

THE HILL WEST HERALD

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ISSUE 15



AUTUMN TERM 2017

Message from the Head Teacher

The two snow day closures earlier last week gave many of us the opportunity to find our inner child and enjoy going outside to play in the snow with our families. It gave us time to have inexpensive fun whilst practising an activity that will have been enjoyed by generations over time through our families. With the freedom of sledging and snowman building we saw our children embrace their creative and courageous selves and revel in the sheer joy of winter fun. For the most part they will have been independent, self-directing and fully engaged, solving problems and over-coming challenges.



As well as enjoying the winter fun with my family I also had the time to read a little of Alfie Kohn's work on behaviour management; a term he refers to as flawed. Kohn suggests that by using the word 'behaviour' we are only focusing on observable actions, thereby missing the motives, needs and values of the people engaging in the behaviour. Kohn argues that rewards and punishments are out-dated and unsatisfactory. Kohn says the threat of making children suffer if they don't do what they are told, which is at the heart of punishment, is particularly damaging because it leads them to focus relentlessly on self-interest. "So either they will capitulate at the cost of their moral development or they will blindly lash out in resistance. In neither case will they become concerned about the effect of their actions on other people," he explains. Rewards are just the flip-side of the same process. "When you reward kids, when you dangle goodies in front of them for jumping through your hoops, the question they come to ask is, 'what do they want me to do and what do I get for doing it?' Rewards and punishment are both ways of controlling kids, and research overwhelmingly shows that both actions undermine children's interest in, and commitment to, whatever they have been asked to do".

Kohn adds that academic studies have also shown that children who are frequently praised or rewarded tend to be less generous and caring than their peers. "The effect is even more pronounced if they were rewarded, or praised, for being caring or concerned because each time we give them a patronising pat on the head or a sticker or a gold star for doing something nice, they've learned that the reason for doing something nice is because of some benefit they themselves will obtain," he says. "And they become just a little more self-centred than they were before they heard the words 'good job'. So, in Kohn's view, the focus for schools and teachers should not be to devise ever more clever ways to bribe or threaten children, as schools have done in the past. Rather, they should move away from what he describe as 'sugar-coated' form of control that's currently popular with adults whose goal is to produce compliant children—and move towards creating compassionate individuals and independent thinkers. How can we achieve this? "The ideal solution is one in which the whole system facilitates a move towards a deep curriculum of understanding, a pedagogy of engagement, giving kids more say about their learning and solving problems together," he says. Kohn says that he has worked in many, many classrooms where teachers do more asking than telling, and where learning is project based, interdisciplinary, collaborative and exciting, rather than being about memorising facts for exams and practising a series of disconnected skills. He says he has worked with many teachers who spend their days actively resisting moronic mandates in order to do what's best for their kids. They realise that what research has shown is that children learn to make good decisions by making decisions, not by following directions. The teacher's who get it are helping children to develop socially and morally, as well as intellectually, he argues. They realise that development happens only when the teacher is willing to share authority and to bring kids into the decision making process.

I of course reflect on this as a teacher and as a parent. I realise that the snow days reinforced Kohn's arguments on behaviour management as children were allowed to make their own decisions, decide how brave they really wanted to be and manage their own risks while being fully engaged in the learning and fun!

Learning Partnership News



Jubilant students and staff are celebrating the much-anticipated news that Ofsted has now rated their school; Stockland Green – which has undergone a major transformation – as 'Good'. The Stockland Green School, part of the Arthur Terry Learning Partnership (ATLP) has been praised for its strong performance and ethos following an Ofsted inspection in November. The positive report commends the academy's many strengths, including teaching and learning, leadership and governance, and pupil behaviour and attainment.

In the Ofsted report, lead inspector, Bianka Zemke, wrote, *'This is a good school... Senior leaders are aspirational and have high expectations of staff and pupils. They have successfully created an ethos of 'aspire, believe and achieve' within the school.'* Zemke (2017) adds, *'Considerable improvement is evident in many areas.... for example, outcomes in mathematics have improved markedly.'* Highlights from the report included:

- ◆ *The headteacher and her dedicated leadership team know their school very well.*
- ◆ *The leadership of teaching, learning and assessment is a clear strength.*
- ◆ *Teachers have high expectations of pupils and foster strong and respectful relationships. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons that use a range of innovative strategies to stimulate pupils' interest and curiosity.*
- ◆ *Governance at the school is strong...They are dedicated to the school and possess many strengths. They bring a range of relevant experiences and expertise to their roles.'*
- ◆ *Behaviour in lessons and at social times is good. Pupils are courteous, friendly and mature in discussions about sensitive issues.*
- ◆ *Parents, staff and pupils are supportive of school leaders and feel that the school has improved markedly since the last inspection.'*
- ◆ *Pupils feel safe at the school and are complimentary about the pastoral support they receive when they need it.*

Headteacher Marie George is “over the moon” with the findings. She said, “We are delighted that Ofsted has found us to be ‘Good’ in every area as we have worked very hard to make sure our students receive the education they deserve. They recognise our strengths and attainment – our dedicated team, the quality of teaching and learning and the care and value we give to our children and young people, who are proud and happy to be here. This result is testament to the hard work and commitment of many. I want to thank our entire learning community for supporting us, for believing in this school, for transforming Stockland Green, which we are fiercely proud and humbled to be at the heart of.”

Early Years

By Mrs Rebecca George—Assistant Head Teacher

Reception is an exciting time for children here at Hill West, where they are nurtured and happy. In Reception, we place emphasis on learning through play and exploration where the well-being of our children is at the heart of our teaching, enabling our children to gain a deep level of learning and development. Through an explorative, creative and investigative approach to play, our children are able to develop their self-confidence and self-esteem through high levels of involvement.

The Foundation Stage Curriculum is made up of seven areas of learning and development. These are divided into three prime areas and four specific areas. At Hill West, we ensure that the Prime Areas are incorporated into the children's learning throughout the year. These are:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Communication and Language
- Physical Development

Development in the Prime Areas enables our children to go on and master the skills within the Specific Areas providing them with the essential skills and knowledge to participate successfully in society. Personal, Social and Emotional Development underpins all we do in Reception at Hill West.

