

Talking Trees

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

10th July 2012

Dates for your diary

Thursday 28th June – Inset day
Friday 13th July – Last day of term
Wednesday 5th September – First day of next term!

Workdays – all 11-3pm

Thursday 26th July
Wednesday 1st August
Saturday 4th August
Saturday 11th August
Wednesday 15th August
Wednesday 29th August
Saturday 1st September – cleaning workday

It's very helpful if you can let us know if you are coming so we can plan work. If you make a last minute decision to come, please make sure you check your emails or phone Sandie on 07549 651016 to check that the workday is still going ahead.

We will send an email around to notify parents of any cancellations or additional work days. If you have specialist skills to offer including carpentry or plumbing and could help on different days to those listed above, please let us know, as Trevor is likely to be working at the school on other days during the holidays and we would be willing to work around your availability.

Wish, Wonder & Surprise

By Miss Hazel Jamjar

Elder has recently finished a main lesson on Creative Writing. The themes of 'Wish, Wonder and Surprise' were explored in many different ways using a variety of exercises and pondering on how these soul moods are experienced. Students were encouraged to create their own pieces using many different writing styles. They began by observing natural phenomena as a way in to the feeling of wonder. Each day students sat outside, in the same spot, writing what they observed and felt. Some of these were crafted into poetic pieces. Magic wishes, wishes for others and the feeling of longing were just some of the aspects discussed around this theme. Enthusiastically, Elder delighted in the prospect of 'story time,' and eagerly sat on the carpet listening to fairy tales! From these a closer look at how stories can be structured was discussed, which led to each student eagerly embarking on

planning and writing their own 'short story.' Surprise was introduced in the third week by creating different kinds of scenarios out of the norm. This led to lively reactions, strong feeling and a lot of discussion... I will say no more, other than it was great fun to plot and plan! I hope you enjoy the following examples of their work.

ARMS OF BEAUTY by Jessica

From the mouth lies life,
To the eye leads a cave
The bark that's been broken
Leaves a wood clean skin,
A twisted, ugly trunk
To go up the arms
Blooms a beauty

SWAYING by Jessica

Swaying, swaying with the trees,
Crying, crying between multiple needs.
The mouth that sings to bring the music
The tears that rain to make the colour rise.
Swaying, swaying with the trees,
Crying, crying between multiple needs,
The heart that beats like an ancient drum
From the lungs that breathe to make the breeze.
Swaying, swaying with the trees,
Crying, crying between multiple needs.

LIVING YOUR LIFE by Jessica

Dancing in the rain,
Singing in the snow,
Howling at the moon,
Swaying with the trees,
Crying with the storm.

WARM WIND by Connor

Warm wind,
Green leaves,
Wet earth,
Swaying trees,
Dying petals.

SEA GLASS by Tali

It was green – The deep glass-bottle green it had been once was now washed out and diluted.
It was opaque – The light illuminated it but it had remained cloudy and hazy.
It was smooth – The Sea had tamed its jagged edges, turning a razor sharp dagger into a harmless pebble.

SHELL by Jessica
Silver, pink, white and blue,
Hear my wish it comes to you.
A pebble or stone,
I stand here alone.
Rough on the side
I see you, you were washed in by the tide.
Why so small?
Please do not break at all.

CRYSTAL by George
Lightly tinged with a pale trace of purple.
Bleached on the uncivil fractured side of the crystal.
It has seven entirely tranquil margins.
It has razor sharp perimeters which are wholly plush.
Is this crystal just decomposed sea and land beasts?

INDIGO by Nikolaus
I'm shiny and green.
I have circles on me.
I've been broken in half and sliced into parts.
My rough skin was removed, leaving me bare.
My home is dark. I hang from its ceiling.
I make no remark of how I am feeling.
My mind is blank.
My home leads to the ocean.
I live without motion.

HAIKU by Connor
Splendid day it is!
We feel like lounging around!
Let's go to the beach.

HAIKU by Mortimer
Oh delicate snow
You are but flakes in the wind
Oh unwilling drift!

HAIKU by Nikolas
In the far, far north,
The cold wind chills to the bone
And the wind sheds skin.

HAIKU by Ella
Flowers gently wave
In the wind and they smile
At the burning sun.

