

THE HILL WEST HERALD

**HILL WEST**
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theherald@hillwest.bham.sch.uk

ACE; Ambitious, Curious, and Ever-respectful



Message from the Head Teacher

By Dr Beth Clarke

This year, Omicron variant permitting, Christmas will most definitely be a time to celebrate the joys to be found in family and friendship. Last Christmas, many of us had to celebrate without our extended family and friends and so this year is likely to be all the more special. Whoever you are spending it with I wish you the best of festive times and hope that all of our children have some time to reflect and be truly grateful for each and every blessing. In the Clarke family, we are looking forward to welcoming our grown up sons and their partners. We are also excited to be welcoming my Mum and Dad who are flying in from Italy on the 21st December (all being well). We can't wait and the excitement is already starting to build.

Our family, like yours I'm sure, thrives on routine. Christmas, although a joyous time of year, can also be a particularly challenging time of year for many children, including those children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder, those who have been adopted from care, are in care or those who have experienced early childhood trauma and loss. Irrespective of whether a child has an additional or identified need parents will know that any change to a child's routine can be disruptive and anxiety provoking. As such, there are some helpful hints below, shared by Adoption UK and the Communication and Autism Team, to ensure the festive season is full of love and laughter for all children.

Christmas can bring up some big feelings: The relentless drive to have fun and enjoy Christmas can feel out of place for children who may be worried about lack of money, more stress in the family, or the impact of increased seasonal alcohol consumption on their lives. For children who have experienced terrible Christmas times in their earlier lives, the arrival of decorations and Christmas songs can trigger powerful negative memories. Giving time and space for children to feel and express worries about Christmas means that they can feel heard, understood and supported. We know that this Christmas will be a challenging time for some members of our local community whether this be due to unemployment, homelessness, loneliness, illness or struggles with mental ill-health. Our love, thoughts and best wishes are with everyone.

Talking non-stop about Christmas: If a child is talking about Christmas, or asking the same questions about seasonal activities over and over again this could be a sign of deep anxiety rather than excitement. This signals to us that the child needs extra support and increased nurture.

Christmas Dinner: If your child has strong likes and dislikes don't stress about them sitting down to the same Christmas dinner as everyone else. Keep to what they are used to and don't try to get them to eat what they wouldn't tolerate during the year. It's only another meal. And it doesn't have to be perfect. Use familiar cutlery, dishes and cups for your child.

Christmas Presents: When Christmas presents are exchanged we all expect our children to be polite and show appreciation. If your child is likely to say 'I don't like that, take it back' warn family and friends not to expect too much, how to respond and not to take it personally. Draw up a list of possible presents that family and friends can pick from that relate to your child's special interest.

Coping with the pressure of Christmas: Be realistic. Preparing for and celebrating Christmas can be stressful. Try to find some time for yourself. Even if it is for a long soak in the bath, a trip to the hairdressers, or watching a DVD. Ask family or friends to help out and give you a break. If you are cooking Christmas dinner and are panicking about how you will manage if your child is not coping, prep and cook on Christmas Eve. Do anything you can to cut down on the workload. Talk to other parents about how they manage Christmas. And remember, this has been a challenging couple of years for us all, we should not lose sight of that!

I sincerely hope that you all have an amazing holiday and send messages of love, peace, prosperity and good health on behalf of everyone at Hill West.



Arthur Terry Learning Partnership News

By Dr Beth Clarke

The Power of Reading

Over the last couple of months all of the Head teachers in the ATLP schools, working with the executive team, the centralised teams and the Trustees have been re-developing our three year strategic plan. At the centre of our plan sit the children and young people our school serves and one of the central tenants is supporting **every** child in **every** school to read fluently with confidence and comprehension.



When I reflect as a parent, on the most enjoyable time of the day, it has to be 30 minutes or so I spend reading a book to my daughter in bed before I settle her to sleep. This has been a routine in our family from the very first day she arrived. This has meant that over the last 7 years we have read thousands of books and stories and shared a secret world full of story language and adventure. We of course had some making up to do as she didn't join our family until she was 4 years old. Research on the importance of reading to children has shown that children who are read to in the first five years of life have a 1.4 million word advantage over children who are not read to at home.

We know, as parents and as teachers that studies show that reading for pleasure makes a huge difference to children's educational performance. Not only do children who read widely or who are read to widely perform better in reading tests than those who don't but also they develop a broader vocabulary, increased general knowledge and a better understanding of other cultures. Parents of course, make the biggest difference. It is never too early or too late to start reading to your children. One of the great benefits of reading together every day is that you are forming a habit – a healthy habit – from a very young age. Children who are surrounded by books tend to grow up into adults that read. They become lifelong lovers of reading. For those children who haven't got anyone at home who is able to read to them we are reading lots of stories to these children in school throughout the week – outside of their lessons.

Learning to read is about listening and understanding as well as working out what is printed on the page. Through hearing stories, children are exposed to a wide range of words. This helps them build their own vocabulary and improves their understanding when they listen, which is vital as they begin to read. It's important for them to understand how stories work too. Even if a child doesn't understand every word, they'll hear new sounds, words and phrases which they can then try out, copying what they have heard. As children learn to read at school, you can play an important role in helping to keep them interested in books too. Find out what interests them, help them to find books that will be engaging and fun, and spend time reading the books they bring home together. You can often find me and my daughter in the charity book shop in Mere Green on a Saturday morning, looking for books in a particular series or written by a particular author.

I am sure, that for many of you, reading to your child each night before bed is also a well-loved routine. I would urge you to continue to do this, even as they get older. Research suggests that a reluctant reader in Year 4 reads approximately 50,000 words a year. An average reader reads approximately 100,000 words a year but a keen reader, reads as many as 1,000,000 words a year. These are words that they then begin to use in their everyday language and of course their writing.

