

Talking Trees

The newsletter for Norwich Steiner School

Friday 17th July 2015

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Friday 17th July – last day of summer term
Wednesday 23rd – workday (9am – 1pm)
Thursday 24th July - workday (9am – 1pm)
Thursday 3rd September – workday (11am-3pm)
Monday 7th September – First day of autumn term
Thursday 22 October – last day of first half term
Friday 23 October – Inset day, no school

Workdays during the holidays

Apart from two mornings next week and the cleaning workday on the final Thursday of the summer holiday, we haven't listed any workdays. This is because it commits one or two of us to being in school on particular days, often with little idea of whether or not anyone is going to turn up to help.

However, Trevor is going to be here on several mornings a week throughout the holiday, and we will be needing help to do tasks such as painting window frames, continuing the work on repairing the flint walls and putting up shelving.

So we ask that if you have a day or a morning on a particular day in the week, or if you know there is going to be a week when you might have some free time to help, please get in touch with Sandie 07549 651016 or Trevor 07884 937145.

Some advance notice is appreciated and we are really grateful for any support parents can offer in this way.

Olympics experiences by Willow Class

Molly Lord

We all got to school for the usual time in the morning. We gave Sandie all the bags and we all had a day bag. Some parents brought us to

the train station; Lula's mum, my mum and Grace's mum.

Then whoever had money was allowed to buy sweets for the travel. We all went on a train for two hours. After that, we went on a bus past some of the sights like Big Ben and the London Eye.

Then we went on another train for three quarters of an hour and at the station some taxis picked us up and brought us to Michael Hall. There, some people welcomed us with drinks and cake. Ten minutes later, Dona Olivia arrived and we started to build our tents and unpack. And then another ten minutes and Sandie arrived. We set up camp.

Isabella Jeckells

The journey was fun but tiresome. When we got there we had to wait for Sandie with our tents. Next day was training; it was hot but was easy. I could hardly run the next day, we were stiff and aching a lot.

On the day, it was very fun and you could see your families that gave you strength; they were so proud of you, full of joy and admiration.

Sofia Lloyd Johnson

The first train was ok. We went past lots of trees. This train was to London. We went on a bus to get to the other train station and we had to rush to it because we were late and we missed it so had to take another one but it was lucky we did because the toilets were amazing!!!

Niamh Mason Butcher

After making a fire, we went to explore. It was the biggest school I'd ever seen! Then we came back and had dinner and went to bed.

In the morning we went down to the big field and were put in our groups. I was in Militos which was yellow. The training was hard but fun. I made a friend there. After training, I had

a gigantic water fight with other people because it was so hot! Also, we played 'Three Lands' and on the second day, 'Storm the Acropolis'.

At the final event, we got on our tunics and went down to the big field. Then we went into our groups and lined up. We had to say a poem. Then we went to our parents apart from the people doing the first event. We went to the Norwich bit and sat down and watched until our events. I did Javelin, Relay and High Jump. In other words, it was a really fun event.

Reuben Wilding

We went on a train from Norwich to London Liverpool Street. I sat next to Fred. After that we went on a bus to Victoria Station. Then we got another train to Forest Row and went in a taxi to the Olympics.

Tallulah Breeze

Camping was my favourite part of the Olympics. Camping was fun because every night we would chat and eat biscuits and snacks but the horrible thing was that we kept falling down in our sleeping bags! In the mornings we'd wake up with messy hair and chat a bit more, get dressed, eat breakfast and go to the training field. On the actual day, I was scared and didn't want to do it, there were so many people there. I saw my parents and they cheered me on so I just did it and it was really fun!

Erin Doherty

As we got to the Michael Hall camp, I saw the three fields and felt a ball of excitement rise up in my belly. Everyone started rolling down the hill and because we were in the first field, rolling was all we had to do to get to our camp. We had to wait for Sandie to get there so we just lounged around for a while. On the first night we decided to stay up late but go to sleep really quickly on all the other nights. In the morning we woke up so early I thought I might cry. We had cereal for breakfast and then we went to start training. We went to a big circle in the middle of the training field and were called up in our cities. Then we rotated in the activities. First we tried Relay. We tried all the other activities and at the end of the day we collapsed back at the camp. We slept well

and in the morning our legs killed. After we had warmed up and had breakfast, we started another day of training.