WISHES by Barnaby
What do you wish for, what do you seek?
A Gummy bear army at its peak.
What do you long for, what do you crave?
A gravy filled bath in which to bathe.
What do you lack and what do you need?
There's nothing I need accept something to read.
What do you want of what do you dream?
Enough gummy bears to fill a stream.
What do you have and what do you own?
A family and a nice warm home.

What would you be? Oh what would you be?
To be a monkey to climb a tree

WISHES by Mortimer
What do you wish for, what do you seek?
A V10 carbon ever so sleek
What do you long for, what do you crave?
A beef burger my hunger to stave
What do you lack and what do you need?
A super power of smoking weed
What do you want, what do you dream?
A DBR9 with that brilliant gleam!
What do you have and what do you own?
My hair that is gleefully shown
What would you be? Oh what would you be?
A hobbit to sit around drinking tea

UNSEELIE by Tali, written in response to Walter de la Mare's Silver'

Fay looked back and breathed a silent sigh of relief. She'd left the village without any trouble. Now to get past Mistress Blackthorn's cottage: she crept forward, the damp grass brushing at her ankles. Both her shoes and the hem of her dress were already soaked. It was night. The moon was like a pearl in the cloudy sky, bleaching everything with its pale light. Fay raised her lantern and looked at the little thatched cottage before her. Mistress Blackthorn didn't have a garden fence. She didn't need one. No one dared to go anywhere near her house because Mistress Blackthorn was a witch. At least that was what people said. But a lot of people said it, and it was best to be on the safe side.

Now Fay couldn't help feeling a little nervous as she made her way through the orchard at the back of the house. She even cast a fearful glance at the dovecote by the back door. If stories were to be believed, the birds were Mistress Blackthorn's familiars. There was no light in any of the cottage windows. This managed to calm Fay's nerves until it occurred to her that perhaps a witch wouldn't need to see in the dark. Around the front, Mistress Blackthorn's dog - allegedly another of her 'familiars' - was asleep in his kennel. As Fay passed, he stirred, twitched and uttered a muffled 'woof.' She froze for a second, but the dog didn't wake and she moved quietly on. She wouldn't have normally gone this far. She'd only sneaked out at night a few times, and then only to the outskirts of the village.

But she wanted to see the Changing.

Extract from 'WHITE KOO' by Connor
'Hello!' my name is White Koo and I'm a nice guy, but if you annoy me I will get angry. I won't kill you, but I will teleport you into a dark room and leave you there for three days. Before I let you out, you will donate £100 to give to a poor family.....

Extract from 'DEATH IN BRUSSELS' by Ella

.....As we were walking towards the car park, seven men walked out from behind the bush. I gasped as I recognised who they were. I think it was Gregory, but one of them said, 'so you think you could get away that easily?' I ran for my life. Everyone was running but I was the quickest, which was good. I slid under a lorry and tried not to breathe. I was glad it was dark. I heard lots of gunfire. I heard someone screaming my name. Then I heard the sound of bodies falling to the ground. I heard an especially loud thump which must have been my mum as she was the largest. One of the men said, 'Got them all?' 'Yep, let's go before we get caught,' said another. I heard the sound of running feet. When I thought the coast was clear, I got out from underneath the lorry. I saw all of my friends on the floor in pools of their own blood. I walked over to the bloodied shape of my mother; her face was turned to the side. It looked like she was screaming. I closed her mouth and shut her eyes. At least the shadows hid the bullet wound.

Extract from WINSTON MEADOWHALL by George

As well as the other three people, there was a middle-aged man who was reading his paper with a frown on his face.

An old man walked in at that second, and the new comer looked around and saw Winston and came to talk to him. He looked friendly & clever so Winston made room for him at the small table.

Up close he was about 5.3ft Winston reckoned, he wore glasses permanently & had a bright intelligence, which made a slight shiver run down Winston's back. Who was this old man? Why was he here? And most importantly, why on earth was he coming to speak to him?

As the old man walked past him, his coat brushed Winston's shoulder, several things moved inside it. Winston started to wonder what the hell was going on!

Winston suddenly noticed two cars outside; the second one was just parking. He was sure they hadn't been there a couple of minutes ago. The windows were shaded so that it was impossible to see inside, this did not strike Winston as unusual....

