



# THE HILL WEST HERALD

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ISSUE 7



**In our Easter  
Bonnets**

SPRING TERM 2015

## Message from the Head Teacher

As the Easter holiday approaches my attention turns to family, friends, festivities and favourite places. This picture was taken on one of my many visits to Wales and brings to mind fun-filled holidays in rain and shine and a nostalgic longing to return. I will of course spend some time in South West Wales this holiday and be sated until my next visit. This photo also reminds me of our continuous journey for improvement. I think we all have an intrinsic drive to be the best we can be and surround ourselves with like-minded people, all of whom have an impact on who we are today and who we are going to be in the future. Sometimes life presents us with real challenges and our ability to cope is dependent on our resilience and network of support. At Hill West we are constantly trying to shape our young people and develop their independence and resilience so that they can cope with all that life will bring for them. We encourage them to surround themselves with positive role models and set themselves aspirational goals in the short term and in the longer term.



With the fifteenth Red Nose Day just behind us (thanks to the hard work of the parent council for their organisation this year) we are reminded of just how lucky we are. One of the driving missions of Comic Relief this year was to make enough to get 300,000 children across Africa into education and learning. Having the potential to transform the lives of so many people is phenomenal. Children need knowledge and skills if they are to build a better future. Getting an education is key to this. Obviously being a Head Teacher, and after visiting our partner school in Tanzania, I am passionate about ensuring that all children get a right to education. The number of children attending primary school in Africa has increased by over 60 million since 2000 and Comic Relief will have helped over one million children in Africa and the world's poorest countries to get an education. This is due in the main because of the drive of a few to influence the majority.

I am, therefore, passionate about enabling our pupils to realise they can make a real difference and that by choosing a path through life driven by compassion, enthusiasm, ambition and belief they can achieve much. The money raised at Hill West this year, following our Red Nose extravaganza, sees our pupils already making a real difference, with just £60 being enough to send an orphaned child to school for a year. However, our ambition should not end there and this is why we will be supporting 'send my friend to school' again this year. This project brings together thousands of children from across the UK to speak up for the right to education, and remind world leaders of their promise that all children should get the chance to go to school. This project has been running since 2005 and over 10,000 schools and youth groups, and millions of children have been involved so far in the UK. Together we really can make a difference.

Consequently, on my holiday in Wales this Easter break, I will reflect on how privileged I am to have had a great education, much of which was free well into my adulthood. I will also give some thought to all those friends and family (some of whom I will be with) who have helped shape me as a person and influenced my life for the better. I will think about the children of Hill West too and consider how we can continue to improve provision for them and ensure that they too see themselves as privileged and know that they can make a difference to make the world a more equal place in which to live. The green hills, coastal walks and castle battlements will all be inspirational and I will return to school with renewed vigour and sense of purpose, looking forward to all the Summer term holds.



ArthurTerry  
**Learning  
Partnership**

Hill West and the other schools across the Partnership have been busy nominating colleagues for The Outstanding in Education Awards taking place at the end of the summer term. The Outstanding in Education Awards are an opportunity to recognise and celebrate the unique contribution that our staff make to the development of the Partnership.

We would like to thank our 600 plus staff for their continued support and hard work as we strive to improved education standards and achievements for all children in the community.

These awards offer each member of staff from across the Partnership an opportunity to nominate 'superstar' colleagues whose performance shines through and who really make a difference to the life of their education establishments.

The awards will culminate at a celebratory event, where staff from across the Partnership will come together for an evening of awards and appreciation.

We look forward to announcing the winners in due course.



## Easter Assembly

by Miss Brown - Class Teacher, Moles

After weeks of hard work, singing practise, learning lines, collecting props, trying on outfits and learning to speak at maximum volume, year 4 were ready to do their Easter production.

With all characters cast with some auditioning, we all began to learn about the Easter story and the

importance of Easter. Year 4 showed amazing maturity with this, covering very grown up themes and messages. Discussing why Jesus was hated by some and loved by others. Why people were crucified for breaking the law. What horrible betrayal Jesus went through in his last hours of life. They were all able to embrace these themes and helped them with their poignant performance.

Next to do was the all important handing out of the parts! We were so impressed with the number of children that wanted lines, a huge well done to all their confidence.

Particularly so with those willing to take on singing solos! What a scary thing to do at 8 or 9 years old. The singing was beautiful, from all of the children, and brought a tear to many eyes.

Moving round the tables in the classroom and creating as much space as possible to create a stage for rehearsals. This they perfected and were able to create a space suitable for practising in 2 minutes flat!

Their lines of the play were written together with teacher and pupils to help them own their play and write their own lines. But we also had the songs to learn! With huge smiles on their faces, even when we were getting it wrong or weren't sure of the words, they sang the songs again and again! Of course for the final performance they were all word perfect and singing with voices that all carried to the end of the room!



## Mr Mrosso's Visit

by Miss McNally - Class Teacher, Wrens

On Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> February Mr Mrosso arrived in England after his long flight from Kilimanjaro, Tanzania. It was his first time in England- in fact it was his first trip outside of Africa.

He was met with a very warm welcome at the airport by Mr Lackenby and Miss Patter. Mr Mrosso was very excited and said he could not wait to see what England had in store! Their first stop was at Frankie and Benny's, where they all enjoyed a full English breakfast. Mr Mrosso commented on how he would never have this food for breakfast back in Tanzania, although he does eat eggs on occasions.



They visited Birmingham City Centre, where Mr Mrosso was struck by the fantastic architecture. He said he had never seen so many beautiful buildings; including the cathedral.