The next day as we came up to the field, I saw my parents and brother under a big marquee that had an enormous sign saying 'Norwich Steiner School'. We then ate snacks and waited for the grand opening ceremony to start. We all gathered around the fire torches and grouped with our Archons. We then walked over to the big flame. We said a poem and the Olympics began. I did Wrestling, High Jump, Relay and Javelin and after we got our medals, I went to pack my tent and then went with my family to stay the night somewhere nearby.

A view from the Bridge - Review

By Tanya Mason, Elder class parent

First of all, let me start by saying that I approached this year's play with a bit of resistance. Last year's Fiddler on the Roof had left me so overwhelmed with praise for the pool of talent that is Elder Class. I went through the year, remembering a scene or singing a bit of a song almost every day, always making me smile. I also remembered the overwhelmingly positive comments amongst the audience - one regular theatre-goer said he considered it one of the best productions he had ever seen! This was a massive achievement to have the whole class acting together and singing together, covering all the roles (many with double parts). We had the first duet, the first stage kiss! They even had their own "Fiddler" for heaven's sake - how could they match that, I thought.

And on seeing the script this year, I was uninspired (although now I think I was simply lacking imagination and vision!) - it seemed a downright depressing read, the accents were strange, the characters all so flawed and not that easy to enjoy. What a contrast from the uplifting, hopeful charm of Fiddler! So I was unprepared for the experience of Thursday evening when, sitting in the front row, I was utterly drawn into this story and connected with these characters' lives. The play was extremely well cast and the actors put in very genuine performances. The intensity of the

small cast working closely together meant that you could really connect with the emotions of the characters - whether it was Eddie's possessive frustration, Katherine's struggle for personhood, the anxious remonstrations of Beatrice, the social vulnerability of the immigrants, or the helplessness of Alfieri.- so much so that, by the final scene, I was actually moved to tears by the tragedy of the situation the characters were in.

I knew from seeing the Fiddler production how well the class works together on stage. The strong relationships among the class allow them to really gel, and to trust and support one another, and this shows in the dynamic way they inhabit their roles and the natural timing that they find on stage when working together. This time around, they not only worked as a team on stage, but also behind the scenes and in every department of production. I was so impressed by every detail that had been covered by the students themselves, from the brilliant set design and props to the very professional lighting and filming. They did their own budgeting, publicity and marketing for the play, as well as managing their own wardrobe. They even had their own catering department on both nights, offering a delectable range of really high quality refreshments, which made me feel like I was in the VIP lounge! This was also the first time a student has directed one of the school plays, so it was completely and utterly an Elder Class Production (someone copyright that, please!).

Well congratulations everyone - despite my prejudice, my doubts and my natural leanings towards musical theatre :), you made me love this play. I can honestly say this was the most professional production to date. I really can't wait to see what you do next year!

I know why my daughter says that Elder Class are her favourite "acting troupe". Yes, they are all fine actors. But more than that, they are a fine TEAM. Whether on stage or off stage, the Elder Class Clan is irreplaceable.

Oak Class

By Mr Nowell, Class teacher

During the Age of Discovery, western european powers, led by Spain and Portugal, driven by the need to find new and lucrative trade routes, began to digest large parts of the world, stripping them of their resources, both human and mineral. The conquistadors spread through the Americas like an unstoppable wave: a handful of ruthless soldiers was able to bring down vast and ancient civilisations.

We began the Summer term by looking at our own digestive systems, moving from the absorption of foodstuffs to the more subtle digestion of sound and light through the wondrous organs of the ear and the eye. On many levels, this was a term in which we considered how we 'take in the world,' through our senses, through our voyages of discovery, both inner and outer. By looking at the incredible journey of sound, from its origin as vibrations in the air, through its encounter with the eardrum, its condensation and amplification by the hammer, anvil and stirrup and its entry into the cochlea, via the tiny oval window, we gained a sense of how the human being really does "take in" the surrounding world.

We ended the term with a four week physics block. Here too, in our work with mechanics, we looked at the way in which force and effort can be applied in the world, and encountered the idea of 'mechanical advantage.' If I position a lever in the right place, I can create mechanical advantage and lift something many times my own weight: in other words, I can manipulate the world to my own advantage.