“Reading for pleasure is the single biggest factor in success in later life outside of an education”. Bali Rai

The wonderful thing for children about being read to is not only that they can lose themselves entirely in the book being read but the activity is completely threat free. It offers them a time to relax while reading is being modelled to them and will inevitably lead them to want to read for themselves.

Our First Christmas in Reception 2021

By Mrs Lisa Pardo and Miss Sophie Roberts

Celebrating Our First Christmas at Hill West

Christmas is such a magical time of year. Celebrating Christmas at school for the first time has already been full of exciting events and activities for our Robins and Wrens.



Decorations for the tree

Our school Christmas tree just would not be the same without the wonderful decorations created by the Reception children. Children used many skills including; hole-punching, threading, gluing, fixing, painting, matching and drawing to create these wonderful snow-people. We hope that they will be a treasured memory for families, each Christmas, for years to come.



Christingle

The children busily prepared for Christingle. The children practised special new song including: *Love shone down* and *Sing Christingle*. During lessons, the Reception children have developed a knowledge of what Christingle is and what each part of the Christingle represents. On Tuesday 7th of December we walked up to All Saints Church with our beautifully created Christingles, ready to celebrate at the service.

What is a Christingle?

- Christingle is a celebration to share the light of Jesus.
- The orange represents the world.
- The red ribbon symbolizes the love and blood of Christ.
- The sweets which can be added at home represent God's creations.
- The lit candle represents Jesus' light in the world, bringing hope to people.

Nursery Nativity

Reception were lucky enough to be invited to the Nursery Nativity. Reception listened, watched, smiled and sang. Such a lovely start to our day!



The Christmas story

Reception have been learning about the meaning of Christmas. They can talk about how people celebrate the birth of Christ in a manger in Bethlehem so many years ago. This learning has provided wonderful opportunities for writing, craft and speaking and listening.



Christingle

By Ms Kelly Bailey

During the countdown to December all across the school we are treated to the beautiful voices of our children singing in unison to our Christingle songs. There is usually a wave of recognition across KS2 as the children recall the songs from their long term memory, having sung them during previous years. My personal favorite,



which I can be found singing badly in my car, kitchen, bath etc., is 'Love Shone Down'. It is such a shame that parents were unable to join us in the church this year, but we are pleased we are able to uphold the Hill West tradition of our annual visit to the church with our children.



What is Christingle all about?

During the service, each person takes a Christingle and the candles are all lit to create a warm, magical glow symbolising the light of Christ and bringing hope to people living in darkness.



Christingles are made using oranges and a few other bits, as you choose. You light the candle at the end of a service to spread a magical glow around everyone.



Each element of a Christingle has a special meaning and helps to tell the Christian story:

- The orange represents the world
- The red ribbon (or tape) symbolises the love and blood of Christ
- The sweets and dried fruit represent all of God's creations
- The lit candle represents Jesus's light in the world, bringing hope to people living in darkness.



Christingle 07.12.21



Anti-Bullying 2021

By Mr Ryan Horne

15th November 2021 marked the start of Anti-Bullying Week, and as usual at Hill West, we take the opportunity to remind children about what behavior constitutes bullying and what to do if they, or someone else, has been, or is being, bullied.

Our Anti-Bullying Policy states: ***All children have the right to learn and work in an environment where they feel safe and which is free from harassment and bullying (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; Article 19).*** Our school is a place where every person has the right to be themselves, to be included and to learn in a safe and happy environment. Everyone at our school is equal and treats each another with respect and kindness. We aim to make all those connected with the school aware of our opposition to bullying, and we make clear each person's responsibilities with regard to the eradication of bullying in our school.

We take positive active to prevent bullying behaviour through a combination of:

- Raising awareness about what bullying is and how it affects people;
- Emphasising the important role that bystanders play in tackling bullying;
- Teaching pupils how to safely challenge bullying behaviour;
- Teaching pupils how to manage their relationships constructively and assertively.



Bullying is the use of force, coercion, hurtful teasing or threat, to abuse, aggressively dominate or intimidate. The behaviour is often repeated and habitual. The STOP acronym can be applied to define bullying – Several Times On Purpose.

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable and will not be tolerated at our school. At our school the safety, welfare and well-being of all pupils and staff is a key priority. We take all incidences of bullying seriously and it is our duty as a whole school community to take measures to prevent and tackle any bullying, harassment or discrimination. We actively promote values of respect and equality and work to ensure that difference and diversity is celebrated across the whole school community. We want to enable our pupils to become responsible citizens and to prepare them for life in 21st Century Britain. These values reflect those that will be expected of our pupils by society, when they enter secondary school and beyond in the world of work or further study. We are committed to improving our school's approach to tackling bullying and regularly monitor, review and assess the impact of our preventative measures.

This year in Anti-Bullying week, there was a national project entitled, 'One Kind Word' which we were delighted to participate in. One kind word can do a lot to help someone who is feeling uncomfortable, upset or bullied at school. We decided to celebrate 'One kind word' across school. Our artwork was intended to represent a kind thing to say to a person who feels rejected or alone. We collected these words from every class across school and displayed them in the Key Stage 1 hall for everyone to see and enjoy. We take bullying extremely seriously at Hill West and this project was intended to promote kind actions and words across the whole school. The Hill West ACE Champions wrote a letter to our Hill West parents encouraging us all, as a community, to use one kind word to those around us in an effort to support everyone and to send out the clear message that bullying is not acceptable.



Christmas 2021 at Hill West

By Mrs Linsie Burton



As usual the Christmas festivities have been in full swing here at Hill West with lots of exciting events taking place for all year groups.



Last Friday the PTFA kicked off the festive season with the Christmas Movie night, in place of the usual Christmas fayre. This proved to be a real success for both KS1 and KS2, seeing over 100 children in each hall enjoying the showing for the evening. They also got to enjoy sweets, popcorn and a hotdog whilst they sat back and relaxed. KS1 viewed 'Arthur Christmas', while KS2 watched the hilariously funny 'Elf'. Lots of fun was had by all that attended and thank you to all staff who stayed to help out and make this a fantastic night for our children.