After this, Mr Mrosso went to his hotel to rest after his long journey. He was fascinated with the lock on the door. He explained to Mr Lackenby and Miss Patter how he didn't have doors in his house or school, but they were left as just as open pathway. Before he left, Mr Lackenby explained to Mr Mrosso that he would be going to visit England's capital city early in the morning. Mr Mrosso could not contain his excitement, he must have said thank you at least one hundred times! He would meet again with Miss McNally who had visited his school along with Mr Lackenby in September 2014.

The day of the visit to London arrived! They travelled by train and started their tour of London from Euston Station. Even at the train station Mr Mrosso was in awe of how different life was in London compared to his life back in the town of Moshi in Tanzania. He had never seen or used an escalator before, so this seemed a bit daunting to him at first, but with a little persuasion (and demonstration ) he thought it was very fun- even asking to get a photo taken on one!

They visited the London Eye, Big Ben, Houses of Parliament, Buckingham Palace and The Tower of London. The red buses and red telephone boxes interested Mr Mrosso as he knew they were iconic symbols of London! He did not miss out on any photo opportunities as he said he wanted to have lots of memories of visiting London and be able to show his family and friends of his amazing trip. Visiting Buckingham Palace enthralled Mr Mrosso and he said it had made him so happy that he had been able to visit here. He could not have been more grateful.

After a good night's sleep Mr Mrosso arrived at Hill West on Monday morning eager to meet the staff and children. On arrival he commented on how colourful our school was and said he could not wait to see the children. After a morning tour of the school and meeting with staff Mr Mrosso was given his timetable for the week. As he is a Year 6 Maths teacher he had asked to have as many opportunities to observe and participate in any Year 5 or 6 teaching.

Over the week, Mr Mrosso visited all classes at Hill West, even visiting the book shop and participating in the orienteering staff meeting, where he had lots of fun!

He commented on how active the children were in their lessons and said how they always look as if they're having so much fun!

Mr Mrosso was invited to dinner by the Scrivens and Hull family during the week and had said how kind both families were to him and that he was so very grateful for the hospitality that they had shown towards him.

On Friday 6<sup>th</sup> March, Mr Mrosso's last day at Hill West, a goodbye ceremony was held by Mr Lackenby's Year 5 class and Miss McNally's Reception class. A tree was planted in the orchard by Mr Mrosso, where a Tanzanian flag was raised as a representation of his visit through



our successful 'connecting classrooms' project. Mr Mrosso was very moved and touched by this and said he could not wait to share his experience with his pupils and colleagues back at James Ole Milya School.

As a final goodbye gesture, Mr Mrosso was presented with gifts from Hill West. He was astonished when he received a laptop with solar panels! He said that this would be a whole new experience for the children and staff at

James Ole Milya, where they would get to practise using a form of technology- which has never been done at their school. We were privileged to be part of such a special encounter.

Mr Mrosso ended his trip by thanking everyone for all of their kind gestures and said how he would take all of what he had experienced and use it when returning to his teaching back at James Ole Milya.



## Purple Pinkie Day

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On February 13th everyone came dressed in pink or purple in support of Purple Pinkie Day 2015. Purple Pinkie is a campaign by Rotary International to raise money for End Polio Now – one of the world's biggest-ever immunisation programmes.

Polio is a crippling and potentially deadly infectious disease caused by a virus that spreads from person to person invading the brain and spinal cord and causing paralysis. Because polio has no cure, vaccination is the best way to protect yourself and the only way to stop the disease from spreading. The spread of polio has never stopped in Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan. Poliovirus has been reintroduced and continues to spread in Chad and Horn of Africa after the spread of the virus was previously stopped.

The significance of purple pinkie refers to the dye which is applied to the fingers of children in India, Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan when they have been given the polio vaccine.

Around 20 Sutton primary schools took part in the awareness day, dressed in shades of pink and purple, in return for a small donation. For every 20p donated, one child can be vaccinated against the disease.

Here at Hill West we raised a fantastic £340.00!



That's 1700 children who won't have to suffer the debilitating effects of this preventable illness.



## Easter Bonnet Parade

by Miss Stone - Class Teacher, Robins



Robins and Wrens have been excited all week waiting for the Easter Bunny to visit! We have put our craft skills to the test to make our own baskets and cards to entice the bunny to



visit... Luckily he did. Lots of very happy faces when their baskets magically filled over night.

To finish off the week we celebrated our Easter bonnets with a parade. We were a little nervous but deep down we loved it! Look how fabulous we looked in our photographs. The fun didn't stop there! Egg rolling was lots of fun and the Easter egg hunt was so much fun too. We got to meet lots of KS2 children and run around the field, some of those eggs were tricky to find but our new friends helped us lots.

After all this fun we are definitely ready for an Easter break (and some chocolate!).





## Singing Playgrounds

by Mrs Bowkett, Teaching Assistant, KS2



On Friday 16<sup>th</sup> January, 15 children from Year 4 were invited to a Singing Playgrounds workshop. Singing Playgrounds is a programme of singing and playing together through singing games. They are similar to the playground songs and rhymes that many parents and grandparents will remember, such as *Ring a Ring 'o' Roses*, *Oranges and Lemons* and *Here We Go Round The Mulberry Bush*.

We were first to arrive at the venue but were soon joined by children from four other schools. After a brief introduction, the leader Ula began singing a song. She sang a short simple phrase and then pointed to us to respond in the same way. She continued until we had learned all the words and could join in the song. She didn't use music or instruments, just her voice and clapping to keep the beat.