The real strength of our curriculum is that it places the human being at its centre: not a purely *functional* being who can be trained to do this or that, but a *human* being, who is guided in his or her actions by a moral compass. At the same time as we learn to manipulate the world, to explore its manifold secrets and riches, we learn about the consequences of unbridled greed. Out of this juxtaposition arises the potential for something truly human: a sense of responsibility towards the world and the people who live in it.

Maple Class

By Mrs Higgins, Class teacher

At the end of each school year the children look back over all of their book work and art work, finishing off any incomplete pages, and remembering various lessons. They also might see how much they have learnt and notice improvements or be pleased with particular efforts. Maple class have been surprised at the volume of really lovely work they have done this year and are looking forward to sharing it with their families. It is nice for the children to be proud of what they have done.

However, while it is easy to present the beautiful, visual work that the children produce every day, often it is harder to share the other aspects of the constant learning and creating that the children do in school. I am thinking particularly of music, which only becomes illuminated at festivals or end of term productions, but is probably the most nourishing and challenging learning process that the children go through at school, every morning. It is a fulfilling experience for both the class and the teacher as it is a purely social lesson that is different each time, it is never complete like visual work, but it stimulates the children's feeling and memory like no other subject.

I have noticed that having a bit of time at the start of every lesson for singing and making music has been the most important aspect of the children's school experience, and it has been most rewarding for Maple class to see the older children share music in assembly, and to sing with them.

In fact it has been wonderful to see the older children looking after Maple class over the year; they have been good role models. A particularly big thank you to Oak class students for their kindness, patience and willingness to entertain Maple class without being asked, especially the knitters and skippers.

Reflections on Drama

By Mr Higgins

Last week, I was lucky enough to be able to experience two very different pieces of theatre: the first was Elder Class's adaptation of 'A View from the Bridge', by Arthur Miller; the second was Sequoia Class's performance of the cantata 'Captain Noah and his Floating Zoo' by Michael Flanders and Joseph Horowitz.

What struck me about both pieces was how easily I was drawn in to both narratives, - whether I was feeling pity for the unicorns who missed the ark because they were splashing in the rain, or willing Eddie Carbone to let go of his obsession with controlling his niece, - while I was watching either play, my whole attention was fixed on what was unfolding before me.

What is this investment that we're so willing to place in a pretend environment, and why is it often such a moving experience?

Recent anthropological study suggests that the first forms of theatre may have been puppetry based, gradually evolving into mask-based chorus drama with the eventual development of the bare faced soliloquy-speaking actor coming comparatively recently. It is interesting then to look at the development, through the school, of pretend and make-believe play in this light.

In Waldorf education, it is often the case that the children, in how they are taught, are involved in a gentle, unconscious recapitulation of humankind's gradual expansion and broadening of consciousness. With this in mind, what 'theatre' do we see going on in Kindergarten, for example? One of the things we can witness at this age is the myriad projection that goes on in the children's free play, - many inanimate objects becoming embodied and given life and volition through the agency of the children manipulating them. It is also something of a tradition for the Kindergarten children to mark their graduation to Class 1 with a puppet show for their parents.

Moving to the early years of Lower School, we may see the children involved in little plays about animals, wearing masks, and miming,

speaking and singing in chorus. This is developed through enacting Greek and other myths, still in chorus, with occasional characters stepping forward, leading to the stage around Class 7-8 whereby some classes may embark on a Shakespeare play, where the tangible masks become metaphorical ones as identities shift and change as a result of the complexities and playfulness of the language.

Often, when teachers are involved in putting on a play, they will remark on how many different facets of the children are called into being during rehearsal and general preparation and design of costumes and set etc: - speech, listening, music, spatial awareness, social awareness, timing, memory, a sense of humour, a sense of sadness, reverence, a sense of the absurd, improvisation, beauty, ugliness, silence, movement, - all these qualities in their constant interaction and friction produce an environment that elicits experiences, both performing and witnessing plays, that resonate with children and audience long after the performance.

