

Talking Trees

The newsletter for Norwich Steiner School, Kindergartens & Parent & Child Groups

23rd March 2011

Dates for your diary

Friday 8th April – break up for Easter Holiday
Tuesday 3rd May – start of summer term
Thursday 7th April – kindergarten parents evening
Friday 6th May - Mayday festival

Parent & Child Groups

By Susan McGurk, Parent & Child Group teacher

In Parent and Child we have been delighted to welcome many families who are completely new to our community as well as to see some familiar faces returning with a second (or third!) sibling. It is lovely to see how our newcomers - both small and large - become absorbed quite quickly into the groups.

It is particularly encouraging to notice and welcome the increasing cultural diversity of our families. We have parents from Poland, Holland, Germany, Argentina and Japan - to name but a few. This reflects very well the truly global nature of the Steiner Movement. Worldwide, it is the fastest growing alternative education movement.

In handwork we have focused on making things with wool and felt - cosy and comforting items for the wintertime. Our ring-time songs and rhymes have reflected the stillness of the earth and animal kingdom. As we move into Spring, our crafts and songs will reflect the changing face of Mother Earth as she slowly wakes up from her Winter sleep; in ring-time we will sing of snowdrops, whilst in craft we will knit little yellow chicks for the children to play with.

Some of our older children are getting ready to make the transition to Kindergarten. As a staff we are looking at how we can support families in this process. This is on-going work and we are always available to talk to any parents who wish - this is an important part of our role!

Staffing -wise we have had some changes over the last year. We sadly said goodbye to Tara who has moved to Kindergarten. We wish her well; her knowledge, dedication, creativity and sheer hard work contributed so much to our team and families and we are really appreciative. We thank you Tara, wish you well and are glad that you are not far away!

Carlotta now runs Friday's playgroup for older children. Susan Mc. has taken over the Monday group as well as assisting in Kindergarten on Tuesdays where she has been delighted to see so many familiar faces amongst the children.

We welcome Luci as assistant on Tuesday. Having attended the groups with her son who is now in Kindergarten we are pleased to see her back in a different role.

Wishing you and your families both near and far, a joyful Springtime.

School Inspection

By Sandie Tolhurst, Administrator

At 3.30pm on Thursday 10th March, our first school inspection for nearly 5 years, was completed and the building and its inhabitants breathed out. We had a good inspection and more than that we are currently not allowed to say, although by the end of April, the full formal report will hopefully be available for all to read.

Although inspections can be thing of dread, it's probably fair to say that the whole experience was actually extremely positive. It's one of the only times that a school gets reflected back to it what it looks like and in an objective, constructive and non-emotional way. All staff who came into contact with the inspectors themselves (there were three), have confirmed that they were knowledgeable, supportive and offered pedagogically sound advice and insights.

In addition to the formal inspection report, we were given lots of informal feedback, advice and ideas, which were very helpful and we are already working at implementing these where appropriate.

We would like to extend our thanks to all parents, for the verbal and written feedback you supplied to the inspectors and also to those of you who so kindly organised the Inspectors food for the three days they were here.

As soon as the final report is released, we will email it to you and make some paper copies available; it will also be posted on our school website.

Message from Miss Anka

Class teacher, Willow Class

I am very thankful to my parents for sending me to a Waldorf school. Indeed, I feel very fortunate and blessed to have been brought up in such a loving and holistic way. The memory of my childhood is connected to deep feelings of satisfaction, fulfilment and purpose. I have always loved going to school because it felt good (well, maybe not first thing in the morning...). However, just over the last three years here at Norwich Steiner School I have started to realize how much it has really given me and how well it has equipped me for the years to come. Waldorf education doesn't end when a child leaves school, in fact, it just begins to blossom. Life is a journey and school is just the preparation, it is the time when you pack your bag. When I left school I had no idea where I was going but I had a deep feeling that I had to find something that would be soulful and meaningful and I have had the trust that I would always be "on the right way" if I kept moving and searching.

Although also still geographical, my journey has become above all an inner journey. The minute we start to settle (for a world view, an image) we start to deaden. And this is where the traps are. To be on a journey can be exhausting and it then gets very tempting to settle down somewhere, to create traditions, to label an idea as "anthroposophical" or a child as "ADS" etc. It might mislead us into constricted perceptions of how the world or a human being is. However, especially when being a teacher, you cannot allow yourself to get comfortable and lazy. Your journey is towards the children, towards the world, towards mankind, every day. Everyday you have to question yourself and your images and make sure that you don't stop observing, that you don't stop exploring, don't stop loving.