We spent the morning learning more songs as well as adding actions to them to make them even more fun. After a break for lunch we devised our own version of a song to use in our playground and Ula taught the children how to be a playground song leader and encourage others to join in.

We now have a Singing Playgrounds club where the new song leaders practise the songs they have learned and take them on to the playground to teach other children. We hope that by involving more children, they will continue to play these singing games and pass them on down through the years to come. It's a great way for children to make new friends and the chance to do something a bit different to their usual playground activity. Many children in KS1 particularly enjoy them and we have tried to think of ways to make the songs educational as well, e.g. singing the early times tables and learning the alphabet!

We're looking forward to our next Singing Playgrounds event in May where we will be able to share our songs and ideas with other schools.

## Reception at Birmingham Nature Centre

By Mrs Page - Teaching Assistant, Wrens



The children were able to walk around the centre looking at all the animals and learning different facts about their habitats and food.

We met Julie, the Teacher at the centre, and she showed us lots of animals. She was very impressed with our knowledge of nocturnal animals. We listened to a wonderful story about the Owl and the Fox and afterwards we were able to handle some of the animals they had in the classroom.

All the children and the adults thoroughly enjoyed the day, especially lunch and the play area!!



Fun in the play area

Those noisy Wrens and Robins woke me up.



It's the Owl and The Fox from the story!



Hellooooo Mr Owl

## Mathletics

By Mrs Terry - Class Teacher, Hedgehogs

Hello, for those of you who may not know me, I'm Mrs Terry. I started working at Hill West in September and am Hedgehogs' teacher. Another thing that you may not know is that I love maths. At Hill West, there are many ways that we make learning fun for children, and Mathletics is one of them.

We have been using Mathletics at Hill West for many years now, and it is incredibly successful. It is a website ([www.mathletics.com](http://www.mathletics.com)) which can be accessed from any computer, anytime, anywhere. Each child in the school has their own unique username and password, which will log them in to their very own profile, each with its own character (just to make things a bit more fun). Children can customise their profile character by changing its appearance by earning more points. So, how do they earn the points? Well, that's where the maths comes in!

Mathletics has a variety of activities to help children learn, develop and enhance their maths skills in a number of ways. One part of Mathletics which many children enjoy is the times tables songs – a fun, creative way to learn times tables! Beware – they are incredibly catchy and there's no doubt you'll find yourself singing along with them! Another activity which many children enjoy is Live Mathletics. During this, children can find themselves challenging any other children across the world in a live maths duel, during which they must answer as many questions as possible in as little time as possible. In addition to this, there's also a maths dictionary, which is incredibly useful.

Possibly the most useful aspect of Mathletics (for teachers, children and parents and carers) is the fact that it contains thousands of questions, tasks and activities about all different areas of maths. On the home screen, children can choose the area of maths they want to practise (choosing from addition and subtraction, multiplication and division, money, patterns and relationships, fractions, time, measurement, shape & space and problem-solving) and select their level of difficulty before beginning their challenges. For completing an activity, children will receive medals, which can be transferred to points, which will eventually lead to them gaining certificates (and who doesn't like getting rewards?).

Not only is Mathletics an incredibly fun way of children learning at home, it is an invaluable tool which allows them to develop their knowledge in all areas of maths. Enjoy Mathletics!



## Spring Musical Evening 2015

By Miss Jones—Swifts Class Teacher and Mrs Langhorn - PPA



Wow what a fantastic evening! It was a pleasure to celebrate such amazing musical talent from across the school on the 20<sup>th</sup> March.

To begin, we were treated to a performance from members of the Jaguar Land Rover Brass Band who kick-started our evening, giving our children an insight into what they can achieve in the future.



We then moved to the choir who treated us with their rendition of 'Rather Be'. This then moved on to the woodwind in our school. We enjoyed flutes and clarinets in solos, duets and trios and they played beautifully.



After the woodwind we moved to the guitars where we listened to a group of Year 4 children giving their first performance on guitar and also to our talented Year 6 children playing their own compositions!

This led on to one of our pianists, Heidi Leeson, who delicately played 'Fugue', a piece she had been preparing for her grade exam. After a quick dash back to the choir, we were treated to 'Lean on Me', a gentle song with lots of contributions from brave soloists.

Next we moved on to our huge violin department, who played a variety of solos and group pieces, finishing with an audience favourite of 'Cabbages'. After the violin showcase we moved to our second pianist Omar Ismail, who played the John Legend song 'All of Me' fantastically, bringing out the emotion in the song.

To bring the concert to a close, we called upon the choir once more to sing 'Wake Me Up', rounding off what had been an evening of pure musical talent!



We will be sad to say goodbye to our accomplished Year 6 performers and wish them the best of luck with their future musical endeavours. But we look forward to the budding talents of our younger musicians. Can't wait for next year!



## World Book Day

By Mrs Lampitt - School Librarian



This year everyone dressed as their favourite book character at Hill West, even the staff joined in! Children took part in ERIC time (Everyone Reading In Class).

Activities throughout the day included best costume award for both key stages, a song performed by KS1 staff for the children to watch, fun reading lessons, a World Book Day Competition and a KS2 book and film quiz, which Year 5 were the proud wins of.