ORACLE by Mortimer

Dark empty eyes lie before you. The endless gripping gaze you cannot escape from. This is what one sees when observing Oracle. The desire to know more about her is extraordinary. So much remains hidden. So much seems withdrawn. This was

Oracle. The girl that no one knows about. But everyone knows. Her whole life, a mystery to anyone but herself, leaving you wanting to know everything about her and nothing at the same time. The name Oracle foresees that she will act in a prophecy. But this prophecy has never been revealed and is completely anonymous. One day she shall reveal this prophecy but when she does she will have to fall to come back even greater. And when the day comes she shall she be faced with an impossible task and to complete it she must fail first.

Willow Class

By Nina Scaife, Class teacher

This half term we are practicing for our class play about Madge Magpie who tries in vain to teach the other birds how to build beautiful nests.

We will also be going on our first class trip together to Whitlingham Country Park where we will enjoy walking, observing nature, playing and picnicking!

As the end of my first year at Norwich Steiner School is fast approaching, I have been reflecting on the experience.

I'm struck by the very warm welcome that I have received from the children, parents and staff and feel very grateful and privileged to be part of the school. It's been an incredible journey so far and that's only the first year, so I am really excited about what new discoveries lay ahead of Willow Class and I in '12/'13!

Oak Class

Jeremy Nowell, teacher

After half term we began our first 'Human & Animal' main lesson. We started by looking at three distinct but interdependent areas of the human being: the head, which likes to be still, the limbs and digestive system which are always active and the heart/lung system, which sits between the two, and which, to some extent mediates between them. We considered how our legs carry us around all day and behave like faithful servants. Our arms, too, serve us, but they are free from the burden of carrying us around and are therefore available to serve others, if we choose to use them in that way. We can take or we can give - human beings are free to decide how to use the gift of their hands.

We considered how animals tend to be specialists - a mole is designed to dig, a seagull to fly, a beaver to gnaw and so on. The human being is a generalist. With his hands and creativity he is able to make tools and machines that can do almost anything. With all this in mind, we went on to look at a

number of animals, including the cuttlefish, the otter, the deer and the elephant. The children drew them, wrote about them, made up poems about them and, through these various activities, may have understood a little more about what it means to be human.

This has been a year of discovery for Oak Class, at the heart of which resounds the overwhelming, unspoken question: 'Who am I?' In order to find out they have been continually experimenting - pushing in different directions until they find the limiting factor. Sometimes that limit is a parent or teacher, sometimes it is their classmates, sometimes it is they themselves. In this respect the year has sometimes been fractious and sometimes very difficult for individual children. Through it all, though, the spirit and dynamism of the class has prevailed, and the classroom continues to be a joyful, if sometimes exhausting, place to be.

We were sad to say goodbye to Leela and her family at half-term. In the short time she was with us, Leela brought a great deal of joy to classroom and playground alike. We wish her well in her life back in Oregon and look forward to keeping in touch with her.

It was lovely to see a number of parents at the recent Oak Class parents' evening. We talked about a number of issues relating to Oak Class, including the social dynamic, the curriculum, next year's Steiner Olympics and the question: 'When is a nature table not a nature table?' (The answer is: 'When it is used as a repository for books and pieces of paper...') Thanks to Sue and Kate for the delicious cakes and cookies! A warm welcome to Charlie and Harriet, who were attending their first parents' evening.

As we reach the end of another year, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Miss Jess for all her help and hard work, and for being so supportive to both the children and myself. Miss Jess has also taken on the task of coordinating Oak Class reading groups, and has helped many children to engage more actively with their reading.

Temporary Vacancies

We have a number of temporary, supply vacancies for initially one term. Some of the following vacancies have the potential to be extended or to become more permanent posts, depending on the upper school teacher recruitment. We are currently only advertising these vacancies internally.

Handwork Teacher - sought for Oak, Birch & Sequoia (new class 1); each class being taught

handwork for 2 lessons of 45 minutes per week, or as one double lesson; preferably during an afternoon.

Music teaching - one or two single lessons a week for Birch class, ideally in an afternoon, to supplement and support the new older children "Ensemble" which will be starting on a Wednesday afternoon from September. Elder class will also be looking for someone to help progress their music skills, ideally on 2 mornings a week, before main lesson, for 20-30 minute sessions.