Monday morning saw our very bare, hall Christmas trees fill up with all the fantastic decorations made by the children of Hill West. This annual event began in KS1 where Year 3 had created super wooden Christmas trees, Year 2 had made lollipop stick reindeer, Year 1 produced personalized snow globes and Reception made amazing snowmen. The children were delighted to be able to sing joyful Christmas songs whilst they waited for their turn to place their decoration on the tree. As the tree filled up with beautiful hand-crafted decorations, the children eagerly anticipated the final tradition – turning on the Christmas Tree lights. The

hall filled with the children's gasps of delight, when the darkness was illuminated and the decorations sparkled brightly!



In KS2, the children eagerly awaited the arrival of Dr Clarke from the KS1 hall, so that they too could begin to decorate their tree. Year 4 produced baubles using geometric shapes and their knowledge of 3-dimensional shapes, Year 5 made hand-stitched Christmas trees from felt, joined together using a range of sewing techniques including blanket stitch and decorated with brightly-coloured buttons, whilst Year 6 extended these sewing skills, producing a Christmas tree design using two different embroidery stitches and three different-coloured embroidery threads to represent a tree on rectangles of Binca fabric, backed on card.

As part of the last two weeks of the Autumn term, children can design and create their very own Christmas cards and advent calendars to bring home, whilst other children can produce Winter cards for their families if they choose. This is an opportunity to develop and further refine their Art and DT skills, and we hope you enjoy all the hard work the children have put into the work they produce.

Another one of our Christmas festive events, is our Christmas Jumper Day in aid of 'Save The Children'. This year our children really went above and beyond with their marvelous festive attire to help the school raise an amazing £334! What a truly fantastic effort by all involved to benefit those children who are less fortunate than ourselves.



In the last week, KS2 children had the chance to enjoy a Christmas meal with one of their loved ones. The food was delicious, and afterwards the children were able to make their own magical reindeer food. How fabulous that children and adults were able to enjoy this special time together!

Everyone at Hill West wishes you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



The Hill West Nativity

By Mrs Sarah Terry

Christmas is such a magical time of year, a time we can celebrate and spend quality time with loved ones, but it is especially magical at Hill West. Among the exciting celebrations is a staple event in the Hill West calendar – the Nativity. It is so wonderful to watch the children of Year 2 perform the Nativity, bringing the spirit of Christmas alive. This year's Nativity was particularly special, as COVID-19 restrictions meant that the years-old tradition could not take place last year.



On Monday 6th and Tuesday 7th December, the days that the children in Year 2 had been waiting for had arrived - the Nativity performances! Over 60 children, most of whom had never performed in front of an audience before, took to the stage to showcase their wonderful talent (the result of weeks and weeks of hard work learning song lyrics, dances and speaking parts) in front of proud family members, children and staff.



This year's nativity told the traditional story of Mary, Joseph and the quest to arrive in Bethlehem in time for the census - enforced fully by Caesar's census-takers - before the birth of Jesus; however, this time the story had a twist! In this version, we heard of a rarely-told side of the story – the story of the midwife due to deliver baby Jesus and her trusty, long-suffering donkey sidekick, Steve.



Esmé and Manveen performed fantastically well as the midwife; they had so many lines to learn and delivered them so enthusiastically. Taylor and Arthur, who portrayed the midwife's right hand man (or should I say donkey), did so with such comedic timing that they had the audience in stitches! However, Steve wasn't the only hilarious donkey in the performance. Krish and Charles demonstrated their comedic talents as Nigel, the donkey who safely carried Mary and Joseph (Sarpreet and Henry, along with Arabella and Arjun) to Bethlehem, but unfortunately Nigel had to endure Mary's complaints all along the way.



Guided by the magnificent stars, the angels (led by Angel Gabriel), the wise men (along with their very own narrator), the shepherds (and their sheep) all eventually made their way to the stable at the back of the inn, despite the grumpy inn-keeper's insistence that Mary and Joseph could not stay at the inn! Luckily, his wife was far more understanding, and found them room in the stable.

All of the acting was completely fabulous and was interspersed with fantastic songs, which the children worked incredibly hard to learn. There was also a beautiful dance by the stars, which was a real highlight! All in all, it was a wonderful performance and we are very proud of the children.

Year 1 certainly have big boots to fill for next year's performance!



Diwali

By Mr Adam Henrick and Mrs Alison Downes

Weeks of line learning, prop-making and costume-designing came to a fabulous conclusion when, on November 4th, it was wonderful to be able to invite Year 5 parents back into school for the very first time since COVID-19 had struck, to enjoy two splendid performances of the story of Rama and Sita.

This is a poem which has been told over and over again. There are 24,000 verses of heroes, villains, good, evil, life, love and death. The children, through their performance, shared with their loved ones the story of Ramayana – a most sacred text which dates back 5,000 years; it explains how the Hindu festival of Diwali came to be.



Badgers gave a superbly entertaining show in the morning, with their dance re-enactment of the legendary fight between the monkey army and the demon army as a real highlight. Later that afternoon, it was Hares turn to perform, and their dance was also simply stunning. There were also stand out performances from several actors in both versions.

Their plays showcased the effort and hard work invested by every single child, from prop designers to back-stage workers, to narrators, to actors. The time invested by children at home, and in school, was clearly demonstrated by their cool, calm performance and excellent story-telling!

The children ably re-told and re-enacted the ancient legend. They revealed their inner actor, by portraying their roles with confidence and energy, and who could ignore the



foot-stamping petulance of Kaikeyi (the jealous wife of King Dashratha), and her hair-flicking arrogance? Or the beauty and serenity of Sita, or the valour and charisma of Rama. Not to mention the morally-ethical Bharat, who agreed to take care of the throne, whilst Rama was banished to the forest for 14 years at the request of Kaikeyi. The death of Dashratha was both shocking and

dramatic, and meant that Rama's fate was sealed. As he left for the forest with his lovely wife Sita, Rama's noble brother - Lakshman - volunteered to accompany the pair on their banishment.



