(Begins to rummage through contents of school bag)*

Song 1. WOULD YOU PLEASE PROVIDE A COSTUME? (see page 46 for lyrics)

First chorus spoken by class teacher (after class has exited) addressing audience as she recites the content of the last remaining letter in her hand.

MISS HOEY *(Over music as per track 1 on CD)*
Would you please provide a costume
For your child to bring to school?
If it proves to be a problem,
Would you kindly speak to Miss Hoey? *(Joins teachers in 'staff-room')*

During song, Mum, children and Dad (Charlie H) each in turn move to front of stage to sing solo verses. The teachers in the 'staff room' all stand up to sing each chorus, sitting down again in between. Staff and family all exit at end of song.

School bell rings off-stage. Sign reading 'School Office' hung on wall one side of stage. Two ladies sit behind desks with telephone/computer screen etc... Busy environment answering calls etc... Small children come in one by one, in school uniform with class registers under their arm and hand them to office staff.

JAMES W Class 5's register for you.

MRS BROCKLEBANK *(Takes it)* Thank you James. *(Answers another phone call)*

LILLIE-MAE Class 6's register for you.

MRS EDWARDS Thanks Lillie.

LEROY 'Scuse me, Mrs. Brocklebank. Mr. Ritchie says please can he have the key to the drama cupboard?

MRS BROCKLEBANK *(Going to cupboard)* Here you are, Leroy. Can you bring it straight back when he's finished with it? Thank you.

DAISY H (& JACK) *(Arm around his shoulder)* Miss, Jack's fallen over and hurt his knee. It's really bleeding Miss!

MRS EDWARDS *(To Mrs. Brocklebank)* I'll deal with it. *(Looks at cut)* Oh! That's not so bad. Shall we clean it up? *(Children sit down while attends to cut)*

Enter 2 inspectors.

INSPECTOR 1 Uh, good morning. Would you mind telling Mrs. Derbyshire that the Ofsted Inspectors are here to see her.

Mrs. Brocklebank and Mrs. Edwards both jump to their feet in horror. Mrs. Edwards ushers Jack and Daisy out of room. Mrs. Brocklebank goes to get Head Teacher.

Re-enter Mrs. Brocklebank with Head Teacher.

HEAD My word! What an unexpected surprise!

INSPECTOR 1 *(Shaking hands vigorously in turn)* Good morning!

INSPECTOR 2 Good morning!

INSPECTOR 1 My name's Mrs. Neve. And this is Mr. Rosinke.

INSPECTOR 2 We're Ofsted Inspectors.

INSPECTOR 1 We're here to inspect your school!

INSPECTOR 2 We're here to inspect your teachers!

BOTH We're here to inspect you ALL!

INSPECTOR 1 Sorry it's short notice but we hope you'll understand.

INSPECTOR 2 We'll be with you for all this week. We'll need your lesson plans.

INSPECTOR 1 Just carry on as normal! You have no need to fear!

INSPECTOR 2 We'll find our own way round, thank you.

BOTH Pretend that we're not here! *(Exit)*

Speechless Head Teacher and office staff stand frozen, mouths open, for a few seconds. Enter class of children talking, with their teacher (allowing Head Teacher and office staff to exit with props). Children carry a number of dressing up boxes on stage and set them out in a line across the front of the stage. They stand around talking.

MR RITCHIE *(Sternly)* I don't know why there's so much chatter going on! I'd like you all to settle down quickly so we can sort out what we've got for our Christmas show. *(Children position themselves in groups behind the dressing up boxes)*

Song 2. TINSEL AND TEA-TOWELS (see page 47 for lyrics)

This song requires some choreography. There is huge scope for the momentum to gather as the song progresses. During the choruses the children by the boxes can bury their heads inside and throw out the odd prop and items of clothing. During the verses these can be picked up and 'danced' around the room. Each additional verse sees an accumulation of activity. This is your key opportunity to get 'tinsel and tea-towel' happy!

Inspectors arrive and witness the mayhem after verse 3. They stand up straight and expressionless at the back of the room, in full sight of the audience but unseen by the cast. They make notes on clipboards as appropriate. In the final chorus, Mr. Ritchie joins in the fun with the children, waltzing a string of tinsel around the room with a tea-towel on his head. Go for a big dramatic ending and anticipate rapturous applause!

Enter Mrs. Farmer, (opposite side of room from inspectors) with another class of children, lined up in pairs behind her.

MRS FARMER *(Loudly across room)* Excuse me Mr. Ritchie! Can we use this room now?

MR RITCHIE *(A little embarrassed)* Uh... yes... certainly. *(To his own class)*
Children, clear all these things away quickly and line up at the door in twos.... Quick as you can now!... Brooke! Take that tinsel out of there!

