

# Talking Trees

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

15<sup>th</sup> March 2010

## Dates for your diary

Saturday 27 March – Morning in the School  
Friday 30<sup>th</sup> April – Mayday festival (all invited)  
Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> May – Polling day (see below)  
Monday 10<sup>th</sup> May – Evening talk (details TBC)  
Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> May – Open Day  
Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> May – Parent's evening (Birch)  
Monday 14<sup>th</sup> June – Evening talk (details TBC)  
Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> July – Summer Fayre

## Oak Class

By Jeremy Nowell, Class teacher

We have been exploring the world of complementary colours in our painting lessons. The golden sword may be bright, but see how dazzling it is when surrounded by the purple darkness! Children bring so many qualities into the world, and sometimes it is only when these are set against a certain background that they become completely visible. In many ways the classroom is an ever changing canvas, the job of the teacher to provide the range of colours against which every child will be able to shine in its own unique way.

Each child in the class has contributed to the brightness of Oak Class this term, whether through work, play or mischief! Every child has, at some point, managed to amaze me with something he or she has said, drawn, painted, written or acted out. A moment of kindness, of brilliance, of endeavour, of determination – all contribute to the vibrant undertone of purposefulness which seems to pervade this lovely and lively class.

Steiner education is often described as being 'a journey, not a race.' That's all very well, say some, but what about the 'real' world of qualifications, results, tangible achievement, measurable success? I look at the children in Oak Class and see a luminosity that cannot be measured. When we do measure children, we diminish that luminosity. The world seems to be full of children whose inner light has been subdued, if not entirely extinguished. To bring one's child to a school such as ours is, at a very profound level, a statement of hope and trust.

We trust in the child, in its journey, in the integrity of its potential, and this in the belief that the future is anything but a half-empty glass; if only because that child will be a part of it, filling the future with its own light.

Modern education is founded largely on the fear of what children may *not* be able to become or to achieve. This fear, a curse of our material age, spans the future like an enclosing dome. The children of Oak Class, and indeed of the school, seem to be painting a very different picture of the future; a rich tapestry woven in many beautiful colours, in which each of their paths glimmers as a thread of inexhaustible hope.

## Birch Class

By Sarah Higgins, Class teacher

From the beginning of the year, the children in Birch class have been learning about the world around them – their immediate surroundings in particular. We started our farming block by thinking about our snack time grace:

*"For sun and rain, for grass and grain,  
For all the toil on sea and soil,  
That we may eat our daily food,  
We give our love and gratitude."*

By finding out just how much human effort goes in to the contents of a lunch box. It has been important to look at the traditional methods of farming rather than the modernised profit-making industry that farming has become (which would be quite disturbing and difficult for the children to comprehend). This subject has strengthened the children's understanding of time – in seeing how dependent we are on the seasons for our survival we also looked at some of the old trades that have almost disappeared, like hedging and metal work, and how people would have used their skills while working closely with the elements around them.

This subject has been helpful with indirectly answering some of those questions that

continuously come at you from quizzical 8-10 year olds. Like....”*Why don’t we have computers in class*” and “*yeah, why can’t we have calculators for maths and an escalator on the stairs?*”

As adults we know that these days humans rely too much on mechanised assistance, often to the detriment of the natural world. Children could not comprehend such a complex answer, and it is enough to say that they can use calculator and computers when they have learnt to use their own hands first.

Surprisingly, that response does seem to be enough for them, and in class, the children have been consistently intrigued by the many small human efforts involved in making the world our home.

Finally, thank you to all the parents for coming in during the mornings to help with the children’s reading practice. There has been a considerable improvement in the children’s reading skills and this has helped with their writing and spelling as well.

## Request for help

From Miss Anka, Handwork teacher

If you have half an hour to spare on Wednesdays at 14:50, and would be happy to read to Birch class whilst they are doing their knitting, I would be very pleased to hear from you as soon as possible. Speak either to myself or let Carol know. Thank you.

## Elder Class

By Michael Higgins, class teacher

In Elder this term, we have concluded our study of Indian mythology. It has been interesting to experience the multiplicity and colour of the Hindu pantheon in contrast to the solitary, human development of Prince Siddhartha on his path to enlightenment.

Whereas the noble prince Arjuna was able to defeat his enemies by a combination of his intelligence, bravery and skill with bow and arrow (and a little guidance from Krishna), Siddhartha was able to withstand all the living, evil forces of the cosmos by means of a rainbow of thought which he arched around him as he sat motionless beneath a tree.