Meanwhile, Ravana (a powerful 10-headed demon) and his sister, Surpanakha (who was as hideous as her demon-brother to look upon) were most disgruntled with the news that Sita had chosen Rama for her husband. Ravana had tried to win Sita's hand by bending the bow and firing the arrow - as challenged by Janaka to gain her hand in marriage - and Surpanakha had

fallen in love with Rama. Both were plotting together to help Surpanakha achieve her heart's desire and simultaneously gain revenge for Ravana – after he was refused as a groom by Sita!

So danger was lurking in the forest - in the form of Surpanakha – who had spotted Rama and Sita as they made their way through the trees. Surpanakha followed Rama and Lakshman as they left Sita in the forest home they had built and approached him to ask Rama to marry her. He refused but suggested his brother might be available. Unfortunately, Lakshman was horrified by her freakish, demonic appearance and cut off her nose. She screamed and ran to find her brother. Enraged at the desecration of her face, he vowed to take Rama's most precious belonging from him – his wife, the lovely Sita.



Ravana gathered his demons around him, in preparation to carry out his evil plot. He sent them to find his friend, Maricha, with the intention of asking him to change his form into that of a golden deer, so that Sita could be distracted and lured away from the protection of Rama, into the hands of Ravana, who could then take her away to his island home and force her to marry him.

Loyal to the core, Maricha promptly obliged her friend and presently approached Sita, in the form of a golden deer, as she was carrying out chores in the clearing outside their forest home. Once Maricha had caught her attention, he bounded off into the trees. Sita called to Rama and asked him to find the pretty deer. Rama and Lakshman rushed off, but before they left, Lakshman drew a magic circle on the ground and instructed Sita to remain within – as this would protect her and keep her safe. As they disappeared after the deer, Ravana seized the moment and, disguised as an ancient old man, hobbled towards Sita. “Water?” he begged. He coughed and spluttered, and with her sympathetic nature, she stretched a drink towards him, at the very edge of her magic circle. He took the opportunity, and swiftly pulled her, as she teetered on the boundary, out of its borders. Although she screamed, Rama could not hear her deep in the forest, so Jatayu, the bird, bravely attempted to fend off the demon-king. To the detriment of both, Jatayu was simply not strong enough and a triumphant Ravana dragged Sita away. With his dying breath, Jatayu was just able to tell the returning Rama what had occurred.



Suddenly the sound of marching filtered through the trees and eventually the mighty Monkey Army, led by the God, Hanuman, arrived in the clearing. Rama told Hanuman what had taken place and was delighted when the god, and his army, agreed to help rescue Sita. Rama gave Hanuman his marriage garland to prove to Sita that he had come on behalf of her husband, before Hanuman bounded off, in mighty god-like leaps, to search for Sita’s prison location.

Upon arrival at Ravana’s island, Hanuman found Sita locked away at the very top of a tower. He showed her the garland and promised to return with her husband. Although he was temporarily captured by Ravana’s guards, who wickedly set his tail alight, he used his mighty leaps to escape their grasp. After extinguishing the flames in the ocean, he set off to locate Rama. He quickly explained that he had found Sita, but they needed to hurry. A bridge was required to cross the



ocean, but Hanuman came to the rescue yet again, smashing mountains to create boulders, which the Monkey Army used to build a bridge to the island.

As the brave Monkey Army marched across, they found a horde of hideous demons waiting for them, and a ferocious battle commenced. All parties fought



valiantly but Rama, Lakshman and their Monkey friends were eventually triumphant. As Ravana fell to a final blow from Rama, Rama took the key to the tower from his belt and released the beautiful Sita.

As fourteen years had now passed, Rama was then able to return to re-claim his throne. As he and his party travel home, Diya lights were lit by the people in the darkness outside their houses, to light his way back. And that is why today, Diwali Diva’s and fireworks are lit, to remember the journey home of



Rama and Sita, when good overcame evil and light overcame darkness!

Year 5’s plays were a fantastic start to Diwali celebrations and were much enjoyed by all! Congratulations Hares and Badgers for your brilliant performances. Bravo!



Modeshift Stars

By Miss Sophie Beardmore



Modeshift STARS is a national award scheme, launched in 2008, which offers support and rewards to schools for taking steps to promote safer, greener, healthier travel.

The scheme is supported by the Department for Transport and has seen over 1,400 schools in England achieve accreditation since its inception. **This includes us!!** There are five accreditation awards that schools can be given which recognise Best Practice in the delivery of Effective Travel Plans; **Green, Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum**. At Hill West, we currently hold a **BRONZE ACCREDITATION** and we are working towards achieving **SILVER**.

Modeshift STARS has the following aims:

- **To enhance the quality and performance of Travel Plans** – by providing a national standard and sharing best practice on the development and implementation of Travel Plans. **At Hill West we have just updated our Travel Plan and are currently developing and implementing a new ‘Walk to School Wednesday’ to help encourage more children to walk to school.**
- **To promote healthier lifestyles** – by encouraging people to get active through more walking and cycling, thereby creating healthier and more productive communities. **For many years Hill West have been involved with Bikeability, in Year 6, to promote the health and safety of riding a bike on the roads. Children also receive additional information on this during their daily assemblies.**
- **To create safer environments** – by helping organisations to identify and address travel and transport issues to enable safer journeys for all. **Hill West took part in this year’s Road Safety Week, where children were exposed to our road safety heroes and learnt about how they can become safer pedestrians when walking, riding etc on our roads. As well as this, Dr Clarke, myself and Lisa Breeze (Parent Council) met our local councillor to discuss how we can improve our provision for a safer arrival to school outside the school gate including parking and crossings.**
- **To promote urban and rural regeneration** – by ensuring that places are well connected and that people are well informed of the travel options that are available to them. **At Hill West we are very lucky with the connections we have; train lines and buses, which children are aware of.**
- **To promote sustainable development** – by ensuring that the transport needs of new developments are catered for and ensuring organisations are good neighbours that care about the local environment and their impact upon it. **Hill West always communicates issues regarding parking outside school and things to be aware of in our weekly bulletin.**
- **To improve Air Quality** – by reducing the number of vehicles and congestion around sites to improve the quality of air locally. **At Hill West the Right Respecting Steer Group are working with myself in thinking about how we can increase the air quality around the school, for example by setting up a parking zone 0.5 miles away from the school gate, so children can walk part of their school journey.**



What are we doing at Hill West?