Modelling/Clay teaching - we have approximately 2 x 45 minute lessons a week where we are looking for someone with teaching ability and knowledge of modeling materials (wax, clay) in the context of the Steiner curriculum, to work with pupils in the younger classes.

Freeplay afternoon supervisors - next September, we are looking for suitable staff to supervise and support the freeplay sessions for the younger classes. Those who apply must have an enjoyment of being outside in all weathers. There will be free-play sessions for Sequoia on Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons; for Willow class on Wednesday and Friday afternoons; and for Oak class on Friday afternoons. It is anticipated that these will be combined sessions.

Rates of pay

Teaching posts pay £20/hour (teaching time) including 12.1% statutory holiday pay.

Free play supervisors posts pay £10/hour (1pm-3.45pm) including statutory holiday pay.

For more information please contact the school by email at info@norwichsteinerschool.co.uk or by phone on 01603 611175 (answer phone will be checked during the holiday period).

Affiliated parent & child groups

The Root Children - run by Luci Firks on Tuesdays at St Thomas' Church Hall, Earlham Road, Norwich. Contact Luci for details on 07733 350177 or by email lucifirks@gmail.com

Fir Cones - run by Catherine Mack on Wednesdays and Thursdays at 20 Unthank Road, Norwich. Contact Catherine for details on 07900 446826

Beech Tree Baby and Toddler Group - run by Helen Kibblewhite (see article below) on Wednesdays at Welborne Village Hall, near Mattisham, from 10am-12 midday. Contact Helen on 01362 850426 or email helen.kibblewhite@yahoo.co.uk for details.

News from Beech Tree Parent and Child Group

From Helen Kibblewhite

Beech Tree Parent and Child Group has existed for two months now. We meet in a small flint village hall with a grassy garden next to big beech and oak trees and surrounded by open countryside.

It has been lovely to see the children quickly become at home in the room and secure in the rhythm of the morning; eager to start their play when they arrive and beginning to join with putting away and the ring-time verses.

I make bread each session, and our craft activities so far have included wet-felted balls, alder cone bees and butterflies.

I plan to keep the group small, with no more than a maximum of eight families. Currently we are very small, so keen that more families join our gentle and friendly group in its peaceful rural surroundings.

Please pass on the contact details below to anyone who may be interested. Welborne village hall is about nine miles west of Norwich.

Phone Helen Kibblewhite 07745193809 or email beechtreebaby@yahoo.co.uk

Sun Children

By Jacqui Armour, kindergarten assistant

Today we had a dress rehearsal for our sun children's graduation circle time.

The younger children practiced being the audience, while the sun children performed a selection of rhymes and songs that traced and described a year in our kindergarten. It was like watching a kindergarten year in a nutshell, and brought back so many memories of our time together and of the festivals that we have shared over the previous three years.

The sun children have also been making puppets and creating a story for their puppet show: drawing pictures of their characters, carding fleece, stitching felt to make bodies and clothes, and gathering props. They have made beautiful invitations for their parents, and are eagerly anticipating presenting their work to them.

These children have shown great determination and have worked really hard over the last half term, working together to complete their projects (weaving, sewing and woodwork), becoming a

coherent social group, and preparing themselves to form our new class one in September.

We have observed that when they play now, they really draw on their inner selves, bouncing ideas off each other, constructing a group imagination, using their thoughts and words, no longer needing or using physical props. These collaborative narrative skills will form a sound foundation for their future literacy and language learning, and we can see that they have developed the communication, interpersonal and self-management skills that they need to be able to successfully enter the formal learning environment of the lower school.

We are so proud of all of their achievements and it is with great joy that we will be waving goodbye to them as they continue on their journey, although of course we will miss them all.