Bon voyage!

Birch Class (age 9-11)

By Sarah Higgins, Class teacher

The Class 4 subject lessons on the Dark Ages went well with the cold winter months, ending the Autumn term with Ragnarok (the death of the Norse Gods), and beginning the brutal Northern tale Beowulf after Christmas.

Birch class took part in these stories by reciting them, the same way they would have been told hundreds of years ago. The bold alliterative quality of the Anglo-Saxon language brought out a ferocity of speech, even from the quietest children in the group.

There have been some great retellings of some of the darker tales. Here is one example from one of the boys who summarised a part of the story – those with a sensitive disposition do not read further....

"Beowulf stood read for Grendel in the hall. The door suddenly quavered and crashed open. Grendel marched in with his eyes ablaze. He took the guard by surprise and ripped him to shreds and advanced towards Beowulf. The fight broke out. The hall trembled. Beowulf got hold of Grendels arm and ripped it out of its socket. The monster wailed and fled. Beowulf told King Hrothgar and he was greatly rewarded."

Oak Class

By Jeremy Nowell, class teacher

We started the term with 'Money and Markets,' and learnt how the wise King Manifus invented money in order to prevent a cow from being chopped in half as part of a bartering process. The children made bread rolls in their cookery lesson and sold it to parents on their market stall outside the school the following day.

After half term we tackled parts of speech and punctuation for the first time, using a river flowing down a mountain to represent the flow of a sentence, and the artist, poet and various offspring who visited the mountain to reflect the qualities of noun, verb, adjective and adverb. All this was set to Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy,' which the children learnt to play on their flutes. We have now embarked on our final block of the term, looking at 'Time,' observing at first how nature marks time with the passage of various bodies through the heavens and steady march of the seasons.

Four new children have joined Oak Class since the beginning of the year. I have been struck by how well they have settled, how warmly they have been accepted into the joyful flow of life in the class and how wonderfully each has contributed his or her own qualities to that of the whole. The larger class has presented many new opportunities for friendship and learning, (as well as new challenges for the teacher!) A big thank you, as ever, to Anna for her unstinting support and devotion to the class.

Elder Class

By Michael Higgins, Class teacher

As part of this term's studies, Elder have been looking at European Geography, the diversity of its topography, its rivers and mountains, including how to give global positioning map references. At the beginning of our block, the children were encouraged to imagine a map for a country of their own invention. As a follow up, as we considered what language might be spoken in each of these fanciful countries, the class came up with fifty essential words that any people might need. The next stage was to translate these words into a fabricated language with the proviso that the words had to sound and feel like the things they represented. The children were then asked to write a day in the life of a person in that country, utilising these 50 words, translating their finished tale partly into the language of that country. The following is one of these tales (from the country of Arli by Ella):

The Story of Arli

Wez, Ma said as the sliee grog-grog ran twung in the sky. Priserr Sally flossed to know if the bleu-bleu was coming. The rach druphap ma bliff-grogged flossed bo to wrieta kill the aahleg that chip-chiped to my nor. "Shoemarr Patrick grie must take the sievish culcue and folee and slooprt the moomachie and get chipiecracks." "Doujz, grie must saches into rastel, ma need to get a dog-pog and a mupuss for bo. There is doiyz grog-grog, so ma have to get some from the plop grog-grog. Ma here grooesum and crackoum, where will grie hide? Ma're boffish, lachtie and balem. The hawre has blown out. Flieeot is falling, bo must hide until the beeum comes out.

Community supported vegetable and fruit box scheme

By Brigid Hayward, parent

One of the projects started by East Anglian food link and Transition Norwich is a community-supported agriculture scheme based at Postwick, right on the edge of Norwich. Here they will they will be growing organic vegetables and fruit for 200 households, who will support the scheme by paying a monthly subscription, picking up their weekly 'share' of produce from one of the pick up points around Norwich, and optionally helping with other activities. If someone was willing to organise it, the school community could be a pick up point for vegetable and fruit boxes from this community, if it's possible to sort out the logistics with the school. They now have the funding for the Postwick CSA, so its definitely going ahead. For more info see www.eafl.org or call Tully on 07717 471 396

You might also be interested to know that another of their projects is at the Hewett school (just down the road!). There will be a school market garden on 2 acres which will be growing organic vegetables, salads and some fruit for sale to the school kitchen and the local community through playground markets.

If you are inspired to run a pick up box scheme at the school, or interested in picking up an organic box scheme, I will leave a list for you to leave your details on the notice board.

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