

# Talking Trees

The newsletter for Norwich Steiner School

8 December 2016

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Friday 9 December – last day of term  
Tuesday 3 January – Spring term starts  
Tuesday 24 January – Birch parents evening  
Tuesday 7 February – Elder parents evening  
Tuesday 7 February – Maple parents evening  
Friday 10 February – Inset day & half term  
Monday 20 February – back to school  
Tuesday 21 February – Sequoia parents evening  
Tuesday 28 February – Willow parents evening  
Tuesday 28 February – Rowan parents evening  
Tuesday 7 March – Oak parents evening  
Friday 31 March – Inset day & Easter holiday

## ROWAN CLASS

Mrs Mason, Class Teacher

Rowan Class have journeyed far this term. The children, on the first day, individually lit a candle and walked to the class chalkboard. They all made their first mark in Rowan class that day. The straight line and the curve.

We practised these forms and very quickly the children were able to recognise the shapes of some letters. We then travelled to the land of stories, where a kingdom had run out of fairy tales to be told. Two children, Siun and Ishkar were sent to seek more stories for their father, King Yarn.

Rowan children acted out these stories with great enthusiasm.

We continued the journey to the land of numbers. The children explored the quality of number in their bodies and in the wider world. The children counted many things and these became alive when we began knitting. The children suddenly had to count stitches and rows!

The class kindly help each other and continue to knit furiously, trying to finish their first project.

Rowan class then explored nature and the change of seasons through their home surroundings.

I told a small story of a piece of flint in the school wall talking to the bricks, supporting them in the school building. The Brick and the

Flint stone discussed how they were each made. The flint was millions of years old and was heated and cooled many times by mother earth. The Brick was made by Human hands. The pair talked of all the things they had seen in their 'life time'. The children really enjoyed these simple stories to help them develop a deep connection with their local surroundings.

We are now in the world of letter writing, brought to life through story and beautiful pictures. The children were very excited to begin writing and we practised carefully how to balance our new writing pencils and grip them correctly.

In our gardening lesson with Harriet, the children have now officially taken over their own patch of the garden. Thank you Birch class! The children have already planted spring bulbs, Elephant Garlic and broad beans.

We have suddenly arrived at the last week of term and our simple Christmas play -'Grimm's Tale of Snow White and Rose Red'. The children explored this story over a number of weeks. Each child has tried on differing characters for size. The children planned the play, decided on props and costumes themselves.

I was very happy to see the children working together and playing with the different characters and ideas. The imagination of a Class One child is a truly wonderful thing. Best wishes and a peaceful New Year.

## RAGNAROK APPROACHES IN SEQUOIA CLASS!

Over the last few weeks, Sequoia have been experiencing what it's like to be various Norse Gods and giants as they prepare for their two short Class plays, - 'The Death of Baldur' and 'Thor, the Bride'.

It has been interesting to see how the children have approached the portrayal of different deities and elementals, whether it's the swaggering, muscle obsessed Thor, the devious trickster Loki, the vile-mannered, shouting noise giants, the blind, ill-fated Hodur or the calm, beautiful but doomed sun-god, Baldur.

The class have also been learning the huge effect that a simple gesture can have when on stage, - even just a glance of the eye or a turn of the hand can communicate so much in addition to the words being spoken.

The death of Baldur is essentially a tragic play and part of working in this mood has been to try and establish how solemn we wish to be in our acting and for how long! What we are learning is that the ideal seems to be to juxtapose the portrayal of deep seriousness alongside a gesture of humour, - very much like life in Sequoia Class!

Musically speaking, I had hoped that by the end of the summer term, Sequoia would have progressed to playing recorders in 4 parts, - descant, alto, tenor and bass. However, the class has been so eager and committed that they have already achieved this and have been practicing Christmas Carols in preparation for our communal Carol singing at the end of term.

It is to be hoped that the skills needed to play ensemble music together, - holding your own line while being responsive and alert to the other musical lines around you, will bear fruit away from the music lesson and into the playground and beyond!

## PRESSED in Kindergarten

It is Michaelmas.

We are tired, hot and sticky. Very sticky. Our arms ache, our legs feel like jelly and I have a plaster over the blister on my thumb. Our feet make sucky noises as we walk over the kitchen floor. But we are all smiling. We have laboured over our fruits and imbibed the fruits of our labour, and found it to be surprisingly good, considering that we were not sure whether we saw a maggot (or two) go in (hope not). We don't care now.

We have gathered wind-fallen apples from the field, stood back while the teacher hit the tree with sticks, then all rushed to grab the biggest juiciest looking apples as they landed.

We have wheeled our wheelbarrow, brimful of apples  
*'There must be more than 100'*  
*'No, more than a thousand'*  
*'More- there must be infinity apples',*  
*'More than infinity apples, a universe of apples'*  
Out of the field, over the playground, through the courtyard, along the corridor and down a ramp into kindergarten.