We support our children by helping them to interact effectively and develop positive attitudes of themselves and others. Children at Hill west are given many opportunities to speak and listen in a range of situations, and to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves. Our wonderful school grounds provide our Reception children with the opportunity to access daily learning in all curriculum areas outdoors, but particularly encourage both gross and fine motor physical development.



These Prime Areas are fundamental to a child's development. They are then supported by The Specific Areas. The Specific Areas strengthen the Prime Areas. The Specific Areas are:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

At Hill West we provide a curriculum that is thematic and closely follows the children's interests through a combination of child led, child initiated and adult led activities. Our curriculum instils a love for learning as well as a hunger to explore and investigate, take risks and problem solve within a stimulating and happy learning environment both indoors and outdoors.



Children have plenty of opportunities to become independent learners, in all areas of the curriculum, through exciting, effective continuous provision. The purpose of continuous provision is, to continue the provision for learning in the absence of an adult. Children are motivated and challenged by the resources that we provide for them. We want our children in Reception to be thinkers, negotiators and problem solvers – to apply the knowledge that they already have to enable them to explore new possibilities. Our well planned continuous provision raises attainment through active learning and high level engagement. Our experienced staff observe and play alongside the children, introducing new concepts and ideas, taking next steps into the children's play. Alongside this we teach daily phonics sessions, using Letters and Sounds. Through many practical and fun games, which often incorporates the use of technology and the outside environment, our children make excellent progress in both reading and writing.



In Mathematics our children have lots of practical opportunities for counting objects, ordering numbers, adding and subtracting, doubling and halving, sharing, investigating shape and patterns and using mathematical language. Skills are often developed through cooking, technology and craft activities, helping to deepen mathematical understanding.

Creative imaginations come to life both inside and outside our classrooms and within 'The Pod'. Our children have access to a wide range of resources and are encouraged to use their imaginations to create constructions, potions, models, collages and paintings where they will try out new skills or practise and refine skills already learned. Our children are encouraged to express themselves freely when experimenting with musical instruments, role play, music and dance.

Our Creative Curriculum provides many exciting opportunities for developing our children's understanding of the world around them. Our children are encouraged to be curious and to investigate their environment by asking questions and observing changes. This includes using age appropriate technology. Our children interact with and explore ipads, digital cameras, microscopes, interactive whiteboards and electronic toys.

All of our Reception children have made a fantastic start to school making excellent progress. We are very proud of our Robins and Wrens!

The Great Outdoors

By Mr Steve Carroll—Building Site Supervisor

When I first applied for the post of assistant caretaker I presumed it would just be taking care of all the little day to day maintenance jobs and cleaning up the occasional “accident” that the little ones might have. It turns out that the job is so much more than just that.

We are lucky here at Hill West to have beautiful grounds that are surprisingly extensive for such a built up area. It's my job to make sure that the grounds are kept to the high standard that they've always been kept.

On an average day, going about my duties, I encounter so much of what urban wildlife has to offer. Our grounds are a lifeline for so many species of birds, animals and insects.

Permanent residents include a pair of Woodpeckers that spend a lot of their time in the large oak tree in the corner of the field by the orchard, we have foxes, hedgehogs, field mice and amongst all of the species of birds you'd expect to see we have regular visits from buzzards that circle above looking for small mammals to pick off. If you're in school early you can often see them on the field or majestically circling above.

My job has evolved somewhat, from all the duties you would expect, to now include a new Eco Warriors club. The club was set up to continue the schools proactive approach to exercise and encouraging the children to experience the great outdoors. Each year we have a team of children from Year 5 who join us. We do everything from growing our own vegetables, building shelters, tending the orchard, learning about the four seasons to local visits to nature reserves and looking after our neighbourhood with litter picking expeditions. This initiative is going from strength to strength and we have recently been awarded a grant to enable us to enhance the experience for this year's team.

Just like you, I'm extremely proud of this wonderful school and all the opportunities that it has to offer our children. Looking after the grounds is an absolute privilege and the feeling of job satisfaction has never been greater and somebody has to clean up the littles ones accidents and make sure the school is clean for our children and if I'm being honest I'm happy doing that too.



So, at the end of the day, when I lock the big mower away, drink my well earned brew, and survey the land that we're so lucky to have I wear a smug grin on my face that is the realisation that I'm fortunate enough to work with such a great team and be around all these inspirational children.

Hereford Walk

By Mrs Jenny Swain—Teaching Assistant

First on our selection of topics for Year 3 was the formation of hills and mountains. This may not sound exciting to some but a trip to the Malvern Hills bought our topic to life, allowing the children to embrace all that they had learnt and were to continue to learn about hills and mountains and the way in which they form.

In order to prepare us for our expedition Miss Jones's Dad, Mr Jones, who is a survival expert with many many years of experience kindly came to visit both Rabbits and Hedgehogs, where he shared his knowledge and expertise, engaging the children in fun activities whilst teaching them a valuable understanding of how and what they need to be prepared when embarking on adventurous expeditions.

October Friday 13th was the day we boarded the coach bound for the Herefordshire Hills.



Unfortunately, the weather was not on our side that day, with strong winds, an overcast sky and some rain thrown in for good measure, but Year 3 were not going to let a bit of a bad weather spoil their day out.

As we drew closer to our location the children's anticipation and excitement grew. Mr Jones, our very own survival expert, met us on our arrival and patiently waited for us to part into our groups before leading the first group on their way. Group by group we followed heading for the hills, starting at the British Camp.

The initial climb was hard work as the steep paths were wet from the rain and therefore slippery, luckily there were railings allowing us to pull ourselves making the climb a little easier on our legs. As the children climbed, the excitement seemed to dwindle somewhat, with moans and groans from a few, but I am proud to say that true team spirit prevailed as the children encouraged one another, pulled and pushed each other, walking through the Iron Age fort, until they reached the summit.

The moans and groans stopped, the children stood tall at the top of the hills, the excitement was back but this time with looks of relief, achievement and awe also added as they took in the stunning views all around them.

We met with all the other groups for a picnic lunch on Hangman's Hill which was made slightly more interesting as we were having to be extra careful not to lose our finished wrappers to the wind, there were a few dashes made by adults to retrieve the odd piece of tin foil or crisp packet but all in all a lovely lunch with beautiful surroundings.