In 2020, we asked our children how they travel to school; **44% of children walked to school**, this includes those who scooter or cycle (2%) and **56% travelled to school by car**, but 8% of those above parked at a distance and walked the remaining distance. However, **2%** of those that travel to school by car were actually **car sharing**. We are currently collecting data for 2021, emailed out on the 19th November, to see what would incentivise children to walk to school more often.

At Hill West we have two targets we are trying to work towards achieving:

1. To reduce the number of pupils travelling to school by car by 4% (from 56% to 52%)
2. To increase the number of pupils either walking, cycling or scootering to school by 4% (from 2% to 6%).

To help us achieve these aims, the ACE champions and the Rights Respecting Steering Group are working together to brainstorm ideas which will help us promote more walking to school, through ‘Walk to School Wednesdays’, and to improve the air quality around school, by developing an air quality control area around school (eg. 0.5 mile radius for parking).



PTFA news

By Mrs Adamthwaite and Clare Whelan



What a term it has been for the Hill West PTFA! The Halloween Disco was meticulously organised and our parents and children attended in record numbers. The sweets and beverage counters were emptied as everyone joined together again for the first time in a long time.

Following on from this success, the PTFA organised the most amazing Cinema night. KS1 and Year 3 enjoyed the film 'Arthur Christmas' and year 4, 5 and 6 watched 'Elf'. The children devoured a hot dog (or meat free equivalent), a drink and some sweets.



Not only that, we had a visit from Santa himself. It was so wonderful to observe our children laughing and singing together as they were entertained by the films and festivities. There was even some time for Christmas



Karaoke and Christingle practice.



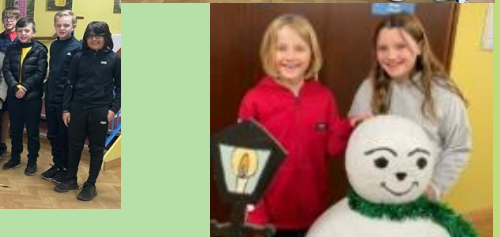
Parents generously bought raffle tickets and this added to the spectacular profits made by the event itself. The Hill West staff team provided some wonderful prizes that formed a number of hampers and we also received gifts from local businesses and Parents.



The sale of the Hill

West calendar went on sale last week! Children sent in their design for their allocated month and these have been included in the design. The PTFA have also ensured the Christmas card design sheets were sent off to be added to the 'My Child's Art' page, so

children can see their Art work in-print and then send these to their friends and family.



The PTFA never cease to amaze me with their adaptability, hard work, enthusiasm and dedication. It is beyond fathomable what they have achieved this year. I am so excited to be part of the PTFA and to be able to support our children at Hill West through the fabulous events they have planned on the calendar for 2022...



Aberdovey November 2021

By Dr Rhian Warrack

When I look back on my own time at primary school, my school's week-long residential visit to the 'Mountain Centre' in the Brecon Beacons stands out above all other events! Similarly, "Aberdovey!" is most frequently cited by our children in Year 6, when they are asked what their favourite moment at Hill West Primary School has been. Of course, at Hill West Primary School, we visit The Aberdovey Outward Bound Centre, nestled into the side of the hill at the mouth of the Afon Dyfi (River Dovey) where it meets Cardigan Bay, something that the children at our school in Year 6 this academic year, had been unable to do as Year 5's because of the global COVID-19 pandemic!



And so it was with the utmost, heartfelt pleasure that I asked our coach driver to set off on the morning of the 8th November! For not only were we taking 49 Year 5 children to Aberdovey, but we were also taking 49



children in Year 6. We were truly delighted that we had been able to ensure that they would not miss out on this life-changing experience, and we couldn't wait for them to start their Outward Bound adventure after the trials and tribulations of the last few years.



As the coach reached the crest of a hill and drew alongside the Cambrian Coast Railway – which literally runs in parts right along the edge of the coastline - the children caught their first glimpse of Cardigan Bay, causing gasps of delight and excitement. As the coaches pulled into the parking bays – no mean feat as the space is extremely tight – the instructors were waiting to welcome us. After unloading a suitcase, the children gathered at "The Wall" to find out from the course director, Steve, which groups they would be in, before being taken to find their dormitories and choose their beds. This year, linked to COVID, we were the only school visiting, although with 98 children and 9 members of staff, we were a much bigger group than usual. The children



then worked with their instructors to discuss the learning aims for the visit and took part in some



orienteering activities to help the children find their way around the site. At 5pm, dinner was about to be served, but due to COVID restrictions, each group was given a specific time to enter the canteen to choose their meal and a specific table to sit at. Luckily the food was unaffected by COVID, and was as delicious as usual!





After the children had eaten, it was time to get ready for their evening activity, and with nine different groups, there were lots of different events taking place. Some children had the opportunity to climb the on-site gorge in the dark, with only headtorches to light their way, whilst other groups explored the site! Other groups took part in team building activities, whilst yet



others focused on getting their cages ready for the following days' activities!

After exploring the Outward Bound Centre, the children in each Year group gathered



together for hot chocolate, before heading off to their rooms for a well-deserved night of sleep, although for one birthday-boy, there was time for a slice of birthday cake before bed! Excited, and eagerly anticipating the first full day of adventures ahead, eventually the children were all asleep.