Birch Class Olympics at Michael Hall

By Sarah Higgins, class teacher

The grounds of Michael Hall, where the children take part in the Olympic activities, are enclosed by extensive woodland and hills. This is where we, and all other Steiner schools, set up camp. Here the children were surrounded by trees, clouds, mole hills and straw, with no demands made upon them from the modern world – no electronic distractions, and no questions or expectations from the adults – only that they wash their hands and don't let their tents get too smelly. With this level of freedom the children were well mannered, curious and calm. They made their own entertainment – rolling down hills in their sleeping bags, and they also worked hard. Every day was taken up with training and perfecting their skills, and meeting and supporting new groups of children. Every evening the Birch children were exhausted and yet they did not complain – not one of them, not once. Martin Baker, on behalf of the UK games training, has given Steiner school pupils a wonderful gift of the Olympic games. Three days of fun unfamiliarity and challenges that enabled them to connect with each other better, and find their own courage.

Reflections of a teacher

Michael Higgins, Elder Class teacher

Once upon a time on a crisp March morning several years ago, I walked into a function room of a Methodist Church in Bowthorpe, where I was introduced to three children: one boy and two girls. These children were the first Class 1 of the new Norwich Steiner School and I was to be their music teacher. As I came into the room, the boy, aged 7, was sitting on a windowsill, peering at me from behind a curtain; the older of the girls, aged 8, remarked how I smelt as if I'd come from the swimming pool (she didn't yet know I was unable to swim); the remaining girl chuckled shyly.

Soon afterwards, I became their Class teacher and several years later, here, in this beautiful Georgian building, after many comings and goings, the boy on the windowsill and the girl with the discriminating nose are still with us, about to turn 14 and 15 respectively. Their names are George and Ella.

There are so many qualities that have impressed me in these children and their peers as they have moved up as young pioneers through the school. They have performed plays, sailed on broads, carved spoons, beaten metal red hot from a forge, sung and played music from around the world, acted in German, kindled fires, jumped fires, painted the same fires in recollection, sculpted animals, thrown javelins, made viols, cultivated potatoes, made French pastries, dipped candles, deciphered hieroglyphs, written poetry, walked spirals, cycled and camped their way to the coast, understood algebra (!), made human pyramids, built see-saws, danced around maypoles, acted in French, recited Shakespeare, made a proper Christmas pud, climbed walls, wrestled to the beat of timpani, wrestled with the intricacies of Celtic knotwork, carried their own lanterns, dug labyrinths (as the class decided its centre, a white horse trotted down Hospital lane), painted their names in Chinese, knitted cats and played dragon-tag.

In all of these pursuits they have shared their struggles and successes, their frustrations and their joys. And I hope, through the diversity and richness of what they have strived for together, they have learnt a tolerance and care for each other and for those around them.

Thank you, Elder, for sharing these years with your Class teacher. Go forward now, in kindness and curiosity, and forge the Upper School!

Recollections about a teacher

Introduction by Ella, with contributions from all the Elder class pupils

Seeing as Mr. Higgins won't be teaching us any more, I was 'gently' persuaded by some teachers and my mother into putting together a small piece about the fun stuff we have done with him, for the newsletter.

Mr. Higgins is really funny and nice. It was really fun when we went to the cemetery to get elderflowers to make into cordial. It was even more fun on the Camping Trip when we got to see the sea, playing football, beating Barnaby at chess and actually completing the journey on our bikes. It was fun when we went to the Roman town at Caistor and we went to the wrong bus-stop and George took a picture of Tony Robinson on the phone climbing under barbed wire.

The Dylan egg moment

I remember when we were doing some sort of cooking, & we had to crack these eggs. And we all had to do it then, Mr Higgins said, before Dylan did it, "*the egg has to go in the bowl & the shell goes outside it!*" So Dylan cracked it and then accidentally dropped the egg onto the table. Then as he panicked Dylan threw the egg-shell into the mixture!

The flower lecture

Mr Higgins said "*Right, I am going to teach you about a flower*"

Then he just sat there with a flower holding it perfectly still, saying nothing, for one minute.

And we just laughed at him it was so funny! That has been remembered ever since!

The first time I saw Mr Higgins episode

Well basically, when Mr Higgins first saw us, I was hiding behind the blinds on the window frame. Then Ella & Sofia were dotted around on pieces of furniture in the classroom. And Mr Higgins kind of looked around, and you could see from the expression on his face that he thought he had walked into a Mad House, literally! I was scared of him when he started teaching at first because I thought he wasn't very nice because he didn't let us have really long break times like Mr Hamburger had done, but then I kind o realised that was school!