Reenergised after our well-earned break we regrouped to begin our journey back. After the struggle uphill the children were now able to appreciate their surroundings as they walked downhill, overlooking the British Camp Reservoir. Even though we were a little cold, damp and windswept we found time for some smiles and selfies before bidding farewell to the Malvern Hills and boarding the coach homeward bound.



Diwali Assembly—The Story of Rama and Sita

By Dr Rhian Warrack—Class Teacher



Hares and Badgers were delighted to present their Diwali assembly to their families, loved ones and to the children of Hill West. Through their performance, people in the audience learnt about the background of the cultural celebration of Diwali, and the significance of the Festival of Lights to people of the Hindu, Sikh and Jain religions.



The children enjoyed learning their lines and by the final performance were all reciting their lines with expression, in character. The children felt that their performances improved once they were rehearsing in costume and we extend our heartfelt thanks to all those families who were able to support us by providing costumes for the different characters in the play. The children enjoyed performing for each other as they were able to give positive feedback to their friends to support them to make improvements in the performance.



On the day of their assembly, the children did a fantastic job, producing an outstanding performance. The story of Diwali (the Festival of Lights) is the story of Ramayana, which is a sacred text dating back 5,000 years, originating from the ancient land of India. The text consists of 24,000 verses and relates how the Hindu festival of Diwali began. It is the story of Rama and Sita: of heroes and villains; of good and evil; of life, love and death.



Ravana was a powerful ten-headed demon king who lived on the island of Lanka. He had fallen in love with a woman called Sita, and had been able to pull and string the bow of her father, which should have won him her hand in marriage, but she refused him, as he was too ugly!



Some years later, his sister (Surpanakha) fell in love with Rama (the eldest son of King Dashratha), but unfortunately for Surpanakha, he was already married to Sita.

Surpanakha met Rama in the woods, where he was living with Sita (and Rama's best friend, Lakshman). They had been banished there as a result of a plot by one of Rama's father's wives, Kaikeyi. She wanted her son Bharat to be the next king but she knew that this would never happen whilst Rama was there, so she insisted Rama was sent away for fourteen years.

However, Bharat (Kaikeyi's son) was an honorable man. He said he would keep Rama's golden sandals on the throne as a symbol of his power and that he would not sit on the throne, but instead keep it safe until Rama returned.

When Surpanakha approached Rama in the forest and asked him to marry her, he told her that he was already married to Sita. When she insisted, Rama suggested that perhaps she could marry his friend Lakshman, instead. She grabbed at Lakshman and he cut off her nose with his sword, telling her that he would never marry someone as hideous as her! Surpanakha ran away and told her brother Ravana, the Demon King, what had happened. He already hated Rama, as Sita married Rama instead of him.

After Lakshman hurt Surpanakha, Ravana devised a plot to steal Sita away. He captured Sita after sending Rama away searching for a Golden deer. He planned to take Sita to his island home and force her to become his wife.



Jatayu, a bird, who had seen Ravana capture Sita, tried to stop him. He was left fatally injured where Sita was captured, and was able to tell Rama what had happened to his wife before he died.

Luckily, Hanuman, the Monkey God, came to help Rama to get his wife back safely as he had heard from the creatures of the forest that he needed help. He offered to go and find where he had hidden her on his island, so they could plan to rescue her.

Hanuman found Sita locked in a tall tower on Ravana's island and told her that Rama had sent him to find her. Hanuman returned to Rama, who was waiting with his monkey army and told him where Ravana had hidden Sita.

Hanuman's monkey army builds a mighty bridge of rocks across the waves to Ravana's island and Rama and his army marched across. Ravana's army was waiting for them.

The two sides fight but eventually Rama, Lakshman, Hanuman and the Monkey army are successful, and finally Rama kills Ravana with his bow and arrow. Hanuman takes the key to the tower from Ravana's belt and finds Sita to let her free.

When Sita saw Rama she ran to him and gave him back their wedding garland and everyone celebrated. Lakshman reminded Rama that as a result of their quest to find and free Sita, fourteen years have passed since they have left home. They realise that now they can go back!

Soon the news spread around the land that Rama and Sita were returning and that the demon Ravana was dead. Everyone came out of their houses to greet them as they returned. As they walked through the darkness people lit divas to light their way. Bharat was still protecting the throne for Rama, and he welcomed them back.

This is why every Diwali, divas and fireworks are lit to remember the journey home of Rama and Sita. Houses are decorated, Rangoli patterns are put outside the house like welcome mats and celebration food is eaten, to remember the time when good overcame evil and light overcame darkness.

The children loved every moment of their performance and were extremely proud of themselves, as were all of the staff and parents. They told the story extremely well, and did a superb job! Thank you again to everyone who supported us, including the families who sent in costumes, jewellery and props, as we could not have done such a great job without your support.



Glow Day for Child Brain Injury Trust

By Miss Lara Jones—Class Teacher

On 3rd November 2017, we held our first Glow Day at school. Glow Day is part of a campaign for the Child Brain Injury Trust, with this year's theme being 'be seen, not hurt.' As part of this, children were invited to dress in brightly coloured clothes and bring in £1 to raise money for this fantastic cause.

The Child Brain Injury Trust work in partnership with Birmingham Children's Hospital. They provide support to families of children who have a brain injury and their work is invaluable to the families they support. The campaign, 'be seen, not hurt' is especially important in these dark Winter nights on the busy Clarence Road. Children need to be visible to traffic in all weather conditions as it could be what makes the difference between them being safe and a serious injury. The main purpose of the day was for children to see this importance of being visible on the road.

The day started with an assembly from visitors of the Child Brain Injury Trust and Birmingham Children's Hospital. They conducted a wide range of experiments to show the children the importance of their brightly coloured clothes. The children wore different goggles (dark, fog and rain) to see what it would be like to drive in these conditions and they had to point out and explain who they could see clearest. The children could hardly see anyone dressed in dark colours but could immediately point out anyone in brightly coloured clothes, especially those in neon!