Bright and early the next morning (4am for some!?!), the children prepared for the day ahead. The first sitting for breakfast was at 7am, and then children headed back to their rooms and the cages, to get kitted out for the day's adventures...



Team Fiennes explored a wood

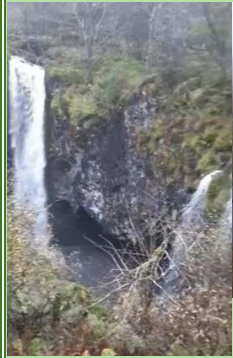
and were delighted to share a hot chocolate in the dry, when they stopped off at a log cabin!

Team Muir went on an adventure through the forest and when they came upon a river gorge, they went gorge sliding! Some of them even stopped for a shower at Hendre Gorge!



Meanwhile, Team Scott climbed through the forest (and the rain) to reach a warm, welcoming, dry cabin – where they enjoyed a much deserved hot chocolate! Alongside respite from the rain!





Team Tenzing went mountain climbing, through the rain and mist – they really pushed themselves out of their comfort zones! They demonstrated positivity, resilience and determination, found a water fall and finished by jumping in muddy puddles!



Team MacArthur went cabin breaking at Hafoty – they really enjoyed a well-earned hot chocolate and the chance to dry off and warm up! It's a good job they all remembered their mugs!



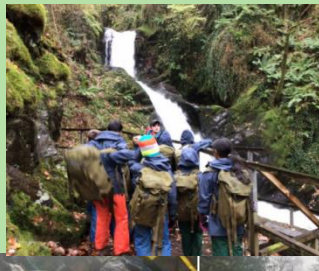
Armed with their maps, Team Simpson went orienteering and really impressed the instructors with their communication skills. Hot chocolate was a very welcome reward!



Team Shackleton spent the morning climbing Jacob's ladder and in the afternoon enjoyed a boat ride



across the bay, where they explored the sand-dunes and discovered just how



hard it is to run uphill in the sand! Team Hilary visited Dolgoch Falls!

The sound of the waterfall was truly

deafening! Meanwhile Team Bonnington climbed up to Haffoty gorge and the rain did not phase them at all!



Back at the centre, some groups worked on-site and were challenged to cross the Grot Pot, a task that starts off with children walking across the dark, murky

water by balancing on the beam, but can end with children being challenged to spin around the beam – without falling in!



After a very wet, yet exciting adventurous day, we all gathered together for a delicious meal, with a choice of Singapore Noodles, Chicken Curry or Tomato Pasta. After dinner, children took part in activities on-site. Team Muir were challenged by their instructor, Will, to transport a ball from one outdoor



classroom, all the way across to the other side of another one – in the dark, without head-torches, to develop teamwork and communication skills – in the drainpipe challenge! It was a lot harder than it looked!



Not to be outdone, members of Team Hilary were challenged to cross the Grot Pot (in the dark) and only half of them got wet (and dirty)!

The children were delighted that this evening they were able to gather together to have hot chocolate and biscuits, before heading off to their rooms for bed. Sleep came much faster for everyone, after such an exciting and challenging day!





Before we knew it, the sun was dawning on our third day at Aberdovey. After another delicious breakfast, we headed off to get ready for Day Three.



Team Shackleton were on a water day, and were wet-suited up to go canoeing! They worked together and had an amazing time. Team Fiennes went rock scrambling, and stood at the top of the world to watch the sun over Cardigan Bay!



For Team Hilary, it was time to suit up too!



They learnt that being prepared was vital if they wanted to stay warm! And after successfully climbing the gorge, Team Hilary thoroughly enjoyed their dinner! For Team Muir, they were to face the challenge of Cader Idris. Many members of the team did not believe they could succeed, but lunch found them sitting on a glacial erratic. But with perseverance and resilience, there was so much more to find! Team Muir found a glacial lake nestled at the top of Cader Idris – a truly awesome sight! And what an amazing climb!



Team Tenzing went to Dolgorth Forest – and thoroughly enjoyed exploring the waterfalls and woods, as well as building shelters amongst the trees. Not wanting to be left out of the excitement, Team MacArthur took their



turn on the open water, heading out in canoes as a team, where communicating

was the key skill to master and they did a fantastic job at paddling! And with complete delight, Team MacArthur ended the day playing sliding penguins on their canoes!



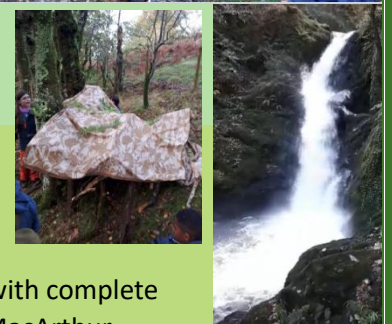
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For Team Bonnington, the challenge ahead of them was Barmouth Mountain. The view looked amazing – but when they arrived at the top... Wow – it was stunning and it was them working together that made them successful! Team Scott has also headed to Barmouth. They were rock scrambling and every member of the team did an amazing job, before climbing to the

very top of Barmouth as well! On arriving back at the centre,



Team Scott climbed Jacob's Ladder too. What a busy day! Team Simpson went canoeing up the Dovey Estuary –



wetsuits were great at keeping everyone warm! They stopped at Picnic Island for their lunch and had lots of fun on the beach! Their canoeing skills were pretty nifty by the end of the day as well! Some of the children found quartz whilst hunting on the beach and they all had a fabulous day!



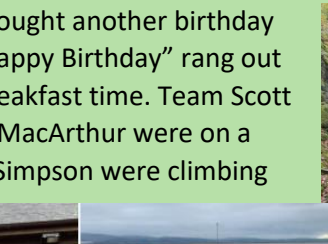
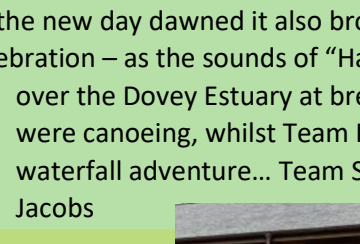
After such a busy day of adventuring, everyone was ready for dinner. Tonight we were treated to Tandoori Chicken, Special Fried Rice or Mac 'N' Cheese. As the sun set over Aberdovey beach – we were just blown away by the view!