Children throw all the clothes/props back in the boxes as fast as they can and line up at door, next to inspectors, with dressing up boxes in tow. They lead out quickly as next class enter.

MR RITCHIE *(Leaving)* Thank you Mrs. Farmer.

As Class 5 enter, with Mrs. Farmer, they sit down on floor facing her, sideways to audience. Head Teacher enters as they settle.

HEAD Good morning Class 5.

CLASS *(Whole class chants)* Good morning, Mrs. Derbyshire.

HEAD I'd like to introduce you to some special visitors who have come to look at all the exciting things we're doing this week. Their names are Mrs. Neve and Mr. Rosinke. Do be polite if they ask you any questions. I'm sure they'll be very interested in anything you have to say. Charlie and Vitesh, perhaps you could find our visitors some chairs and pop them over there. Thank you, Mrs. Farmer. *(Shrugs meaningfully to her and exits)*

MRS FARMER So children, who can remember what we were talking about last lesson?
(Hands go up) James? *(Children's own names can be used throughout)*

JAMES B We talked about Christmas, miss.

MRS FARMER Well done James. Who was in our Christmas story at the beginning?
(Sees hand) Yes, Poppy?

POPPY S Mary and Joseph?

MRS FARMER That's right! Mary and Joseph!

VITESH They did that long journey, didn't they?

MRS FARMER That's right Vitesh. Who can tell me how far they had to travel?

LUKE Please miss, can I go to the toilet?

MRS FARMER *(Sighs)* Yes Luke. Go quickly. *(Choosing carefully)* Lily! How far was it from Nazareth to Bethlehem?

LILY Was it... seventy miles or so?

MRS FARMER *(Delighted. Looks towards inspectors)* Seventy miles or so! You're absolutely right Lily. Well done. Who can tell our visitors what we learned about how they travelled in those days?

ALEXANDER *(Standing up)* They didn't have many cars in those days, so they probably had to walk.

POPPY S *(Correcting him)* Joseph had to walk but Mary went on a donkey.

JAMES B A superhero could get there in 4 minutes!

MRS FARMER Seventy miles in 4 minutes, huh? That would be...

CHARLIE E ... one thousand and fifty miles an hour, miss! *(Inspectors produce calculators, nod approvingly and make notes)*

LUKE *(Re-enters from toilet)* Can we do that song we learned now, miss?

MRS FARMER Good idea Luke! Could you pass the percussion box to the instrumentalists? Mary and Joseph, to your places!

Instrumental group sit with percussion. One child passes painted donkey masks to another group of children. Mary (Annie) and Joseph (Joseph B) get shawl and blanket etc...

Song 3. ALONG TO BETHLEHEM (see page 48 for lyrics)

During song children re-enact the journey to Bethlehem. The chorus lends itself to a choreographed 'donkey dance' – perhaps featuring multiple donkeys.

Inspectors, suitably impressed, clap loudly and exit.

MRS FARMER OK children. Tidy up time. Let's see who can be ready for play first?

Lots of bustle as children tidy away all instruments and props and line up at hall door. Exit.

Enter Class 6, in costume (shepherds and angels). Sit on floor in groups waiting. Enter Head Teacher. The children stand up as they say their lines.

HEAD Well done for sitting so nicely, class 6. I'm sorry to be the bearer of bad news but I'm afraid your music teacher has had to go home early. She's lost her voice. The good news is... I shall be taking you for this lesson! Perhaps you can tell me what you've been learning?

SIENA Our class is doing the angels and shepherds, Miss.

HEAD Now they really did have good news.

CHARLIE H That's what we've been doing. Last week we did some writing about good news and how we hear it.

FREDDIE And we've learned a song which we're acting out for part of the Christmas play.

HEAD That all sounds very interesting. Perhaps you can show me how far you've got? (*Inspectors arrive*) Ah! Mrs. Neve, Mr. Rosinke – do take a seat!

Inspectors sit with back to audience. Group of children (including child 10 and 11) produce pieces of writing and stand in a line to face audience. They form 2 groups to read out their work:

LILY The best news I've ever had was when I heard my mum was pregnant! The doctor told her the good news!

WILLIAM R My good news was getting a part in the school play! My mum got a letter from school.

LUCA It was great news when I heard *Hull FC* beat *Castleford* 20-0. It was in all the papers!

DAISY W We had some great news the other day. The phone rang and it was our teacher saying that the boiler had broken down and school was closed!

MEGAN The best news I've ever had was when I found out I was getting a drum kit for Christmas! No-one told me but it's hard to hide a drum kit in a small house!