The assembly then moved on to talk about the brain, what it does and what it is like. The children looked at a model brain that was very squishy and the importance of the skull in its protection. The volunteers then went on to show the importance of wearing a helmet when you're on a scooter or a bike. They did this through an egg-citing experiment using two eggs. The first egg had no protection and when dropped, it cracked and exploded everywhere inside the container. The second egg, put inside a model helmet was dropped and stayed in perfect condition, showing the difference the helmet can make! The volunteers went on to explain that most of the children they see at the hospital have brain injuries that could have been prevented from wearing a helmet or wearing bright clothes in the night time so it is very important that they do this.

After the assembly, the day continued with different activities in the classrooms including more egg experiments and making jelly brains! The children had a thoroughly enjoyable day that sent a clear message to all of the importance of staying bright at night. As a thank you, they all received a reflective snap band that they could wear when out at night or attach to their school bags.

We raised £342.35 for the Child Brain Injury Trust as a school, which they will use to further support children and families under their care. What a fantastic achievement and thank you for your continued support!



Could you be a FOSTER carer?

Fostering offers the chance to make an important difference to a child's life at a time when they most need it. All types of families from all kinds of backgrounds can foster a child or group of children. Sometimes, a child's birth family is unable to look after them, either for a short period of time or long term, for all sorts of reasons. If the child cannot live with another family member or someone else they know, the local authority may then decide that the best option is to place the child in foster care. Fostering is often a temporary solution to provide children with a safe home while other arrangements are being made, although some young people are fostered until adulthood. Foster carers look after the child on behalf of the local authority who work closely with the child's birth parents wherever possible. Foster carers help build better, brighter futures for hundreds of children every year. They provide a loving, safe, stable home and a nurturing environment to help the most vulnerable children in our county grow in confidence and achieve their potential.

My name is Blair, I'm a Bear in Care.
I used to think my life just wasn't fair!
I felt scared and alone: nowhere felt like home.
But one dark night, whilst full of fright,
I arrived at a house, as quiet as a mouse.
"Where could this be, why now, why me?"
Then the door opened wide, and I stepped inside.
A family stood there, they stroked my hair.
"Welcome," they said. "Do you want a cosy bed?
Where you can feel free, and depend on me?"
With nerves of steel, not sure how to feel
Something inside, told me to abide.
They gave me a drink and I started to think,
This could be alright to spend just one night.
When darkness gave way to a bright new day,
My nerves in a jitter, I began to feel bitter.
Why have I come, what have I done?
I was angry and cross, I felt that I'd lost
Everyone who knew me. "Is this my life, truly?"
But with understanding and care I started to share
My previous life that was so full of strife.
The family that stood before me seemed to adore me
And I started to see, the potential in me
With their love and advice, they were ever so nice!
I began to be a much happier me.
They believed in my life, this couple free of strife.
They taught me to trust, as this is a must.
To live without fear, for the next coming year ...

Obviously, every little bear has a different ending but hopefully the difference a Foster Carer can make to a child's life is priceless!

Macmillan Coffee Morning

By Mr Stuart Lackenby—Assistant Head Teacher

On Friday 27th September, the pupils, parents, families and friends of Hill West took part in the World's Biggest Coffee Morning in support of Macmillan Cancer Care.



Who is Macmillan Cancer Care?

Founded in 1911, by Douglas Macmillan after his father became ill, the Macmillan charity has grown to become the charity it is today, raising hundreds of millions of pounds each year to support those diagnosed with cancer and their families. The money raised through events, such as the Macmillan Coffee Morning, helps fund critical research into types of cancer and treatments; provide advice and counselling to patients and their families and train the wonderful nurses and home carers, who touch many people's lives.

But how did the Macmillan Coffee Morning come about?

The first coffee morning was held in 1990 and, since then, the event has grown and grown, becoming the world's largest and most successful coffee morning event. Last year alone, £25 million was raised thanks to the British public who hosted a Macmillan coffee morning and since 1990, £150 million has been raised for the charity to date. This year, we really wanted to help make that total even bigger! And so, the pupils of Hill West set out to make our coffee morning the biggest the school had ever seen.

What did we do?

After introducing the event in a 'What's in the news assembly?', I had children coming up to me every minute of the day telling me what type of cakes they would be making, how many they would be making, what colour frosting they would be using, who they would be making them with and, from some children, their stories of how their families had been personally affected by cancer. Knowing how generous our school community is, I knew the event was going to be a success. Never could I have imagined what would happen next.

On the morning of the event, we had children - one by one - bringing in their home-baked and home-faked cakes all in support of such a worthy cause. Slowly, the tables in the hall were filled with delicious vanilla sponges, gorgeous ganache filled gateaux, succulent strawberry cheesecakes and enough cupcakes to fill an Olympic-sized swimming pool. Within the first twenty minutes, the six dining room tables we had put out had been filled and still even more cakes were arriving; a testament to our fantastic parents and families.

With an army of fantastically enthusiastic helpers from our student council, we opened our doors to our awaiting crowd. Pouring in one after the other, the event surpassed what we had expected. More than one hundred of our mums, dads, grans and grandads, aunts and uncles and friends came out in support of this wonderful charity. The morning was filled with fun and laughter; our fantastic community catching up over a cup of coffee and one of the mouth-watering, magnificent cakes baked by our generous children.

Then came break time and our children got the opportunity to buy a cake as a special breaktime treat. Even after selling more than three hundred cakes to our children, and over one hundred to our parents, we still had about two hundred cakes at the end of the day. What were we going to do? Not to worry - our parents showed their true community spirit again and bought even more cakes after school (of course, at a reduced price).

How much did we raise for Macmillan?

After a wonderful turn out by our community, we raised a fantastic...(drum roll, please)... £474. All that is left to say is 'THANK YOU!' Thank you to our wonderful children and families who baked or bought a cake and of course, a special thank you to those in our wider school community who came out in support of Macmillan Cancer Care.

Here's looking forward to next year's event

PTFA Halloween Disco

By Mrs Karen White—Family Support Worker

The PTFA Halloween disco never fails to give us the creeps! Hill West pupils do like to dress up in their spectacularly spooky outfits as well as making their faces look as scary as possible.