After dinner, Team Hilary focused on teamwork during 'the floor is lava' game. They had to work as a group to cross the lava using only 7 blocks. They were then challenged to run through the skipping rope – which required communication and teamwork. Hot chocolate was on offer after evening activities, before everyone headed off to their beds. Quicker than ever before, everyone was

fast asleep and dreaming of Thursday's adventures.

As the new day dawned it also brought another birthday celebration – as the sounds of "Happy Birthday" rang out over the Dovey Estuary at breakfast time. Team Scott were canoeing, whilst Team MacArthur were on a waterfall adventure... Team Simpson were climbing Jacobs



Ladder and Team Fiennes were canoeing. With their paddles raised overhead they looked very impressive – and they worked together smoothly to launch their canoes into the water of the Dovey – so far so good!



Shackleton were on a cabin adventure – up high in the forest hills! Despite the clouds building, they kept on going and eventually came to the top of the mountain – what an amazing view!
Team Scott canoed from Aberdovey to Frongoch and they



used their developing communication skills beforehand to work out how they would get across safely together. At the jetty in Aberdovey, Team Fiennes lined up to consider the jetty jumping. Way out of



people's comfort zone, this was a huge challenge that everyone bravely considered and many in the group achieved! Team Muir headed off towards Aberdovey



on foot. They walked along the edge of the Estuary – which is only possible at low tide. They were given the chance to try Bladderwrack seaweed – which the children said tasted like olives or peas. As Team Muir walked through the memorial garden in Aberdovey, they stopped to pay their respects to the fallen – which was



fitting at 11:20 am on the 11th day of the 11th month (Remembrance Day). On arrival at the harbor, Muir donned wetsuits like professionals, and then headed into the sea for a Jog and Dip, before lining up for the



Jetty Jump! Team Tenzing also had an opportunity to take on the fabled Jetty Jump! They were all so incredibly brave!



Thursday found Team Hilary climbing a mountain and the children



then went rock scrambling – they had a fantastic time – and what a view! For their final day of activities, Team Bonnington were put through their paces on a fantastic challenging obstacle course; they





worked together and did an amazing job! Later in the day, Team Fiennes were also on site and took on the climbing challenge of Jacobs Ladder.



Our last dinner at Aberdovey was pizza, pasta or spaghetti bolognese. Absolutely delicious again – and a real credit to the talented chef and his staff who work in the kitchens preparing all the food every day at the Outward Bound centre!

For our last night at Aberdovey, there was a wonderful surprise – the instructors worked together to transport groups down to the beach or up into the hills for an evening around campfires and marshmallow toasting! What an amazing opportunity, with a chance to reflect on the week’s events and what a truly wonderful last evening!



It was a very tired group of children who made their way back to their rooms at the end of an amazing fourth

day at Aberdovey. Some children packed their suitcases, some remembered to have at least one shower before heading home, whilst others tried to eat the last of their chocolate or sweet stash left at the bottom of their suitcases. But pretty soon after lights went out at around 9:45pm, they were all fast asleep and dreaming of all the exciting news they could share with their loved ones at bedtime the following night. The last day at Aberdovey Outward Bound Centre was rapidly approaching!

The final breakfast at Aberdovey is always a little melancholy. As the children savoured their bacon and eggs, with hash browns, beans and tomatoes, or pancakes, or cereal or toast, they realized this was their last day – and whilst excited to see their families, they also pondered what it would be like to not wake up with another day of Aberdovey adventures ahead. But thoughts were quickly pushed aside as they had to strip beds, pack suitcases, and clear their rooms, and get ready for the last morning of activities.

For Team Shackleton, abseiling was on the cards! They had a fantastic time on the on-site course. With faces split by grins, they knew they had had an outstanding time! What a fantastic effort by the whole team!

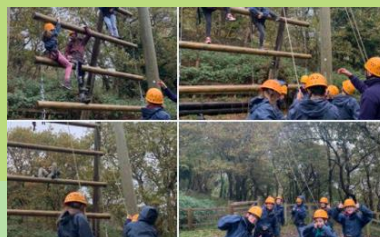


Team Scott took on the trapeze – one final push and an overwhelming feeling of achievement. The smiles on their faces showed how much fun they had, despite the challenges of this activity! Team Muir were taking on the on-site abseiling for



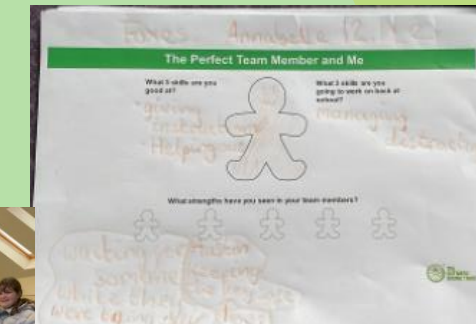
their final task: the concentration and co-ordination, as well as teamwork, displayed by team members was absolutely outstanding.

Team Fiennes took on Jacobs Ladders – which was extremely challenging for members of the team but every person worked together to support each other and they all achieved together!