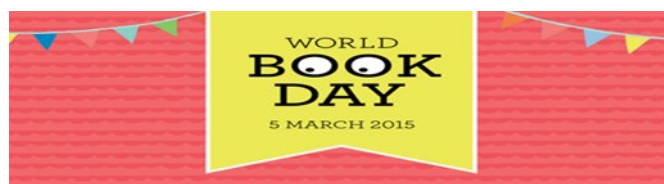


Swallows all dressed up

The children at Hill West really enjoyed World Book Day, their enthusiasm for reading is apparent for everyone to see. Hill West Primary even made World Book Day in our Local Sutton Coldfield Observer, showing of our talents and fantastic costumes.



Malificent met an Oompa Loompa





Badgers joining in the fun

"I love dressing up for World Book Day, it's great to see the teachers taking part"  
Year 5



Where 's Wally and which one's Wally?



Squirrels



Here's the Hares



Rabbits



Kingfishers

The quiz was amazing!  
We were all so excited,  
all the year groups  
wanted to win!

Year 3

## Food Technology at Arthur Terry

By Mr Minto, Teaching Assistant - Year 5

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Since the start of the year, children from the year 5 classes Badgers and Hares have been attending food technology classes every two weeks at Arthur Terry with Mrs Hemmings. The children have taken so much from this experience ranging from learning fruits and vegetables of the world to the difference between battery chickens and free range chickens. In the sessions at Arthur Terry they have also cooked and prepared lots of different meals which include a vegetarian pasta Ragu, baking their own soda bread, healthy fruit smoothies, a delicious looking bread and butter pudding and even scrumptious mini pizzas!

The fortnightly visits to Arthur Terry also provide the children with knowledge about diet and nutrition and the importance of a well-balanced diet. This is something that's not only important now but will benefit them for the rest of their lives.

I think food tech is great. I love it! We make things that we can make again at home and it's a great experience! -  
Louis Fisher



My opinion on food tech is that it is so much fun and I love making the food! I have learnt a lot about a balanced diet.—Olivia Simmonite

I really enjoyed it when I went to food tech, it was really good. It taught me how to cook.—Matthew Verschoyle

## Hill West PTFA Quiz Evening

By Mrs Thomas, PTFA School Liason

Earlier this half term the wonderful Hill West PTFA put on a fantastic adults only quiz night to continue to raise funds for our school.



There was an outstanding turn out with both parents and staff feeling competitive and slightly nervous. It's safe to say that the teachers felt the pressure to succeed!

There were a range of different rounds testing our scientific, geographical and musical knowledge to name just a few.

Half way through the evening there was a chance to rest our tiresome, overworked brains and indulge in fish and chips, what a tremendous effort the PTFA went to, even offering waitress service! There were even half time games on offer to win a range of prizes, including champagne! Miss Robinson did rather well with the 'head' and 'tails' game but unfortunately did not win the prize for the teachers table!

Sam Dawson made an exceptional host, making all feel welcome and ensured that everyone was enjoying themselves. After all of that effort the PTFA raised over £450 for our school, for which we are extremely grateful.





## Health Week

By Mrs Thomas - Teaching Assistant, Wrens

Health week at Hill West got off to an exhausting but fun start when the children came, dressed in sporty gear and ready for action, as a whole day of Zumba commenced. Christina Macguinness took our children on a journey around the world through dance. We all did the Rumba in Cuba, the Salsa in Spain and the Mambo in Mexico before returning back to Britain where our younger children could "Reach for the Stars". With each song, the children asked "Can we do that one again? That was until the next track, when that one suddenly became the favourite!



Many thanks go to Christina, who did Zumba tirelessly all day giving as much energy and enthusiasm to the first year groups session as the last. The day ended with a fun, upbeat assembly lead by the pupils from year 4 who chose dance as their theme for the week. A celebration of the start of our week concentrating on health, safety and fitness.

Meanwhile years 2 and 5 were kept extra specially busy as they also had another visitor on the same day. Dr Beardsell, very kindly came in to school to deliver sessions to them about their chosen subjects.



Year 2 were treated to a lesson which demonstrated how easy it is to spread germs from one person to another. This was cleverly demonstrated with the use of glitter. It quickly became apparent that, once dipped in glitter (which represented the germs) and then moving around the classroom and touching each other, the glitter spread easily and, therefore, so would the germs. This showed the importance of washing hands, sneezing into a handkerchief and so on!

Our scientists in year 2 also experimented with germs on bread. One piece was kept in controlled conditions and nobody was able to touch it while the other was passed around the classroom soaking up as many germs and nasty's as possible. I wonder what differences were apparent by the end of the week?

Later on Dr Beardsell moved on to year 5 where he showed the horrors of what we can do to our bodies when we abuse them through smoking, drugs or eating the wrong foods. It was enough to put anyone off!

On Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March, year 3 made an early start to health week when they marched down to Waitrose to hear about the benefits of eating healthily. Each was given a piece of fruit or veg and asked to read the labels to find that items place of origin. Taking turns, they put a sticker on the map of the world where their tasty treat came from. We were all amazed to see little dots scattered all around the world.

Many thanks to the staff at Waitrose who treated us to a tour of the store and bombarded us with many interesting facts such as, there's the equivalent amount of fibre in one orange as in 7 bowls of cornflakes and an avocado is a fruit, a pineapple is a berry and a strawberry is not a berry at all! Wow!

The highlight for many children was a trip into the cold store. The brave children marched in like penguins to experience temperatures of minus 22 degrees. What a shocker!

All in all the week went well. With a variety of topics covered over the year groups, from dental care to drug awareness, exercise to healthy eating. A fun and healthy time was had by all.



## Spring in Woodpeckers

By Woodpeckers

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WOW! What A fun filled term we have had in Woodpeckers so far .. We have celebrated Mothers Day with Cards, Valentines Day with giant hearts, World Book Day, Red Nose Day - the list goes on! We have been sewing, drawing, painting and weaving; it's been a very crafty term.

We love coming into Woodpeckers in the morning for warm buttered toast and a chat and catch up with our friends. We can play football, and play on the field when it is not too muddy. All that fresh air and exercise sets us up ready for the day ahead. The trim trail and tyres are good fun too, practising our climbing and balancing skills. At the end of school we get to do it all again if we want to or we can relax in front of the TV or Playstation and play games. We have had some really good competitions on the Playstation to see who is the best footballer or the best racing driver.



We must admit we are all looking forward to the Summer Term, getting over to the trim trail and having lots more outdoor fun! Below are some pictures of our fantastic term so far...



## Year 6 trip to France

By Miss Humphreys - Class Teacher, Moles

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Our journey to France began on a cold Friday morning back in January, where a group of very excited Year 6 children boarded the coach, our main form of transport for the next few days. With a long journey ahead, and multiple bags of sweets and chocolate in hand, we set off for the White Cliffs of Dover!

Arriving early, Year 6 were very excited at the sight of the ferry! Once on board, a large group photo of 32 energetic 11 year olds caught the eye of many passers-by. Year 6 enjoyed spending their euros on gifts for family members, browsing through the different duty free shops! The arcade was also a popular attraction which passed some time on the approach to France.

The next stage of our journey lasted an hour and a half and we safely arrived at the chateau, in Rue, during the early evening. We were greeted by a lively bunch of activity coordinators who were eagerly anticipating our arrival! The children were thrown into their first activity, which was followed by a tasty tea. The food throughout the weekend was a lovely surprise for all of the children and staff, giving the children lots of energy for their night time activities, that night's being an outdoor assault course.

After a successful first night, our first full day would entail a tour of the grounds, town and market as well as a visit to a chocolate factory. The premises on which we were staying oozed history and the knowledgeable group leaders engaged the children with interesting stories. The market hosted a range of different French goods, including clothes, food and, much to the delight of the girls, a range of make up! Local museums and a small cathedral added to the charm of the small town, which, when walking through, gave the children an opportunity to practice their French reading and speaking.

The chocolate factory followed another lovely lunch in the afternoon, where the kind owner of the factory explained how all of the chocolate was made. With a free chocolate in hand, the children also had the chance to buy some of the chocolate that they perhaps would not have the opportunity to buy in the UK. Many gifts for family members were also purchased here.

Sunday was spent visiting many of historical sites linked to World War I. Having personally visited many of these sites beforehand, it was good to see how sensibly the children responded to what are quite sombre yet beautiful places. On our small tour we visited Lochnagar Crater, Theipval Memorial and The Canadian Monument and Memorial Park, stopping for none other than a baguette for lunch!

Our last evening at the chateau involved a quiz and marshmallows around a camp fire, giving the children chance to reflect upon their trip. Year 6 continued to behave well on the journey home the following day, squeezing in one last chance to practice their French in the Carrefour supermarket!

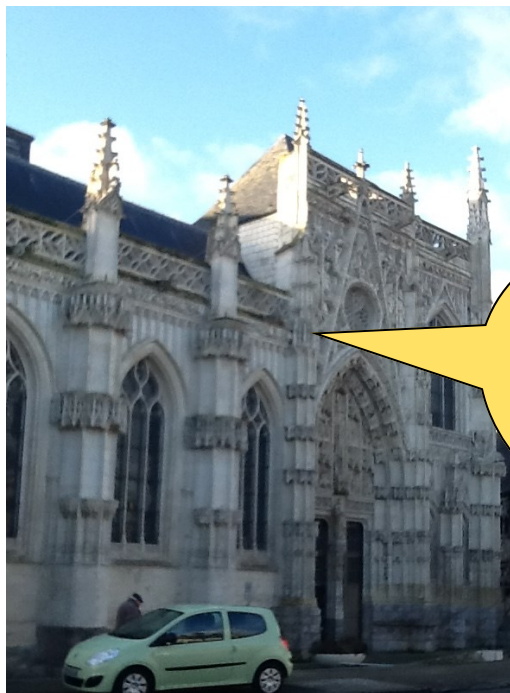


'I really enjoyed having free time, especially when we got in our sleeping bags and jumped around the corridor!'



My favourite part about our trip to France was the battle field memorials for World War One.

One of my favourite parts of our trip to France was the chocolate factory. It smelt so good and was really interesting; the chocolate tasted really good too!



One of my favourite parts of our trip was when we went into town. We learned a lot and there were lots of things that we could buy!

## BIG BANG SCIENCE FAIR!

By Mr Lackenby - Class Teacher - Hares and Science Co-Ordinator



For the past decade, there has been an ongoing debate about the effectiveness of science teaching in primary schools across the UK. A 2009 study by the 'Wellcome Trust' and the 'National Science Learning Centre' found that, in two-thirds of surveyed primary schools, science was no longer a priority and had become overshadowed by literacy and numeracy.

So, in the summer of 2013, the Government released the proposed draft curriculum for schools in the UK and, as part of this, re-designated science as a core subject to put it, once again, at the forefront of compulsory education. Although science has always been a fundamental part of the creative curriculum at Hill West, the new policy has encouraged us to reinvigorate our children's experience of science in a fresh and imaginative way.