We would like to give a shout out to the DJ 'Craig Dennis Disco's' for providing all the spooky music at our Halloween disco. Lots of the children got involved with requesting their own songs which made for a busier dance floor with some great dance skills and moves from the children.

Parents got involved by supporting the bar and selling sweets, in fact we sold out of a couple of drinks and had to send a werewolf to the shop to restock!!!

This year we had a couple of year 8 Arthur Terry students who came back to support the disco, along with a younger sibling - presumably because they remember how fantastic it is!

This year the PTFA target is to raise enough funds to repaint the Key Stage 1 playground and have some new sports courts painted on the Key Stage 2 playground. We're also going to be replacing the tree stump seating circle and increasing the seating capacity with new picnic benches in the nature area so that a whole class will be able to enjoy outdoor lessons. The money raised from this Halloween disco will be put towards the cost of these great facilities.



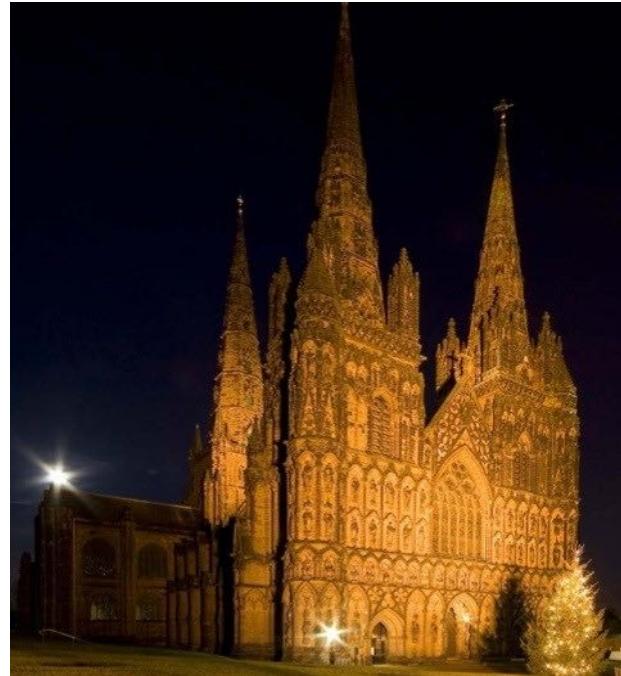
Choir

By Ellyn Cruxton—Class Teacher

The 18th September saw the first choir rehearsal of the school year. Once again, for the third year in a row, the choir numbers had risen, now to over 40 members. Due to the higher numbers, choir had to relocate from Miss Jones' classroom to the much larger school hall. However, there was no time to focus on the new setting as there was a concert to prepare for, in 11 days time.

The first choir concert of the year was on the 30th September, at Arthur Terry, for the Four Oaks community fair. Hill West had attended this fair for a few years, however this was the first time that the School's Choir had been invited to attend. With only 2 rehearsals before the performance, there was a lot of responsibility for the experienced members to help the newer members of the choir, which they did with great enthusiasm.

The 30th September arrived and at about 11 o'clock the choir member began to arrive at Arthur Terry (abet very excited members), very keen to perform. The performance part of the fair had been upgraded from outside in the courtyard to the school's drama theatre. The songs for the performance were a selection of favourites from the previous year's choir program. The first song was Rockstar which was performed delightfully by our choir, with some additional 'Rockstar' moves being included. Song number 2 was 'When I grow up' from the musical Matilda, this song included 2 beautifully sung solos from Esme Wolverson as Matilda and Emily Dean and Miss Honey. The final song of the program was Si Nai Nai, a tradition African



song and firm favourite of the choirs'. The choir performed this song with such gusto, even adding in some brilliantly executed harmony parts.

As the first concert of the year, the choir signalled the start of the great things to come, especially considering that; it was a concert on 2 weeks rehearsal, included songs learnt prior to the 6 weeks holiday and a flurry of new members that had never performed with the choir before. They all did the school, parents and teachers proud, with the phenomenal job they did.

The second choir concert of the year at Bishop Vesey Grammar school, for the annual NSPCC concert, on the 24th November. This is the 3rd year the choir had attended this concert, which was to raise money for the worthy cause of the NSPCC. This time the choir had longer period to rehearse, however they had a whole new program of music to learn. The choir are always very keen to learn new music so soon got stuck into learning it and as usual picked it up very quickly.

The 24th November came around once again the children arrived, although this time a lot more excited than the previous concert and some “a little bit nervous”. The choir opened their set with the favourite ‘Si Nai Nai’. Their second one was a beautiful song ‘I’m a seed in a meadow’, once again choir showed off their superb part singing. The next number was a classic song (probably a favourite for most of the audience) ‘Tale as old as time’ from the Disney film Beauty and the Beast. As expected, the choir sang this with such sweetness that could have been used in the film. The final song in the set meant that the choir had to perform totally against type, it was a song called ‘Bad Guys’ from the film/musical Bugsy Malone. The choir performed with such attitude it was absolutely brilliant and to finish the song off they treated the audience to a small dance routine, completely stealing the whole concert. Although their set was over, the night was not over for the choir as they had to participate in the combined piece with the other choirs and orchestra ‘Havanashira’. It was an amazing end to the concert and a perfect way to signal the start of the Christmas season.

The final concert for the choir of the year and one of the ones most looked forward to was the carol concert at Lichfield Cathedral. This concert was to take place 6th December. Once again it was a new program of music but this time Hill West Choir were joining forces with other local schools to form the combined choir.

The 6th December started off with a trip to the Cathedral to practice the songs and the readings. Then the evening of the 6th December rolled around and everything was in place, the beautifully lit cathedral, the wonderful orchestras, the confident readers and the angelic choirs. The choir sang Silent Night, with some lovely counterparts, Walking in the air (sounding as much like angels as the original did), Christmas is the time and the season, also including some very confidently performed counterparts and ending, once again, with the combined piece Havanashira. Another congratulations must go out to Lily who melted every audience member’s heart with her confident and poetic performance of her reading.

Overall it has been a brilliant start to the choir’s year, as shown by all they have achieved in a few months. They are a true credit to the school and a part of Hill West that the school are extremely proud of. It is very exciting to see what the choir will do for the rest of the year.



Nativity

By Miss Kelly Stone—Class Teacher

Teachers in Year 2 thought it would be an excellent idea to begin practising songs for Nativity way in advance... little did they realise they would be hearing them every day for 5 weeks thereafter! It didn't matter if they were at school, Sainsburys or washing up the songs were on repeat in their heads!

Once all the anticipation of who was who was over, the real fun began. Practises began in small groups in the class room until they were able to work up to a full run through. Things were looking great! Children had learnt their lines as part of their homework and tried hard to listen for their cues to speak. Our fabulous animals brought lots of laughs and sass to our rehearsals until... SNOW DAYS!

Panicked teachers and anxious children returned after missing two days at school and put every spare minute into rehearsals. Tuesday 19th came far too quickly, but the children were ready to give it their all and knock the audience's socks off! The shows were a real treat including dancing cows, sheep and chickens and not forgetting a French camel. The real meaning of Christmas shone through, and reminded us of the importance of forgiveness, charity and love.

Year 2 really deserve their Christmas break after such excellent performances, I am sure the teachers will continue to sing 'follow, follow the star' way into 2018!



Christingle

By Miss Emily Bolton—Assistant Head Teacher

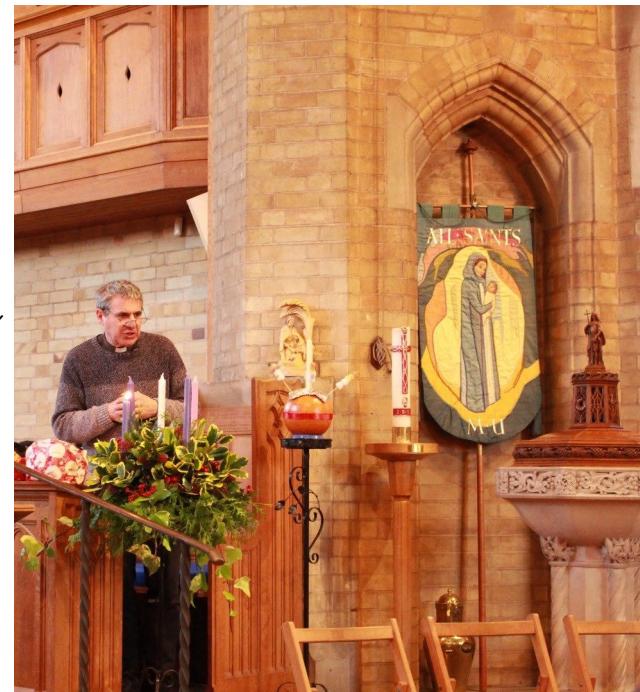
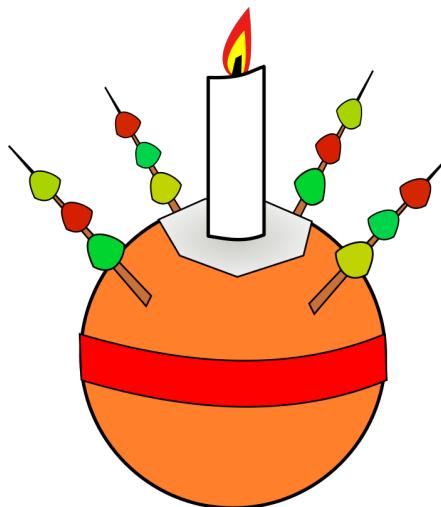
Our Christingle services held at All Saints Paris Church were most certainly a highlight of our Christmas season here at Hill West. This year, our service for Barnardo and Ghandi was on Wednesday 6th December and for Mandela and Pankhurst, Thursday 7th December. Our Christingles were well travelled this year as teachers and children walked from Hill West to the Church and the children all took part in a wonderful parade around the Church.

Both the services were fantastic this year, led by Dr Clarke. Lots of our year 6 pupils took centre stage and spoke to us about how Christingle first came about and what it represents. We also enjoyed singing our traditional Christingle hymns and listening to our woodwind, violin and guitar players getting us into the Christmas spirit!



We would like to say a special thank you to Reverend John Flitcroft for making us so welcome, to Dr Clarke, for leading our service, to our fantastic readers (Miya O' Cleary, Scarlett Woodhouse, Dougie Blaine, Aditya Verma, Freya White, Myla Brookes, Ethan Griffith, Philip Freshwater, Nathan Ellis, Kesh Williams, Jessica M Mercer and Emily Symes) and our wonderful musicians (Zachary Trotter, Naomi Trotter, Charlotte Bancroft, Jess Heirbaut-Kitteridge, Rebecca Mason, Annaika Manu, Tamsin Garbutt, Morenike Ogundare, Thea Janjua, Soraya Shaikh, Anna Chittock, Ivy Robson, Angelina Timotheou, Mia Chung, Amber Prosser, Dougie Blaine, Jacob Roberts, Emily Peasland, Harry Lea, Mya Badesha and Zachary Trotter). We all went away feeling really

Christmassy, and it was great to have so many parents with us too!



European Day of Languages

By Mrs Chloe Grant—Class Teacher

Bonjour! Hola! Guten Tag!

Do you know what I am saying and what language it is in? The children of Hill West certainly did after celebrating the European Day of Languages on Tuesday, 26th September! The European Day of Languages (EDL) is celebrated across Europe on the 26th of September every year and can be celebrated by anybody who wants to learn more about European languages and culture. It aims to promote the rich linguistic diversity of Europe and raise awareness of the importance of lifelong language learning for everyone. It was set up by the Council of Europe and was first celebrated in 2001.

In Key Stage 2 at Hill West, children enjoy regular French lessons with a focus on speaking and listening skills, in which they learn French vocabulary, pronunciation and sentence structure. In addition to this, children are encouraged to take an interest in French culture and traditions. Therefore, for this year's European Day of Languages, we took the opportunity to immerse the children into French culture. Everybody in Key Stage 2 took part, each year group with a different focus to allow them to share their knowledge with others!

Year Three celebrated the Day of Languages by learning about the capital city of France, Paris! They explored some of the city's most famous landmarks and discussed what they mean to the people of France today. Year Three also integrated technology into their learning by completing a quiz on the app 'Kahoot!' all about French vocabulary and culture!

In Year Four, games and traditions were the order of the day! The children were challenged to learn the rules of the traditional game, pétanque, which involves getting your ball closest to the target. They were also able to use their knowledge of French number vocabulary to keep score.

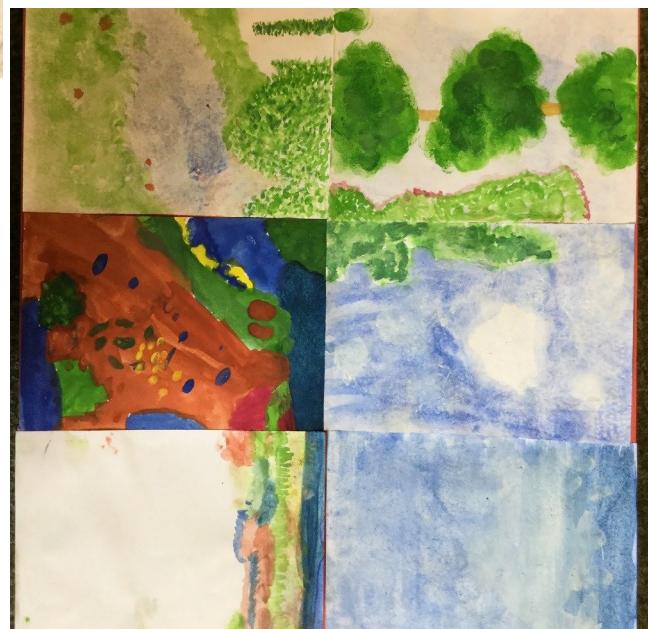


In Year Five, the children were lucky (or unlucky, depending on your tastes!) enough to taste and evaluate some French food. Everybody was raring to go, but first they had to learn how to order each food from their waiter, who would only take orders in French! The children served each other entirely in French and tasted many foods including brioche, croissants, brie and camembert. Brioche was one of the most popular dishes and the smelly blue cheese was the food that split opinion the most!

Year Six took the opportunity to get artistic by studying a famous French painter. They focused on Claude Monet, beginning by researching the art form of impressionism and exploring some of his most famous pieces. To show off their own talents, the children were challenged to re-create one of Monet's paintings as a group by reproducing one section each. They then matched the pieces together to form some super artwork!

Finally, every year group from Year One to Year Six was lucky enough to receive a special visitor! Mrs Fennell, who has been running a fabulous French club after school, arrived with lots of exciting resources and music to help our children learn even more French in a fun and active way! The children had great fun taking part in activities such as using actions and flash cards to learn French names for different forms of transport and singing 'Head, shoulders, knees and toes' in French to remember their different body parts!

After an exciting day of language learning and culture appreciation, both children and staff were reminded of the importance of communication between different cultures and raring to go on the next stage of their French learning. We can't wait until the next day of languages but until then, why not explore languages further with your child? Ask them to explain what they have been learning in their French lessons or explore the website <http://edl.ecml.at/> with them to discover some exciting facts and trivia about languages across Europe!



Masters Degrees

By Mrs Hannah Cook —Deputy Head Teacher



It was back in 2013 when the email pinged up in our inboxes. Being part of the Arthur Terry Teaching School Alliance has afforded us many great professional development opportunities over the years, including networking groups, courses to develop teaching and the Aspire to Headship programme, but by far the most valuable to us has been the Masters Programme which was offered in partnership with Birmingham City University. After some discussion, Mrs Leeson, Miss Jones and I decided to sign up...how hard could a Masters be really?!

Having decided this was a challenge on which we'd like to embark, we happily went along to the first meeting, fresh notebooks in hand along with buckets of optimism and perhaps some slight misconceptions about the amount of work that awaited us! There were several occasions when we felt we had bitten off more than we could chew (writing a 3000-word assignment in a weekend whilst 8 months pregnant springs to mind!) but at the beginning of November this year, we found out our dissertations had passed and we had successfully completed it!

What did the 'Masters in Educational Leadership' involve?

The Masters was based very much on 'Practice-based enquiry', an approach which consists of carrying out research within the workplace to reach conclusions, comparing these with existing research and reflecting on our practice as a result.

In a nutshell, practice-based enquiry involves:

- gathering workplace evidence, for example through observation, data analysis, surveys, diaries, interviews, pupil trails;
- taking action to change practice, make innovations and interventions, record impact and share findings;
- critical reflection on evidence gathered and actions taken, underpinned by a reading of wider policy, literature and research.

What did we learn?

Although there have been times when it has felt like an incredibly hard slog (due to working full time and looking after young children, it has been an additional source of stress at times!), finally completing the Masters has been invaluable. There are many transferrable skills we have gained, as well as a greater insight into the successful leadership of a school. All of the assignments we have completed have led to personal and professional reflection and our own research, alongside the reading we have done, has shaped our thinking as we have grown into our changing roles here at Hill West.

Finally completing the Masters was an extremely proud moment for me personally, and I am very much looking forward to the Graduation Ceremony on 8th January (and am enjoying having my weekends back!)



Rights Respecting School

By Mrs Amie Bishop – Class Teacher

At Hill West, the children are at the centre of everything we do and so we are always looking for ways to support our children to reach their full potential whilst maintaining a positive well-being.

Therefore, we have decided to embark on a journey, with the children, towards becoming a Rights Respecting School whereby children, staff and the wider school community have a robust understanding of the rights of the child and are able to embed these rights as part of daily practices.



What is the Rights Respecting Schools Award?

The Rights Respecting School Award (RRSA) is an initiative run by UNICEF UK, which encourages schools to place the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) at the heart of its ethos and curriculum.

There are four key areas of impact for children at a Rights Respecting school; wellbeing, participation, relationships and self-esteem. The difference that a Rights Respecting school makes goes beyond the school gates, making a positive impact on the whole community.

By promoting the values of respect, dignity and non-discrimination, children's self-esteem and well-being is boosted and they are less likely to suffer from stress. A child who understands their rights understands how they and others should be treated and their sense of self-worth is strengthened.

What is the Impact of the Rights Respecting Schools Award?