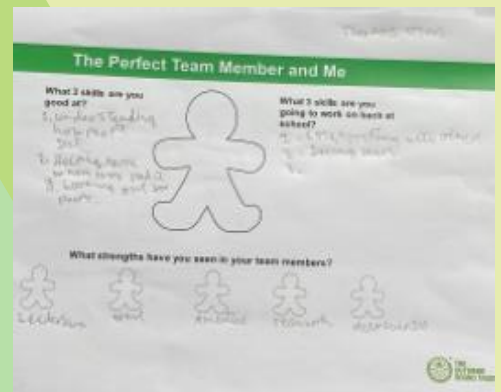
It was also 'Jacobs Ladder' for Team MacArthur. They were in fits of giggles and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Team Bonnington and Team Simpson, were able to fit in a quick 'Jog and Dip' at the beach – they had so much fun splashing around in the waves! Especially when they were trying to splash Mr Henrick in retaliation for him splashing them! The instructors also made time for



the children to reflect upon the experiences they had had at Aberdovey – a vital part of the visit – in which they considered what the perfect team member



would be and what qualities of the perfect team member they have developed during their time at Aberdovey. The children in Team Scott put it brilliantly! "We have been



caring, kind, resilient, brave, supportive, giggly, and most importantly, we've had fun!"

And so the time at Aberdovey for the 98 children and 9 staff of Hill West Primary School had come to an end for 2021. What an absolute privilege to share the journey that the children had taken over the five days of our adventures! We have all learnt new things about ourselves and each other. We have made new friendships, or strengthened existing ones, developed our resilience, perseverance, communication, cooperation, empathy, understanding and work ethic, we have made our own beds (or learnt how to), kept ourselves clean (mostly), kept ourselves well-nourished and hydrated (usually) and learnt new skills that none of us will ever forget. Once again, Aberdovey Outward Bound Centre has worked its magic on us all.

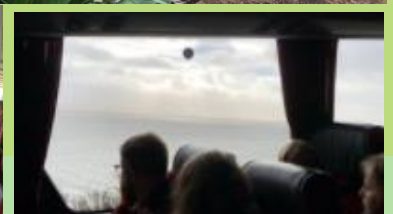
After our extremely busy last morning, we all gathered together to say goodbye and thank you to the fabulous instructors and leaders at Aberdovey Outward Bound Centre who have looked after us, pushed us, challenged us and cared for us for the last five days!



Thank you all so much! You have changed us more than you will ever know – and we will miss you! And as the coach turned onto the road that would take us all



home, thoughts turned to families waiting at home.



"Goodbye, Aberdovey!" and "Thank you!"

A Final Goodbye

By Mrs Hannah Cook



12 and a half years ago, as a fresh-faced, enthusiastic, soon-to-be-qualified teacher, I walked down the drive of Hill West Primary School for the very first time. It's safe to say

it was love at first sight – the inclusive ethos, the amazing grounds, the choir practising in the hall...I handed in my application without reservation and waited nervously, hoping for an interview.

It's hard to believe that I have now worked at Hill West for over a decade, and they have been the very best years. I will cherish memories I have made here for years to come – residential visits to Bockleton with Year 5, the annual Easter Egg Rolling tradition, many wonderful Year 6 Leavers' performances and Year 2 Nativities, and finding a questionable-looking marrow in the cupboard in my classroom half a term after the Harvest Festival...

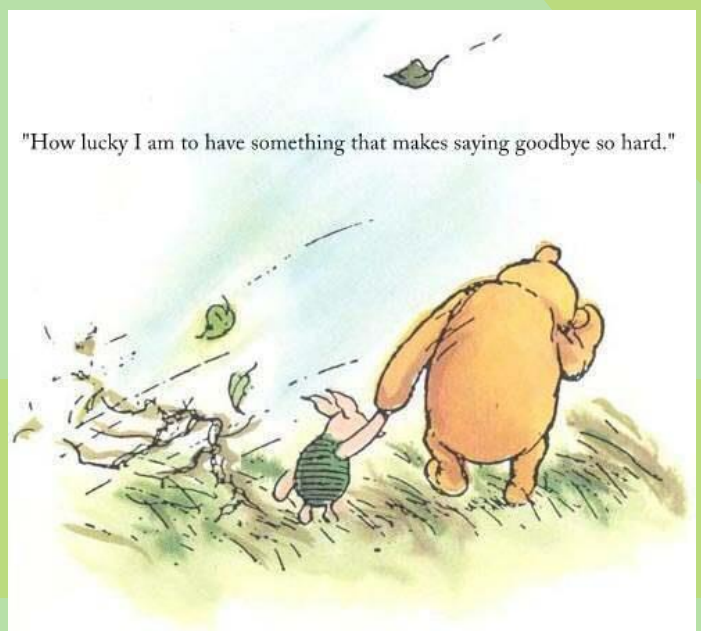
But it isn't just memories I have made here. This school has shaped me – as a teacher, and as a leader. It has instilled in me a belief that every single child deserves the very best education, no matter what their circumstances. It has been an honour to work alongside such a gifted headteacher for so many years, and it is her unwavering support, high expectations and belief in me that has given me the confidence to spread my wings and the passion to make a real difference in another wonderful school as their headteacher. Thank you, Dr Clarke, for championing me.

Hill West is a school like no other and – it turns out – is even better than I first thought when I looked round all those years ago. Teachers and support staff deliver the most incredible, inspiring lessons, but their real strength comes from the authentic relationships they build with the children they teach. Children here are known, loved and nurtured for who they are. The staff at Hill West really are second to none – all of them, from the site team to the admin team to the teaching staff, go above and beyond to enhance the experiences of the pupils here. It has been a pleasure to work with such amazing colleagues, and as part of such a talented and driven leadership team.

Hill West also brings with it supportive and encouraging parents, who are deeply invested in the school and in working together to ensure their child thrives. Working with both Parent Council and our PTFA has been a particular privilege for me, and I am continually amazed at how much energy and enthusiasm they all have.

But the thing that makes Hill West the most incredible school? The children. There is not a day that has gone by when I haven't been inspired by, laughed with and enjoyed talking to one of our amazing pupils; each and every one of them is unique, articulate and I will miss them all dearly.

I feel utterly privileged to have started my career here and for the opportunities I have been given, and would like to thank everyone who has supported me along the way. No matter what the future holds, Hill West will always have a very special place in my heart.



"How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard."