

Talking Trees

The newsletter for Norwich Steiner School

10th December 2013

Dates for your diary

Friday 13th December - Last day of term

Friday 3rd January - Cleaning workday (11am - 3pm)

Monday 6th January - First day of Winter term

Other workdays in the holiday

During the holidays and weekends, Trevor is regularly at the school, touching up paintwork, descaling toilets, doing jobs that help keep the school looking pleasant and cared for, all on a voluntary basis. Thank you Trevor for this. A couple of hours of another's time helping out here and there can make a real difference to what can be done. You can text or email Sandie if you have any time to offer 07549 651016 or sandie.tolhurst@tiscali.co.uk

Trevor will be at the school on Weds 18, Thurs 19 and Fri 20th for a couple of hours each morning. If you think you can spare an hour or two, do let us know.

Stepping Up

By Jacqui Armour, Kindergarten Assistant

"Where are the Sun children?"

"There aren't any sun-children."

"You are the sun-children."

"Who?"

"All of you."

"Where?"

"Oh, yes, we are, aren't we?"

Long, long ago, during the last few weeks of the summer term, as the six-year-olds were engaged in mysterious sun child undertakings with Debora, I watched the transformation of the five-year olds as they began to step-up and prepare for their new position within our kindergarten family.

They started to take on more responsibility, to help with setting the table, clearing and cleaning. They became more capable, more confident. Socially they became a distinct group. They voiced stronger opinions, in

stronger voices. They took up more space, organised more complicated games. They seemed bigger and stronger.

When they returned to kindergarten in the autumn, play happened, work got done, projects were started. New children were shown the ropes, reminded of the rules, encouraged and supported. Songs were sung, words and tunes remembered, snacks were produced and eaten. Things were as they should be. Or was something different?

It was not until about three weeks later, as we were walking along the hall on an important sun child mission (fetching rubber bands from Carol) that they suddenly realised that there were no sun children. They quite literally stopped in their tracks. They panicked a bit, looked confused. Then, when they were happy that we did indeed have sun-children, and sun children that could manage, they continued on their way.

Since then these children have really taken hold of their new role. They have ensured that everything is done properly, as it always has been. The toys are put away properly, snacks come in the correct order, rules are upheld, everything is in its place, and all is well. And the younger children watch them, and wait...

Sequoia Class

By Michael Higgins, class teacher

After a long term which began with there being very much a feeling of two quite different classes sharing the same space, Sequoia is finally beginning to feel like one class with a shared purpose; especially so as they are preparing for their first class play together. Throughout the term, it has been heartening to see how the class has blended together and worked with the necessary frictions and changes that come with combining a Class 1 and Class 2.

This seems to relate to one of the chief virtues in having combined classes in our school; the fact

that the more uncertain of the older ones have the opportunity to consolidate their understanding by going over material for a second time and that the more confident children learn how to pass on what they have learned to their younger peers.

In preparing for their play, the class has found its proudest moment in being able to play Little Donkey on their flutes while being accompanied by the piano; this is quite a feat for them as it is the first time they have been able to play a tune without watching their teacher's fingers!

Wishing you all a merry yuletide, Mr Higgins and Sequoia class.

A Humbling Harvest

By Nina Scaife, Willow Class teacher

Willow children have had a very energetic, practical term with a lot of learning taking place outdoors, particularly at Harvest time.



During September, we enjoyed the unique experience of harvesting our wheat that we had sown and the challenge of separating it from the chaff was a lot of fun.

Finally, we milled our jar of 'berries' (the Miller at Letheringsett Mill taught us this term!) together with some unfortunate lumps of the playground and baked our very own little loaf. Taste-yummy. Texture-decidedly gritty! Oh well, we all saw the funny side and appreciated what a huge effort was needed to make bread before modern machinery existed.

We saved the straw left over from the wheat to make corn dollies which we decorated the hall

with for Michaelmas. Next, we used the pumpkins and sweetcorn we had grown to make soup for the whole school and made butter to spread on the Dragon bread Elder made with the Letheringsett Mill flour we bought on our class trip.

It was enormously satisfying to see the whole school contributing to make the festival so abundant and particularly for me to see the pride in Willow children's faces when they saw everyone enjoying their efforts. Well done all!

Oak Class

By Jeremy Nowell, Class Teacher

This term has been something of an Odyssey for Oak Class. We began, many moons ago, with a three-day voyage to Whitlingham, holding our main lesson in the dappled shade of towering autumnal beech trees. In that woodland cathedral we recited Keats and sang our tree song. We set out through the woods to gather mushrooms of every shape and size, marveling at nature's diversity and ingenuity. The Pig's Ear fungus was my personal favourite.

Mrs Higgins took over main lesson duties for a couple of weeks and the children produced some lovely creepy-crawly writing and much spidery art.

Hats off to the children for playing their flutes so valiantly in the dark at our Martinmas festival.