We have built a platform from crates to put the apple press on, put on our aprons and rolled up our sleeves. Sorted and chopped, and chopped some more (half, and half again). Picked out seeds to put in our pockets and plant at home, remembered the story about the children and the apple tree and noticed that *our* apples have stars in them too, if you cut them like this. And ferried bowls and buckets full into the kitchen.

We have taken turns to climb up onto the crates and turn the handle that turned the cogs that turned the big metal teeth that chewed the apples, remembering to squint like last year, so we didn't get juice in our eyes, (no, we can't borrow the teachers' glasses, and we are not going to just buy some juice from the Co-op) and minding our fingers and hair. It was easier this year- we are bigger and stronger now.

We have pulled out the teeth and inserted the big wooden screw in their place, braced ourselves, and started to turn the handle again. It was easy at first ('I can do it with one hand') but maybe it was broken because no juice came out. It got harder and harder and finally there was a dribble of juice in our jug, then a stream, a river, a flood, a new jug, and we turned even harder to press every single last drop of juice from the apples. Then the teachers tried and they are not so strong because not much came out.

We turned the handle the other way round, and look, the screw is coming back up, it is unscrewing itself, it has unscrewed, it has come off. We looked at what was left of the apples in the barrel- there didn't seem to be very many left. We lifted the barrel away to the sink leaving behind a cake of apples, an apple cake, to share with the birds, and some for the compost heap to help our garden grow.

When we had finished the 'giant children' from upper school came along with enough apples to make juice for the whole school, or so they said, and we supervised while they pressed them, because we knew what to do, we were the experts. They got hot and sticky and tired too, and moaned when they got juice in their eyes, even though we told them to squint, but we think they enjoyed it.

Apple pressing is hard work. It is vigorous, purposeful, wilful, energising and exhilarating and forms a central part of our very practical Michaelmas celebrations. We make our own butter too- from marbles and cream- which we eat with good soup and bread (also prepared by the children) and, of course, our apple juice, which we all agree is always the best we have ever tasted.

### **MAPLE CLASS**

By Mrs Higgins, Class Teacher

Maple class are in the final stages of their puppet show which tells the famous story of The Snow Queen by Hans Christian Anderson. The class have made puppets out of fabric, wool, plasticine and paper and they are taking turns to narrate the story. The class have also

been eagerly practising independent writing, telling and illustrating the story in their own books. The Snow Queen is a story in 7 parts and is wholly suited to children crossing the 9 year threshold. It is also a story for our time.

It begins with a mirror being created that distorts all good things and magnifies the bad. The mirror is dropped and smashes into small pieces. If anyone gets a grain of the mirror in their eye they become critical and very clever. Cut to the end of the story - the unfortunate character who this happens to is in the North Pole, sitting upon the Snow Queen's reflective lake of reason. If he can form the word ETERNITY out of ice shards, he can be his own master.

This word is eventually formed, not by the character's cerebral attempts, but only by some warm tears of love which dislodge the mirror.

I am so pleased that Maple class have been able to work with this richly prescient and vivid story over 3 weeks. As an adult too it is enlivening to learn and tell a story of such depth and confirm that fairy tales contain more truth than cold scientific statements. If you don't already know Hans Christian Anderson's original version, I recommend it as a Christmas treat for all the family.

### **WILLOW CLASS**

By Helena, Class Teacher

Willow class is still immersed in Roman History, this time in our short notice Christmas play, Ceasarside, A play of Five Acts. This came as an idea from the children, who delighted in writing the whole play and are working very hard to perform it on the last day of term.

Willow class children are now the proud owners of a 1st prize cup for winning the biggest pumpkin in the Norwich in bloom contest - congratulations to them, and to Harriet for her gardening skills and motivation. We are including a recipe for delicious pumpkin cookies which some of the class enjoyed making last week, while others made tasty pumpkin soup. Of course they were first class, like the pumpkin!

We will be giving Willow parents a slice of pumpkin on Friday to try their own, and we wish you all love and peace this Christmas.

### **Pumpkin & Chocolate Cookies (Vegan)**

Dry ingredients:

1¼ cups porridge oats

1¼ cups wholemeal flour

1 teaspoon salt

4 level teaspoons baking powder

1 teaspoon cinnamon

¾ cup dark chocolate chopped up

1 cup sugar

Wet:

2 teaspoons of linseed/chia seed

1/3 cup water

(NB the water & seeds are an egg substitute, but seeds can be left out)

1 cup steamed & mashed pumpkin

1 teaspoon cider vinegar

½ teaspoon vanilla essence

Mix together the dry ingredients in one bowl and the wet ingredients in another bowl. Combine the two, then place small spoon-fulls on to a greased baking tray and bake at 180 degrees C for about 12 minutes. Makes approx. 24.