In January, we were therefore delighted to secure 60 tickets for all our Year 4 and 5 children at Birmingham's 'Big Bang Fair' – the largest celebration of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) for young people in the UK. The 'Big Bang Fair' takes place in March each year at the National Exhibition Centre (NEC) in Birmingham and hosts a wide range of STEM organisations that give children an exciting and innovative insight into the world of science.



Our children were obviously thrilled at the prospect of visiting the fair for the day and their anticipation of a fascinating and action-packed day was evident from the moment the coach set off on the morning of Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March. We were one of the first groups to arrive, which was lucky because, by 10am, the exhibition hall was full of thousands of like-minded science enthusiasts. As the children entered the exhibition hall, they were overwhelmed by the sheer scale of the event, as their eyes roamed around the room, mouths open wide at the huge plethora of displays, demonstrations, activities and practical experiments.

As liquids bubbled, objects flew above our heads and robots roamed the floor, the children were spoilt for choice as to where to go next. Suddenly, a gigantic gyroscope caught their attention and they quickly ran over to the Royal Air Force booth for a turn on this activity. One by one, the children were strapped in, ready to be spun upside down so that they could experience first hand the G-Force felt by pilots in flight. At this point, the children realised what a fantastic day they were going to have.



The next stop was 'Gross and Gruesome Organisms' – a section of the event dedicated to the world's most spine chilling living things. The children used all their senses to get closer to a range of foul smelling moulds and bacteria before immersing their hands in something that could only be described as primordial goo. The look on Hamish's and Hayden's face was priceless!

Prizing ourselves away from the fun of protozoa and petri-dishes, our eyes were suddenly drawn to the technology area, where a collection of spider-like robots summoned us, as they crawled across the floor, battling in gladiatorial style. The children were fascinated by the 'robot tournaments' that they were witnessing, awaiting their turn to control the almost human machines in combat with each other.

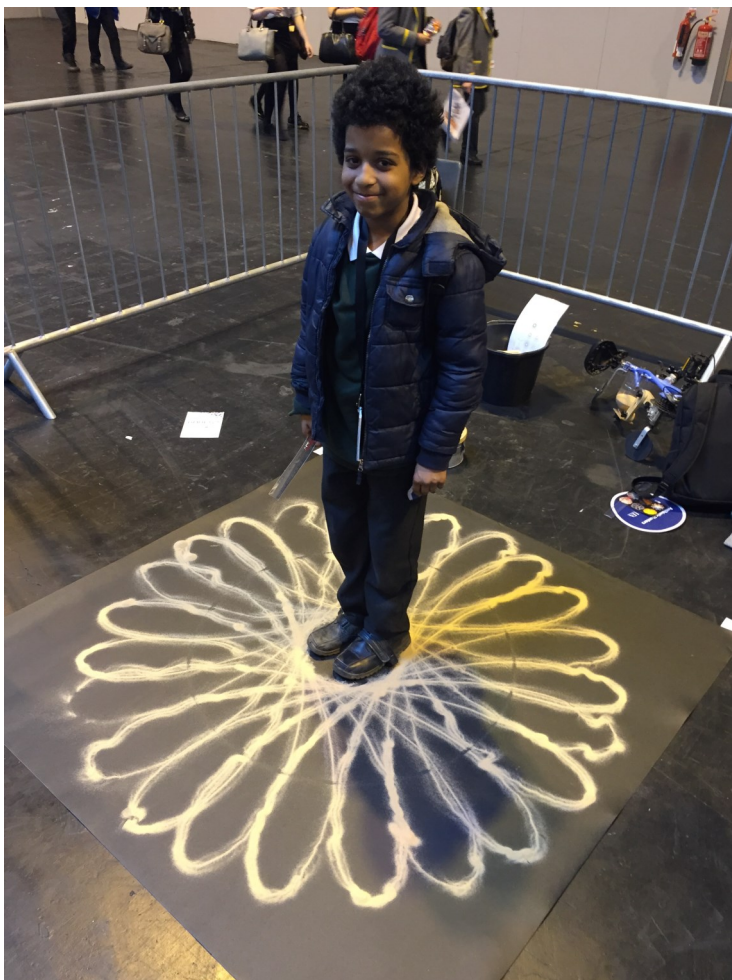


Harry was an absolute natural at controlling his robot.

During lunch, the atmosphere was electric as the children discussed the morning's events, barely pausing for breath as they gulped down their sandwiches in order to make a quick return to the exhibition. The colours and smells of the Botanical Gardens drew us in quickly, as the children soon discovered the opportunity to produce their own cosmetics from natural plant sources. The children thoroughly enjoyed producing lip balms, hand-creams and toothpaste and were enthralled by how these products were made.

Whilst some children were making cosmetics, others quickly wandered over to the 'Energy Zone' to explore the future of sustainable energy from renewable sources. The highlight of this section of the exhibition was when children were put inside a wind tunnel to experience the potential of wind energy for the production of electricity. Moriah, and Shania were blown away by the experience.

The day concluded with the children being taken on a journey to the farthest reaches of the solar system in the immersive 3D cinema. As the children were transported back in time to the 'Big Bang', they visited the rings of Saturn before being blasted off to the 'crab nebula' and



finally stretched infinitely on the edges of a black hole. The cinema experience was truly 'out of this world.'

As the children were reluctantly counted back onto the coach, it was obvious how inspired they had been by the whole event. The buzz of the return journey was a clear sign of how much the children had learnt throughout the day and how they, perhaps, for the first time, had realised how exciting and rewarding a future career in science could be. We very much look forward to next year's incredible event.