After half-term we threw ourselves into Ancient Greece and could scarce believe just how Spartan the Spartans really were! "With it, or upon it!" was one Spartan saying that became deeply engraved on our consciousness.

In maths, we revisited fractions and decided that, on the whole, they weren't so bad after all. We began to recognise that the "moment of true learning" happens in the very moment when we are about to give up and decide to persist for a few seconds more.

The end of term has been dominated by preparations for the our winter play, "Odysseus on the Rocks - Shaken and Stirred," inspired by the Siren Sisters (aka the woodwork girls' vocal workout ensemble and its weekly rendition of "Skyfall." This play has represented a big step-up for the class, with all of the children taking

on individual speaking parts and some being asked to tackle quite extensive roles.

We have all, in different ways, been challenged by the play. The children have worked very hard, having to reach deep to find new levels of focus and perseverance. A play is a wonderful learning experience, in that it asks the individual to be in the fullness of their individuality whilst working towards something greater than him or herself.

So, the Cyclops, Sirens and Hades permitting, we look forward to a rousing end of term and wish all of our families a happy Christmas and joyful New Year.

Birch Class

By Sarah Higgins, Class teacher

Throughout this year the young teens of Birch class have been encouraged to observe and question in all topics. The group have shown that they are slowly developing an analytical approach to the subjects, and they are all beginning to work more independently. From these examples of work you can see some of the varied ways in which the class approach their world.

'I was on my way to the beach when something caught my eye. At first I thought it was some sort of fish or shell. As I got closer I noticed a hole in it. I was a bit scared of it, but eventually I picked it up and observed it a little more. I turned it around and saw a cupped hole that looked as if something would fit in it. I turned it and thought it could be some sort of shovel, the handle would be the hole and the deviate part at the front would be the scoopy part. If you turned it slightly to the right you would see a face. I would compare the colour of it to vanilla ice cream. This looks like something that would support or hold something in place. It must be a bone!' (Athena's observation of half a pelvic bone).

'THE MORAL VALIDITY OF THE BANANA GUARD - A banana guard is a plastic object in which you place a banana. The idea of this is to preserve the quality of your banana...but does it really work? And is it necessary?

Well...as you pick up the banana guard you soon realise it is made of plastic, and hard plastic at that. This wouldn't be a problem if the

banana guard held your precious fruit snugly, but the size results in it rolling around, thus being bruised. Life without a banana guard is not as tedious as you may think. There's plenty of other more reasonable methods of storing your banana, and have you considered maybe not locking up your banana?...set it free into the wild! Do we really live in a society where the well being of bananas is more important than that of a child, or an animal? The amount of money a banana guard costs could give food for a child/children for a few days, maybe even a week in some countries...' (Ferdie)

Autumn in Elder Class

By Sandie & Jeff, Upper School Guardians

The Elder express is gathering steam. The furnace is well fuelled, the pressure gauge is healthy and the tracks are well set and pointing at their destination Class 12 and the International Steiner School Certificate (ISSC)!

Elder class has got off to a flying start this year, beginning with a Geography main lesson block with Jeff looking at plate tectonics, during which the pupils came up with creative and sometimes somewhat explosive demonstrations of earthquakes and volcanoes! In the maths main lesson block that followed, the class were working with Trigonometry, drawing triangles, determining the relationship between the lengths and angles of different triangles and ending up by developing the appropriate formulae. Roy Allen, a visiting teacher, taught both the trigonometry and the next block, which was looking at the physics and mechanics of bridge building. These quite intense and heady main lessons have now finished and the class are ending the term with a study of Shakespeare's Othello. Jeff, using this text as a basis, is working with the pupils to explore all the moral dilemmas that are of such interest to upper school pupils of this age: the prejudices around skin colour and sexuality, as well as the interplaying dynamics of love, jealousy and hate. Needless to say, this drama-loving class are enjoying acting out various scenes.

Information Technology has been newly introduced during the past half term, with Mr Nowell becoming one of Elders most popular teachers as he leads them through the principles and practice of website coding and design. The class have also started a process of organising individual work placements for the second

week of June next year, with interests varying from working in schools, to libraries, restaurants, shops, estate agents and in the theatre. This more formal process of interacting with the outside world in terms of completing application forms, writing CV's, making phone calls and going for interviews has helped create a growing realisation amongst the Elder pupils that it won't be too many years now before they are no longer at school.

It might be as a direct result of this increasing interaction with the outside world of work, but everyone working with Elder class has noticed that whilst the light-hearted and social nature of the class continues unabated, this year they have become more studious and organised. And in our meetings with the class as Upper School Guardians, Jeff, Jeremy and I are each encountering a common topic of interest: the new International Steiner School Certificate (ISSC). Already, before they've even started it, discussion is rife as to what they might do for their class 12/13 project and what they will go on to do or what they might become when they leave the school in just over 3 years time.