INSPECTOR 1 (*To Inspector 2 in loud whisper*) I'm not sure his neighbours would call it good news!

GRACE When Jesus was born they didn't have phones or newspapers or television.

JOSEPH B But God had really important news to tell the world.

BROOKE So... He sent hundreds and hundreds of angels to fill the sky with singing.

LOUIS P And that's how the shepherds heard the good news!

Reading group sit down.

ALL CLASS (*Putting up hands*) We know a song about that!!

HEAD (*Looking at watch*) We've got just enough time to practise it. Track 13 please Keeley.

Children take their places ready to do their song. This needs to be dramatised and choreographed as it would be in the final performance.

Song 4. ANGELS SINGING (See page 49 for lyrics)

INSPECTOR 1 (*Standing up, clapping*) Well done, children!

INSPECTOR 2 That really was the best singing we've heard for a long time!

Both inspectors exit. Head Teacher stands by door and waits as children exit.

'Staff-room' sign put on back wall centre-stage. Chairs brought on. Head puts kettle on and arranges a few mugs on a tray.

Enter staff with mugs, papers, lunch in hand. Mingle. Some sit down on chairs. Others stand with mugs in hand.

MRS FARMER Boy! Do I need a strong cup of coffee! I'm glad I'm not on playground duty.

MISS HOEY Me too. After the morning I've had... the children are so excited about the Christmas show. *(Turns to Mr. Ritchie and points)* Ben, you've got something in your hair...

MR RITCHIE *(Surprised)* Have I? *(Removes a large piece of tinsel)* Oh dear! This tinsel gets everywhere. *(Laughs)* You should have seen my class rehearsing that song. Even I got carried away. The parents will love it.

MR MCKENZIE I wonder what the inspectors make of it all?

MRS FARMER I'm not sure my class has a very good idea of the Nativity story. I reckon if the inspectors asked them questions about it they'd get some very strange answers.

MR MCKENZIE Someone in my class announced that Boris Johnson could have been one of the wise men!

MISS HOEY One of mine said her grandma could have been one.

MR RITCHIE One boy said that if they were that wise, why didn't they give Jesus a teddy bear and a bicycle?

MRS FARMER What, instead of "gold, for instance and Murphy"?!!

HEAD While we're on the subject of the wise men...! *(Inspectors appear)* ...I think we need to get back to our rehearsals!

Staff and Head exit with inspectors following.

Mr. McKenzie re-enters with class, with some of children dressed as wise men (with or without camels/attendants etc...) Mary, Joseph and baby in crib scene, with animals. Children take their places to perform 'dress rehearsal'.

Song 5. THREE VERY CLEVER WISE MEN (see page 50 for lyrics)

MR MCKENZIE Well done, class! That was great. Let's get you back to the classroom and you can change back into your uniform quickly and quietly. Please don't forget to hang your costumes up. You'll need them for tomorrow night's performance. *(All line up to exit)*

Enter Head and Mr. Ritchie.

HEAD Ah! Mr. Ritchie. The Inspectors have asked if they could talk with a group of children. Sounds as if they're interested in seeing if the children are actually learning anything from doing the nativity play. Would you mind taking a small group along to the library? *(Leaving, he/she pleads)*
Please be selective!

MR RITCHIE Oh to be a fly on the wall! *(Both exit)*

Enter Inspectors with clipboards. Take seats. Enter small group of children – sit down in semicircle facing audience. Inspectors sit together, sideways on.

INSPECTOR 1 Good afternoon children. Thank you for coming along.

INSPECTOR 2 Your teachers probably told you we'd like to have a little chat about your nativity play.

INSPECTOR 1 We've really enjoyed all your rehearsals. You certainly look as if you've been enjoying it too.

LUKE We do one every year, miss – but this one's the best!

INSPECTOR 2 So why do you think you do a nativity play every year?

All hands go up. Inspector 2 points to Charlie. Rest of children look down and groan.

CHARLIE E *(Knowledgeably and slowly)* It's a tradition in this country, sir. But the first nativity ever took place in a cave, in Italy, in about the year 1223. In those days a lot of people couldn't read or write, so a man called Saint Francis of Assisi ("a-see-see") decided to teach the people the Christmas story by performing it with people and animals from his village.

Everyone is lost for words!

POPPY S *(Putting hand up. Excited)* I think we do it to cheer the teachers up!

INSPECTOR 1 Really?! Do you think they enjoy doing a nativity every year?

LILY Yes – 'cause our school always teaches us new things! *(Inspectors scribble)*

VITESH I think they really like the songs we're doing. The other day I heard Mrs. Brocklebank singing the angels' song in the toilet!