## Aberdovey 2014

by Miss Gibson, Class Teacher, Badgers

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When I first heard about the Year 5 residential to Wales in December, I was somewhat anxious, due to the weather in winter and the outdoor activities on our schedule.

But, it was a fantastic week.

I got to see the children being themselves and experiencing new and exciting (even scary) things on a daily basis. The children that arrived back with after 5 days in Aberdovey, were much more confident, capable and adventurous individuals.

**So, where did we go?** The Outward Bound Trust in Aberdovey, Wales. It is an educational charity that uses the outdoors to help develop young people from all walks of life. Through the generosity of their donors, they are able to run adventurous and challenging outdoor learning programmes that equip young people with valuable skills for education, work and life.

**Why did we go there?** All the programmes inspire and motivate young people and take place in the natural environment, away from distractions or modern amenities. The children (and teachers) learn a deep appreciation of the balance between risk, reward and responsibility and leave with transferrable, essential life skills, including: setting and achieving goals, listening and communicating effectively, facing a challenge with determination, cooperation and collaboration, maintaining a positive outlook, even when things get tough, and effective leadership skills.

**What did we do?** Day 1 Just after 9am, Badgers, Hares, Miss Gibson, Mr Lackenby, Mr Minto, Mr Howard and Miss Guest set off to Wales. We arrived at the picturesque Outward Bound centre just after lunchtime, and had some lunch; the children were then split into their activity groups. The groups were named after famous explorers, and their activity leaders introduced themselves to their group by showing them how to make their own beds. Some children found this process a little challenging but still before long all beds were fully made. That evening the groups took part in a series of team building, which involved listening and communicating to one another in order to complete the challenge, it was a great to see the groups getting to know one another properly.





Day 2 With a 7am wake up the children were at breakfast for half past, breakfast consisted of full English, toast, cereals, fruit and yoghurts, a perfect way to start our day.

9am and the day's activities would begin, each group did the same activities but on different days, so this is the order in which Simpson group took part.

We went to a national park nearby where the activities included a range of exploring the forest, and team building exercises. But also the children were able to build a shelter in the woods and we were even treated to some hot chocolate made in the forest itself in a camp kettle on a fire. What a great experience for the children.



Day 3: For me, day 3 was the most challenging, physically and mentally. But like most things that week this also meant that it was by the end of it also very rewarding.

We rock climbed up cliff faces, to one of the largest mountains in the natural park. The challenge was anticipated to be the way up, but in fact as we all found out it was actually the way down which really tested the children's determination and collaboration. We



had children falling on to their bottoms more times than I could count, but each time this happened my heart would sink and I would hear laughing coming from the child who fell on to their bottom and the children around them assisting them back up. The communication was astounding; the journey these children had taken was proven just from this activity.

## Day 4

The last full day was packed full of activities, for us it was the water day! After a 4 hour canoe trip up the estuary (and lots of songs along the way) we made it back to the outward bound centre at the beach front. The children (and I) embarked on a “jog and dip”, this was a true challenge and I couldn't have been prouder of the attitude the children had. The girls in particular did suggest that if I took part in this jog and dip into the freezing cold sea water, then they too would take part. So, of course I was up for the challenge, it was truly freezing, but again an unforgettable experience.

The last meal in the evening, naturally involved discussions amongst the different groups sharing their stories and adventures, the evening then came to end with a camp fire, hot chocolate and marshmallows.



Day 5 Our last morning in Aberdovey involved a prolonged breakfast and having to tidy the dorms and ensure all equipment was put away ready for the next school. After getting these jobs done, the activity leaders took the groups into their common area and had a “final thought” for the week.

For our group it was lovely to see how positive they were about the challenges and daily duties. The common statement made was that the children said they enjoyed it much more

than they thought they would, and in actual fact they were glad they were encouraged to take part in things that usually they wouldn't have because now they have accomplished those challenges.

After a quick bite to eat, it was back on the road! Friday evening traffic wasn't too bad for us and we arrived back at Hill west with a crowd of beaming smiles from all the parents waiting for their child to arrive home.

I know I can speak on behalf of all the teachers and support that came on the Aberdovey trip with us, when I say it was such a valuable and enjoyable week, not only for the children, but as adults too.

Thank you to everyone involved.



## Panto Jack and the Beanstalk at Birmingham Hippodrome

By Mrs Leeson - Head of School

Our annual trip to the pantomime has become somewhat of a tradition at Hill West. As you can imagine, it takes a huge amount of organisation, not just in terms of sending letters out and getting money in from parents, but also due to the mammoth task of allocating seats within the theatre so that classes of children can sit together and organising the seating arrangements on the coaches. So...why do we do it? The answer is simple....we do it for our children.

It is an absolute privilege to take our children to the theatre; to see their excitement as we get on the coaches and travel under the Birmingham tunnels; to witness their awe as they step into the theatre, maybe for the first time, and see the stage in amazing, glittery colours and to experience their wonder as the curtains lift and the pantomime begins.

The pantomime this year was Jack and the Beanstalk, with the part of Jack played by Blue's Duncan James. The villain of the show was Chris Gascoyne (Peter Barlow) from Coronation Street. However, the stars of the show, as far as our children were concerned, were the comedy trio of Gary Wilmott (Dame Trot), Paul Zerdin (Simple Simon, with his wonderful puppet, Sam) and Matt Slack as Silly Billy. These three cast members had us laughing out loud with their funny antics and jokes!