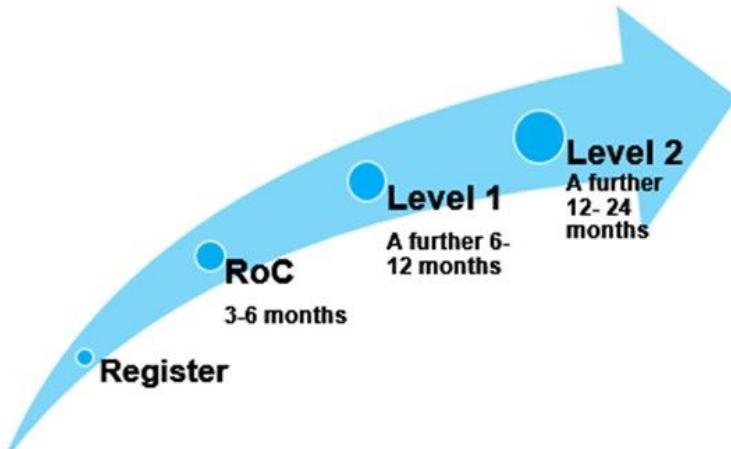
Independent research and feedback from schools show that the Award has a profound impact on children and young people, and the school as a whole. When the principles and values of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) are introduced and reinforced throughout school life, children and the wider school community benefit. Evidence suggests that these benefits include:

- Pupils develop a long-term commitment to values such as social justice and inclusion
- There is a reduction in bullying and discriminatory behaviour among children
- Pupils enjoy and feel safe at school
- Pupils feel included and valued
- Pupils' wellbeing and emotional resilience is improved
- Pupils' engagement in the school and their own learning is improved
- Pupils' attainment is improved, and the attainment gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils is narrowed
- Pupils are more engaged in their local and global communities as 'active citizens'



What happens now?

Currently, we are working towards achieving the first stage of the Rights Respecting Schools award which is known as the 'Recognition of Commitment' (RoC). It is primarily a planning stage which involves auditing the school within four different areas: the leadership of the school, knowledge and understanding of children's rights, ethos and relationships and the empowerment of children and young people. Through this, we will be able to identify some key areas that we are going to focus on in order to achieve level one.



Once we have achieved the Recognition of Commitment, we will then begin to work towards level one. This will involve us showing a Unicef UK RRSA assessor that we have made good progress towards embedding children's rights in the school's policy, practice and ethos outlined in the four different areas mentioned above.

Finally, when we have fully embedded children's rights throughout our policy's, practice and ethos within the four areas, we will be awarded level two. Achieving this level will mean that:

- Hill West has explicitly adopted a child rights approach based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and has embedded it in school policy, practice and culture
- Children, young people and adults in Hill West have a thorough understanding of child rights, and rights respecting attitudes and language are embedded across the school
- RRSA has had a positive impact on children and young people's learning and wellbeing
- Students at Hill West see themselves as rights respecting global citizens and are advocates for social justice, fairness and children's rights at home and abroad
-

What can you do to help?

The wider school community, which includes parents, is an important part of achieving the rights respecting schools award. By discussing the work that the children are doing in school, or even discussing the rights themselves, you will be helping us to instil a positive ethos for the children.

To see a copy of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in child friendly language please copy and paste this link: <http://uni.cf/2paCum7>



Year 6 Takeover Day

By Miss Ayla Crouch and Miss Connie Hunt—Year 6 pupils

What is teacher take over day all about?

Teacher take over day is where pupils from year 6 take the role of a teacher who is not in year 6. This means that they will get to experience what it would be like to be a teacher or anything that they would want to be including:

- Teacher
- Office worker
- Play ground monitor



We think that Takeover day is a really good idea because it lets you know what it is like to work for a day. You have to use your initiative and be very responsible. We really enjoyed it.

To get the job we wanted we had to write an application letter to say why we would like the job and why we think we would be good at it. Successful applicants received a letter appointing them to their job for the day.

Children shadowed staff in the classrooms and helped in lessons, organised reading books, creating displays of pupils' work. Other children led games at break time and completed lunch registers while pupils in the office sent emails, took telephone calls and typed letters.



BIRMINGHAM CITY LADIES FOOTBALL CLUB

By Harriet Shaw—Moles

My name is Harriet Shaw , I am 9 years old and I play football for Birmingham City Ladies Football Club. Every year they select a few girls to join and I was lucky enough to be chosen. Even though I am an Aston Villa fan I joined Birmingham City Ladies as they are one of the best ladies football clubs in England.

I train twice a week and play league games against clubs like Everton, Arsenal , Aston Villa and Manchester City. I am very proud to play for the club and one of my coaches is a lady first team player. I am learning new skills all of the time, having fun and making lots of new friends who enjoy playing football as much as me. It is my dream that one day I will be lucky enough to play for the Ladies First Team and England.



BLACK BELTS IN KARATE—Look at them all!

By Miss Rebecca Waldron—School Office



William Mayall

I have been doing Karate now for 5 Years. Passing my Black belt has meant a lot to me. I am very proud of my achievement. It has given me a lot of happiness and has taught me self-confidence, respect and discipline.

I take part in competitions in kumite (fighting) and Kata (choreographed Moves) all over the country and have a few medals and trophies.

I have now moved onto my advanced learning and will start training for my 2nd Dan, which I will complete when I am 12.



Stavros Georgiou

I have been doing karate since I was 5 years old. I passed my black belt grading at the beginning of December. I enjoyed doing the written project as I got to find out about karate moves and famous instructors (Sensai). I have learnt more moves and discipline since I have joined my

Mya Badesha

My name is Mya, I am 10 years old and I have been training for my black belt for 6 years. The style of karate I practise is Wado Ryu, my instructor is called Sensei Mandy. Passing my black belt grading has been a fantastic achievement and has shown my determination to succeed. Karate is also amazing in life because you can defend yourself as well as others also builds discipline, self control and concentration. Karate also develops good posture. Being in this club has helped me make new friends with people I would not normally meet and it also gives me a sense of belonging.



Jed and Mack Carroll

We have just achieved our black belt and also go selected for the development squad. This means that we have the opportunity to progress and represent GB in the future.