Since January, Birch and Elder have been combining first thing in the morning for the singing of rounds and part songs. The complexity of the children singing their own line while hearing each other’s complements the weaving and knotting of the Celtic form-drawing that Birch are involved in presently.

A popular round this term has been:

*‘Man’s life’s a vapour, full of woes.  
He cuts a caper, and down he goes.  
Down he, down he, down he,  
Down he, down he goes.’*

There is nothing more affirming than to sing joyously of our inherent mortality in the form of a hearty three-part round!

## Singing Trees

By Rob Grant, parent

Would you like to sing? Any parent is very welcome to come along and join us at one of our informal evening sings: no training or ability to read music needed. We sing mainly for pleasure, as well as taking part in festivals, fairs and open days at the school. Our ‘repertoire’ includes a wide range of songs including seasonal rounds, classical pieces and world music. We sing whatever we can get hold of in fact, so if you have anything that you would like to try do bring it along. A schedule of fortnightly meetings will soon be announced but there is no need to commit to regular attendance. Please feel free to come along as regularly or infrequently as works for you. If you would like to know more or to be added to the mailing list for details of days and times please email [singers@norwichsteinerschool.co.uk](mailto:singers@norwichsteinerschool.co.uk).

## Craft Group Update

By Andy Smith (Parent)

After a very fruitful Open Day, the Craft Group will be getting ready for this year’s Summer Fayre. Bev and Heidi continue to host craft mornings on a Thursday throughout term time, making beautiful seasonal items to sell on the craft stall. If you would like to attend these please contact Bev on 01508 579149.

There will be a number of Craft Group workshops taking place in the near future. They will be held on a Wednesday evening (please check the School notice boards after the Easter break for details of these).

Over the Easter holiday, a wet felting course will take place on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> April, 10.30a.m – 2.30pm, at 43 Turner Road, Norwich. There are currently 8 places available for this. Tara (Parent and Child Group leader and Kindergarten Assistant) has kindly offered to run a Crèche for up to 6 children. A simple lunch of Jacket potato and salad will be provided; a donation would be gratefully received. Please contact Andy on 01603 440192 for further details and to book a place.

If you cannot make these sessions, but are keen to make craft to sell at Open Days, Fayres and other events run by the Publicity and Events team please contact Andy, Bev or Heidi.

## Open Day Feedback

A big thank-you to everyone for your support for the recent Open Day, it was really busy day and was a big success. All the talks were packed full and fundraising efforts were well rewarded. In addition to the summary by the events team, here follows a taste of some of the successes of the day.

### Comments by a visitor:

*“Thank you to all of the staff and parents who helped to make the open day this Saturday so wonderful. I have never felt so inspired, calm and centred walking into a school as I did today. You have opened my eyes to the real meaning of education and I just wish all children could have access to such a rich and child-centred approach to life. Thank you. R & H*

**The Craft group** raised £117.00

**The Bookstall** sold books totalling £145.00 (25% of which comes back to the school as a fundraiser).

### The Nearly New Sale

Message from Sue Lowther (parent)

*“Dear All - Amanda and I would just like to thank you for donating so generously to the Nearly New Stall. We raised £160 altogether, and had a great time doing so. Not only is it a great way of raising money for the school, but it's also a great way of recycling clothes, toys etc and helping each other. We hope that many of you enjoyed rummaging through everything and found something of interest to take home with you!*

*We will still be collecting for future Nearly New Sales, so please hang on to or bring in any suitable items you find at home.*

*Many thanks again for all your donations. It was greatly appreciated”.*

## Finance update

By Sandie Tolhurst, School Admin team

Thank you to everyone who has been helping the school with loans and through their fundraising efforts. We still have a little way to go in order to manage the shortfall this year, which we are likely to encounter as we approach the summer holiday. However, with the generous offers from a number of families to pay next year's fees in advance of the summer holiday, we always have this as a 'fallback position' to help with the expected cash flow shortage as it arises.

In addition to our appeal to parents, we have also been taking advice from our Accountants and have started discussions with Norfolk County Council (our landlords) to explore ways that they might be able to support us through this stage in the school's development.

The fee review is also getting underway and once we have some ideas and proposals in place, we will carry out a consultation with parents to hear your views.

A new small team is also becoming established, the Development Fund Raising school support team (DFR), looking at options for finding benefactors and accessing larger sums of money that will be needed to support development and growth. More about this new team and it's work in the next *Talking Trees*.

If you haven't come forward yet but are able to consider lending the school some money on an interest-free basis, we are still keen to hear from you.