ALEXANDER I reckon the teachers have a laugh and they enjoy themselves. And they can see what talents they have.

POPPY S I don't think they enjoy it – 'cause it's too much hassle and stress.

JAMES B Mr. Ritchie gets well stressy! *(Inspectors scribble)*

LILY Only when we forget our lines. Or if we forget to smile.

VITESH Everyone smiled when the Virgin Mary got the back of her dress caught up in her knickers!

INSPECTOR 1 *(Hastily)* Ok! So what do you all think you've learned from the Nativity story?

POPPY S Baby Jesus was born in a barn.

ALEXANDER He could have been born in a really posh hospital – or a palace, for a baby king. But it's not like a fairy tale. It's a true story...

LUKE God chose some really simple, ordinary things – like Mary and the donkey...

LILY ...And the shepherds and the stable.

JAMES B *(Arguing)* But what about the angels and the incredible star? They weren't exactly ordinary!

CHARLIE E It seems to me... *(Others groan)* there must have been some kind of intelligent design behind all of this story – some kind of heavenly plan...

Mr. Ritchie enters.

MR RITCHIE So sorry to interrupt you. I'm afraid the children are needed back in the assembly hall now. Mr. Bannister, our music teacher, has just got back and he wants to run through a song with some of the soloists before our first performance tomorrow evening.

All exit. Soloists stay on stage. Music teacher enters with CD player and any other singers.

MR BANNISTER We'll try this next song from the beginning. Let's see how well you've been practising...

Song 6. PART OF A HEAVENLY PLAN (see page 51 for lyrics)

MR BANNISTER *(Pauses to reflect)* Children you've done ever so well. Sing it like that tomorrow and there won't be a dry eye in the house!

Children get their coats and bags and exit, saying goodbye. Mr. Bannister collects up his songbooks, music stand etc and follows them out.

Backstage crew people enter with sign: 'BACKSTAGE –THE FOLLOWING EVENING'

Backstage bustle scene. Groups of children in costume, with 3 or 4 of the teachers/helpers. Putting on finishing touches to make-up/props/costumes etc

All of dialogue very loud, shouting across room.

ANGEL (DAISY W) *(Furious)* Sir! He just sat on my halo and bent it!

ANGEL 2 (GRACE) *(As tinsel is pulled off her head)* Oi! Get your own tinsel! This bit's

mine!

SHEPHERD 1 (WILLIAM R) Who's pinched my sheep! (*Looks under table for it*)

WISE MAN 1 (JAMES) (*Pushing WM3*) I'm first in the line! I'm the one with the gold. You're last in the queue, after Frankie, remember?!

SHEPHERD 2 (LUCA) (*Tugging on teacher's sleeve*) Please Miss – could you fix my tea-towel? I can't get it to stay on properly!

MARY (ANNIE) (*In a strop*) Hey! Who's got the baby Jesus!

Doll is passed around the boys endlessly, until one of the angels snatches it and hands it back to Mary.

JOSEPH (JOSEPH B) Can I go to the toilet please Miss?

MR. BANNISTER Please be quick! It's time to go on!

Enter stage hand. running. Shouts across to teacher.

STAGE HAND (LOUIS P) Can we have everybody in their places now please? It's time to go on!

MR. BANNISTER OK children. Listen out for your group to be called and then make your way onto the stage. No talking, no pushing... and PLEASE, don't forget to smile!

Song 7. DON'T FORGET TO SMILE! (see page 52 for lyrics)

Each of the groups gather and exit at the end of their particular verse. Teachers stand by doors to usher them out, smiling and encouraging them on their way. Exit teachers.

After song, stage hands enter and set up stable scene centre-stage. Enter Mary and Joseph and sit down with baby.

Song 8. COME AND WORSHIP (see page 53 for lyrics)

M and J, or soloist/small group sing first chorus. During verses each corresponding group enters stable to form a tableau around the manger.

Enter Head Teacher to address audience.

HEAD Every year, amidst the tinsel and tea-towels, I have the delightful job of seeing the children singing their hearts out and presenting us with the Nativity story. It's always good, but I think this year tops the lot! I'm sure you'd like to join me in thanking both the children and the staff for all their hard work. Can we put our hands together in appreciation?
(*After applause. To music teacher*) Mr. Bannister – is there a final song for us? (*To audience*) Thank you all for coming.

Song 9. THEY CALLED HIS NAME JESUS (see page 54 for lyrics)

After song, Inspectors walk over to Head Teacher and shake hands. Hand over some kind of 'well done', eg certificate/medal/rosette/sign with a large tick etc. They turn to face children to clap them, with backs to audience, revealing the words 'THE' and 'END' pinned on their backs.

THE END!