Wearing 3D glasses to enjoy the magical special effects was a real hit with all of the children, particularly when the giant's hand and other items, seemed to come whizzing off the stage and into the audience!!

At Hill West our aim is to develop confidence in our children and this was highly evident when three of our Year 3 children were chosen to go up onto the stage. They each performed a solo song in front of a packed theatre without showing a single nerve. Their impeccable manners, outstanding behaviour and articulacy were clearly apparent. An absolute credit to our school and their parents!

Roll on next year...it's Aladdin!!

Sam the puppet by Mia Levy



By Louis Fisher



**"The hub of Sutton Coldfield Choirs looks set to take the musical world by storm and continue to provide entertainment and musical education, for group and audience members alike, for generations to come."** *Sutton Coldfield Journal, 2014.*

Musical Directors: Richard Jeffries, Liz Birch, and Helen Willetts

**Hon. Patron:** Suzi Digby OBE

Sutton Coldfield Choirs' (SCC) are delighted to announce that its junior choir, the Four Oaks Cluster Choir, won 1<sup>st</sup> prize at the national Manchester Amateur Choral Competition's (MACC) Youth category on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

This competition is a national (UK) amateur singing competition for choirs, held in the renowned Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, providing a competitive and fun platform for amateur choirs around the UK. Four Oaks Cluster Choir (FOCC) competed against nine other youth choirs from around the country, many of whom are in the older teenage age range of 16-18 years.

The Choir has been progressively increasing their national and local reputation in particular with their calibre of singing:

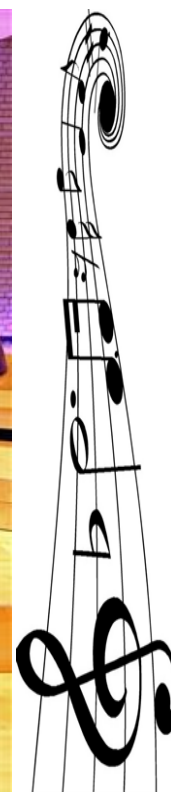
Category finalists in Choir Of The Year 2012

Choir of the Year 2014 'Choir of the Day' Midlands heat

3<sup>rd</sup> place at the Llangollen International Eisteddfod in 2013 and 2014.

Additionally, the Choir have again been selected for the International Eisteddfod singing competition this year in the Junior and Folk categories, so will be going for an English gold on 7 & 8 July! Last year, they competed in this prestigious festival against internationally renowned choirs from Poland, USA and Russia, so members are looking forward to this exciting challenge again.

Furthermore, the Choir has been chosen to perform at the Opening Ceremony, singing for an audience that includes Suzi Digby OBE, a judge on BBC's Song of Praise Choir of the Year, and Paul Mealar FRSA, who wrote a piece for the Duke & Duchess of Cambridge's wedding and the number one hit 'Wherever you are', both in 2011.



## CROSS COUNTRY

By Miss Rowe - PPA PE Teacher

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This year we are competing in sporting events as part of the Wilson Stuart Partnership. For Cross Country, this means that we have to select a small team for each race, held at Bishop Vesey School.

The latest race in the Cross Country Championship was held on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March. Our team was:

Boys: Jamie, Alex, Adam, Charlie and Will

Girls: Eve, Grace, Melissa, Shannon, Sarita and Emily



The boys are off

The Year 5s had been out at The Big Bang science show and had to hurry when they arrived back at school. The children were accompanied by Mrs Langhorn and Miss Rowe.

When we arrived the children had a look at the course and then proceeded to warm themselves up by jogging and stretching.

The boys raced first, at 4.00pm. There were over 120 boys running the race, which was a circuit of over one mile. The boys all tried to beat their previous race position and ran well. Jamie came in 14<sup>th</sup> which was an incredible finish!

Next - the girls. Eve was the first girl back, finishing 35<sup>th</sup>. The girls really gave it their all, but were a little hard on themselves afterwards. One of the girls had been off sick the previous two days! Miss Rowe and Mrs Langhorn were incredibly impressed with all 11 children. Their behaviour, determination and attitudes were

Well done all!

Next race: Wednesday 25th



Eve finishing strongly

## Lunchtime Team Training

by Mrs Durkin and Mrs Thompson, Lunchtime Assistant Learning Mentors

Following successful training courses in 2014 including: First Aid; Autism and Customer Service NVQ Level 1, the lunchtime supervisors have just undertaken their first training course of 2015.

We have just completed our NVQ Level 2 in customer service. You may think 'customer service?', but it's a school not a retail outlet or a restaurant! That's exactly what we thought at first until we were informed that the pupils and parents are our customers.

The course involved looking at all customers, both internal and external and how we can offer them the best service possible. Also, dealing with challenging situations and differing customer needs in a professional and efficient manner.

We looked into legislation and school policies and how they affect our everyday work, including health and safety and customer satisfaction and how these could be improved upon.



Part of our course involved conducting a customer survey, which proved very enlightening! We asked the children about their enjoyment of the school day – including lunchtimes and after school clubs. We asked them for their feedback and ideas for improvements that could be made. There were some wild suggestions such as lessons in computer gaming! However, the most sensible and most popular suggestion was for an all-weather astro turf pitch (the lunchtime supervisors agree this was a great idea, although rather costly!)

After completing the course we are now anxiously waiting to see if we have passed, although we're sure we all have, as we've worked extremely hard and enjoyed it immensely. It just goes to show that at Hill West **everyone** is always learning.