## A Morning in the Classroom

By Sandie Tolhurst, administration team

Hopefully by now, most parents in the school, kindergarten or in the Parent & Child Groups will know about the planned “Morning in the classroom” on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> March. There are flyers, posters and booking forms around the school and if you are interested in attending, then please let us know as soon as possible.

The day is free, although we're asking for a booking deposit of £10, to help us have a realistic

estimate how many people are going to come.

The idea for a morning in the classroom came from the fact that many prospective parents ask if they can sit in the back of the classroom so that they can get an idea of what it is that is different about a Steiner school. In the past, we have often allowed this to happen. However, as you might guess, this can become disturbing and disruptive to the children in the class, and depending on the parents, can also make it difficult for the teacher to teach!

Existing parents get snippets from their children about what is going on, either from songs that the children sing, or work that they bring home, or just through 'tales from the classroom' told around the dinner table. As our children enrich our lives with what they bring home and share with us, many parents say they wish that they could have had a Steiner education themselves.

If any of these sentiments ring true for you, why not come and join the teachers for a morning? Experience the lessons and teaching methods in the way that the children do, as well as having the opportunity to ask questions and enter into discussions with the teachers and other parents.

If you know anywhere you could put up a poster, then please help by doing so. Likewise, it's a chance for anyone you know who has expressed an interest in Steiner Education to satisfy their curiosity, so please put them in touch with us and we will send them the appropriate information.

## Vacancies

For any of the following vacancies, please contact either Carol at the school office on 01603 611175 or by email [info@norwichsteinerschool.co.uk](mailto:info@norwichsteinerschool.co.uk) Jacqui in Personnel team for details and application forms  
[Jacqui@norwichsteinerschool.co.uk](mailto:Jacqui@norwichsteinerschool.co.uk)

## School Management team (resources)

We are seeking applications for membership of the school management Team (resources).

We welcome applications from Parents, teaching or non-teaching staff for these voluntary posts.

The role of the management team is to support and co-ordinate the work of the school support teams, so we are looking for people with good

organisational and communication skills. Management Team members will collectively represent the best medium-term and short-term interests of the whole school.

The Management Team currently meets weekly on Wednesday Mornings.

If you would like more information about this position, or an application pack, please get in touch with Jacqui armour (personnel team) [jacqui@norwichsteinerschol.co.uk](mailto:jacqui@norwichsteinerschol.co.uk) who will be pleased to help.

Information note: Under the Associative Leadership structure that the School is working towards, a Management team would normally be appointed annually by the Collegiate. As the Collegiate had not yet formed, the Trustees towards the end of the summer term in 2009 appointed an interim management team, to support the process of planning and coordination amongst the school support teams until the formation of the Collegiate.

## Parent & Child Group Leader

Shortly to be advertised, vacancy for a Parent & Child group leader. If interested, please keep an eye on the school noticeboard, or ask Carol in reception to send further details, job descriptions, person specifications and application form once available.

## Payroll

The Personnel team is looking for a volunteer to take over the payroll work. This is a well-defined job and usually takes around four hours a month. Ideally we would like someone with experience of payroll software or similar. Use of a computer and access to the internet are essential.

## News from the Kindergartens

By Susan Brown, Maple Kindergarten teacher

Spring is arriving slowly this year, but King Winter is slowly loosening his grip on the land and Lady Spring is peeping out for a while each day. Catkins are dangling in our hedges and trees, and shoots are pushing through the cold earth to see the weak but welcome sunshine. Spring is a busy and long season with Candlemas, Valentines Day, Pancake Day, Mothering Sunday, April Fools Day and Easter this term, then May Day after them. In nature the snowdrop starts the spring circle-times and passes onto Primroses and Daffodil, Lady Spring and the Easter Hare.

The Kindergartens are filled with flowers and buds, hazel sticks and chestnut sticky buds adorn our seasonal tables and our fingers are busy preparing Easter Chicks, Nests and Eggs. While we sit and make our pom-poms the talk ranges from the wondrous things the children see in the gardens and their way to school, to the birds nesting in the hedgerows, everywhere there is growth and new life, the children are enthused with the joy of creation and our outside time lengthens to allow this full rein.

On a more practical note, brother wind still blows cold and the days can be very wet, please ensure that children are dressed in layers with warm jumpers and waterproofs available every day. Summer is still a long way away and we still need to wrap up warm.

Also could all families send in 3 blown eggs per child for their Easter Gardens this week (we ask for 3 as they are easily broken), and one hard boiled egg, decorated if possible for the Easter Hare by Thursday of next week,

Finally we hope that all enjoy the Easter Break and come back refreshed and ready for our May Day festival.