This is an adapted version of a recipe by Kathy Patalsky who has a website with many more vegan pumpkin recipes on it: [kblog.lunchboxbunch.com/2012/10/my-25-best-vegan-pumpkin-recipes.html](http://kblog.lunchboxbunch.com/2012/10/my-25-best-vegan-pumpkin-recipes.html)

### **DRAMA**

By Waldo, Oak class pupil

Drama, I think is as important as maths, science, English or any other subject at school. The amount of films, TV, shows, famous plays, or just a pantomime at Christmas, are all fun to watch, and are good to remember.

I remember going to the theatre, seeing people I know there, talking about it the next day at school, seeing films with people at the cinema and watching the same shows as other people. I think drama is an amazing thing, and I always love doing a play at Christmas. I'm sooo glad

we didn't do drama skills because I wouldn't have a play to remember.

This term I have had a good experience doing drama. My understanding of the real theatre has increased; not everyone gets a role, there are more ways of doing things; everyone on the stage at once, on the side of the gym, having more than one role. My understanding has increased, possibly my confidence. I think I have grown this term through drama.

**ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS** - A Three Week History main lesson with Birch  
By Tony Andrews, Social Science teacher

Some of the questions that often live in the mind of the 16 year old are 'where do I come from?' or 'Why am I here?' These questions arise out of a genuine and age appropriate existential curiosity. The Steiner/Waldorf Curriculum tries to address this in Class 10 through a study of historic origins. Not only of the human being, as a member of the hominid family, but also of human cultures, customs, religions and political structures. Where and how did they originate? How do they inform how we live today? Where do we fit in those stories?

In the first week of this main lesson, we concentrated how human beings and human communities first developed. I started by plotting the existence of the human species in the context of a twenty-four hour clock diagram representing the history of the earth. Surprisingly for some, humans only appeared at about one minute and seventeen seconds to midnight! Next we opened up that short time span and looked at a twenty-four hour clock representing the history of humans up to the present, and were again surprised to find that the Palaeolithic era (stone age) only ended twelve minutes before midnight! (That arose not only feelings of awe, but also feelings of humility to discover what a small part we have played in the earth's history).

Twelve minutes to midnight brought us to the time of the Neolithic Revolution, when the nomadic hunter/gatherer tribes first began to settle and to farm the land and domesticate animals. A very interesting question about the evolution of thinking arises here, and how

almost simultaneously around the world nomadic hunter/gatherers took control of their environment enough to discover and develop farming and animal breeding, and we explored, through discussion, some possibilities in relation to this question such climatic conditions and technological development.

Once humans became attached to one place the development of not only communities, but also technology speeds up. The planned use of reliably available resources now meant that the bronze age and then the iron age could develop. Also abstract concepts like ownership became more complex; 'This is mine, that is yours'. Big stones were used to mark boundaries and identify permanent landmarks and religious sites. Structures like Stonehenge in England and Göbekli Tepe in Turkey were built. As the early tribes became more complex communities, wise men and women who understood things like the how the seasons worked and wider cosmological events gave counsel to their people. And so the concept of the priest emerged, some one to act as a guide; a leader and eventually a king.

We then moved on to understanding the development of the city as a concept, and as a complex organism. The city now develops into a remote administrative or religious centre for larger areas. Uruk in Mesopotamia, in the fertile crescent is possibly the earliest example. As an interesting diversion, we also took the recent discovery of the lost city of Çatalhöyük in Turkey as a study topic: A hunter/gatherer city of up to 10,000 inhabitants dated to a time when archeologists believed that we were still only just beginning to make the transition to the discovery of basic farming. It is important for the students to understand that in archeology and anthropology as in any other science, we are always discovering new evidence, and revising our understanding.

As we moved towards the SSC (Steiner School Certificate) learning outcome essay task; to '*show understanding of aspects of ancient civilizations*' towards the end of the second week, the students began planning their individual assessed assignment projects, focussing on one of the great classic ancient civilisations such as Ancient Egypt,

Mesopotamia, China, The Indus Vally, The Aztecs, Incas or Mayans, Native North America or Classical Greece.

As we move through the last week of term, I am looking forward to seeing the final products of their endeavours!

## **GOODBYE & THANK YOU**

Like the invisible foundations of our school building, without which it would not stand, so our trustees play such a role. They provide solidity, supportive critique and insights that have over the years helped the school to grow and develop. In 2005, this school opened with just three class 1/2 pupils; today, we are able to provide an education for over 100 pupils age from 3 – 19, and Norwich Steiner School is one of only two schools in the UK able to offer the Steiner-Waldorf Level 3 qualification the Steiner School Certificate.

Chris Mitchell recently retired as a trustee, having joined the school governing body in 2010. He has supported and guided the school through good times and bad, and we would like to wholeheartedly thank him for his contributions over the years.