I like Mr Higgins' brilliance at getting distracted

Well, it is just totally brilliant when Mr Higgins goes off on one of his side-tracks about Star Wars, Lord of the Rings, Dads Army, Doctor Who and many other things. We used to get into the most bizarre chats about the most random things, not in any way related to the subject that we were supposed to be covering! (George)

"He's like Jesus, instead of turning water into wine, he turns paths into sidetracks". (Nikolaus)

"We're grateful for the fact that Mr Higgins has managed to guide us to being respectful human beings" (Mortimer)

"Mr Higgins hates the anti-dust chalk - he says he loves the dust!"

"He always has lots of random 'stuff' in his pockets" (Connor)

"He has such a bright personality, that you could use him as a human light bulb". (Nikolaus)

"We miss that he doesn't tell us many stories as we have got older". (Mortimer)

"Mr Higgins hates tissues so much that he calls them suessits" (anagram)

"When we were talking one day in class, I said that I really fancied some custard and when I came in from break, Mr Higgins had put a pot of custard on my desk!" (Barnaby)

When Tali first met Mr Higgins, she made a comment about how her maths teacher at her old school had been so strict they weren't allowed to breathe without permission, and Mr Higgins promptly told her that she was only allowed to breathe once a day.

The class recalled together one particular maths lesson with Mr Higgins where he used different shape swim pools (circle, triangle, square) as examples and the girls 'owned' the pools and the boys were given 'jobs' as pool cleaners working for a company. The idea was to work out the different areas and volumes of each pool. But the whole class got sidetracked with the story and started arguing about the name of the company and who would be the driver of the van. They created scenarios where the workers disappeared from work to get a kebab and the class fondly remembers that the whole lesson soon changed from being a maths lesson to one big story.

One day, when Mr Higgins phoned to speak to Mortimer's parents and Mortimer answered the phone, Mr Higgins pretended he thought Mortimer was the family butler.

On one occasion, Jessica was in Pizza Hut in the City with her friend and Mr & Mrs Higgins were at another table. Mr Higgins got up and came over with some menus, pretending to be a waiter and asked her if she wanted a lemonade.

In the opera, Mr Higgins was impressed with the technology (wooden spoons) provided to eat ice cream.

Once when Mr Higgins was phoning around to remind everyone to wear red for Michaelmas, he left a message on Tali's answer phone saying " This is to remind Tali to order a left-handed pizza next time she's in the restaurant and to wear lots of red for Michaelmas, not pink, but red!"

Mortimer remembers Mr Higgins wanting to get some rope and hang him up in the hall for the Christmas festival because he said Mortimer was such an angel.

Mr Higgins and dictionaries

1. Once, when Josh (no longer in the class) gave the opinion that he thought the word "gruesome" wasn't a word, Mr Higgins ripped the page with "gruesome" on it out of the dictionary.

2. Another time when Connor was speaking in class, Mr Higgins said: "You have a very tantalising mind, Connor" to which Connor replied "tantalisinguard". Mr Higgins asked him if this was a new word, and what was its meaning? Then he wrote in a new entry in the school dictionary: "tantalisinguard" - stuffing your face in books.

"His Gollum impressions are frightfully realistic".

In the recent 'wish, wonder & surprise' literacy block taught by Miss Jarman, Mr Higgins helped with the 'surprise' element by falling into the classroom one day, wearing a Prince Charles mask and pretending to be drunk. Declaring it was his turn to be on the throne.

One day when Barnaby said he was bored, Mr Higgins replied that boredom was only a state of mind and that it was possible to find interest in anything if you put your mind to it. He then told the class that he could find interest in a piece of blue tack if he put his mind to it. He took a very tiny piece of blue tack, pressed it onto the blackboard, stood studying it from many angles for several minutes and then sat down without a word and carried on working at his own desk. Gradually, one after the other, each member of Elder class couldn't resist getting up to go and look at the piece of blue tack on the blackboard!

THANK YOU MR. HIGGINS FOR TEACHING US FROM ALL OF ELDER CLASS!!!

Post script - to Ella - an apology....as she wanted this piece typed out in Sagittar font so that it would seem more 'Steinerly'....but it's such a hard font to read that we decided to use our usual newsletter font, and besides, Mr Higgins really doesn't like Sagittar. Sorry Ella!