Coffee Morning News

By Susen Schaeffer, parent

I just wanted to say a few words of thanks to everyone who helped make the coffee mornings happen. It has been so lovely to see so many of you enjoy a chat, a cup of coffee and each others company. We have had everyone in, from the Events team using the time to plan some great things, to young ones enjoying their second breakfasts, to mum's enjoying some time out and a very keen dad who starts off the proceedings with a coffee!

We have also had some great donations of homemade cakes, which have been hugely appreciated by all and have allowed us to raise a total of £200.

The money we raise will go towards equipment for the children one suggestion has been installing a long jump pit, which would be great, as all school children from class 3 upwards would benefit from this.

I look forward to seeing you all in the new year where we will also be serving some Detox Teas if anyone feels the need after Christmas!

Tarka Daal recipe from kindergarten

Serves 10-12 children!

200g lentils
200g brown basmati rice
12.5 g butter
5 cloves garlic
garam masala
half teaspoon cumin seeds
pinch turmeric
fresh ginger, about 12.5 grams

The rice will need to be soaked for 30 minutes, then rinsed, covered well with water, and cooked for about 20 minutes in a large pan.

Rinse the lentils (2 changes of water), drain, then add 500ml water, three pressed garlic cloves, pressed or finely chopped ginger, turmeric and cumin seeds. Bring to the boil, lower heat, cover and simmer for 30 minutes. Stir to break up the lentils, then cook, uncovered for a further ten minutes.

Melt the butter and add two pressed garlic cloves. Cook until the garlic is browned. Stir the butter and garlic into the cooked lentils.

Sprinkle with garam masala before serving, or at the table.

Fundraising Idea

It has been suggested that we put a bookcase in the entrance hall and books that parents/children/staff have read and enjoyed but no longer want, (i.e quality child or adult fiction or biographical works) can be left and then bought by others. To keep the administration/maintenance of the scheme to a minimum, we will ask for donations of a minimum of 50p per book, with an honesty system in operation. Books which sit on the shelf for a long time may get passed on to the local charity shop to create space for other titles.

We would like to put any funds raised towards purchasing equipment in the school.

If anyone has a low bookcase (ie one which would fit under the picture board in the entrance hall) that they would be willing to lend, that would be wonderful.

Thank you!

To Lindsey Mack for the wonderful job of organizing and erecting some new fencing on for a couple of areas in the meadow playing field. Also to Gary Rayner and John Mason-Butcher for turning up to help on a cold and rather miserable Saturday.

To Tara Doswell for the very professional job of designing lovely new publicity banners for the boundaries of the school.

To Gary Rayner for the number of broken windows repaired over the past months.

The Moral Compass

A tribute to Nelson Mandela by Jeff van Zyl

Last week, on Thursday evening, I turned the radio on. Breaking news. Nelson Mandela had died in hospital. I listened for a few minutes, and then I turned the radio off. I didn't feel particularly sad, but I did find myself in a reflective space. I felt that his death had personal significance for me.

In a sense, each one of us is a navigator. We navigate ourselves through life. The navigators of old, on their wooden ships, used the sun and the night sky as points of reference on their journey. I began to recognise that I have used Mandela as a point of reference on my own personal journey. Somehow his death had changed this.

And then I remembered Simone. Simone was my neighbour when I lived in Kalk Bay, a little fishing village in South Africa. Simone was 7 years old when her mother walked into the ocean and never returned. Her point of reference had vanished. She was 36 years old and adrift when I met her.

Nelson Mandela, at the opening of the first democratic Parliament of South Africa, read a poem to the nation. It was a poem titled 'The child is not dead', written by Ingrid Jonker. Ingrid was a young, white Afrikaans girl. She was Simone's mother. Nelson Mandela, when he read this poem, was giving the new South Africa, still very much a child, a point of reference. He was calibrating the Nation's moral compass.

Mandela was for the children. He was forward looking, always focussing on the next generation. His children's foundation will continue to support young people throughout South Africa. At the heart of it, he believed in the sacredness of each and every child, and in the sacred child within each of us. Through this belief he practiced both love and forgiveness.

And what has happened to Simone? Simone has spent the last 6 years working with a series of meditative exercises. She no longer needs her mother as a reference point. She has finally found a compass that is able to help her on her life journey. The poem below is the one written by her mother, Ingrid Jonker and read by Nelson Mandela.

The child is not dead

The child is not dead
The child lifts his fists against his mother
Who shouts Afrika! shouts the breath
Of freedom and the veld
In the locations of the cordoned heart

The child lifts his fists against his father
in the march of the generations
who shouts Afrika ! shout the breath
of righteousness and blood
in the streets of his embattled pride

The child is not dead not at Langa nor at
Nyanga
not at Orlando nor at Sharpeville
nor at the police station at Philippi
where he lies with a bullet through his brain

The child is the dark shadow of the soldiers
on guard with rifles Saracens and batons
the child is present at all assemblies and law-
givings
the child peers through the windows of houses
and into the hearts of mothers
this child who just wanted to play in the sun at
Nyanga is everywhere
the child grown to a man treks through all
Africa

the child grown into a giant journeys through
the whole world
Without a pass