News from Birch class

By Sandie, Upper school class guardian
& Ferdie, Birch class pupil

Birch class pupils have been studying Ecology in their current main lesson block, taught by their upper school science teacher, Sonja Burnett. Within the ecology block, the class has been looking at human needs, such as the need for water, food and shelter.

To support this block, Sonja and I spent three days during this last week of term camping with Birch class on private meadows/woodland about 30 minutes drive south of Norwich.

Sitting around the campfire on the last day we reflected on how even with the basic human needs being met, living outdoors without many of the things we take for granted in modern life, including flushing toilets, showers, running water and comfy chairs for example, is both refreshing and exhausting. Preparing food, doing the washing up, collecting firewood and keeping yourself feeling clean become both increasingly tiring and necessary in order to allow one to function properly and continue meeting ones

needs.

The other side to this of course is that living in this way is also simpler and rewarding in a way that we can only begin to appreciate when we are immersed in the experience.

Back at school the pupils have been reflecting on their recent experience. Below is what one pupil, Ferdie Fraser, wrote:

“Living outside sort of makes you appreciate other people more. It's a cooperative lifestyle when you're with others in a non-automatic environment. By "non-automatic" I mean your warmth, comfort and general life state really depend on you (or some kind other) doing the work 'manually' to maintain the state you'd like to be in. When you live in an environment where a lot of things are mainly self-sustained machines you lose the "take one for the team" aspect.

You also appreciate people more because they're one of the only sources of entertainment, and I imagine living outside on your own could get rather dull. Falling in a stream on your own is a rather soggy and uncomfortable experience, but falling in a stream with someone else, laughing it off and then watching your friend being cornered by ponies is yes, a little uncomfortable, but so very far from dull.”

Metamorphosis

Jacqui Armour, Kindergarten Assistant

The children have been watching ladybird larvae as they pupate and transform into ladybirds. They are skeptical that these strange creatures on the willow leaves *will* actually turn into ladybirds- ‘They are too long’, ‘They have hairs’, ‘They are stripy, not spotty.’ But we wait, we see what happens, and soon enough they have all gone and there are ladybirds everywhere- but that is probably just a coincidence.

So we have also watched as the sun-children transform, loosing their teeth, and stretching out their limbs and fingers, getting ready to emerge into the world as fully-fledged school children.

They are changing inside too, moving from 'doing' to 'feeling', becoming more sensitive to the words and actions of friends, feeling that 'Everyone is mean to me.' and, sensing this new power of words, or just looks, being 'mean' back. They are also starting to be critical of their friends and teachers, telling us (often loudly and repeatedly) if we make a mistake- if something is not quite as it should be, as it always is. And woe betide anybody who talks with their mouth full!

And they are feeling bored, but, at the same time, their imagination is growing, so when they tell us 'I'm bored' or ask 'What should I do now?' we wait, and we see what happens, and they soon think of something to play, and will take the others with them, discussing and developing ideas as they go, creating a common fantasy world, enjoying seeing their ideas transformed into action. Being able to decide what to do now, what happens next, helps to strengthen identity and develop independence.

Sun-children need to be seen and to be heard. They need to be recognised as the oldest, the biggest, the tallest, the fastest, the almost-school-children; to be respected as the capable ones; to be appreciated as the helpful ones. They have become authorities on kindergarten life and life in general and enjoy passing on their skills and know-how, and, unfortunately, their jokes.

To support these physical, emotional and social changes, and to prepare them for their next stage of life as class one, the sun-children stay for for a weekly transition afternoon during the summer term. This provides an opportunity to start to separate from the kindergarten, develop a new group identity and to form healthy relationships with each other, their future classmates and teacher.

On these afternoons they undertake long handwork projects, honing the finely-tuned fine motor skills and hand-eye co-ordination that they will soon need for writing and reading, make puppets and plan their graduation ring-time and puppet show. They are preparing to depart, and to impart their knowledge to those left behind. They visit and are visited by their

new teacher and classmates, joining them for songs, skipping and stories- getting to know them and the strange world upstairs, where, later, they will transform once more, emerging as teenagers.

Fundraising from Arthurs Organics

From January-July, those shopping for their organic fruit and vegetables from Arthurs Organics, have raised £96 for the School. Thank you for your support!