



School Community Newsletter April 2019

Welcome to our April newsletter including a round-up of the term from each class, communication from our Headteacher Clare, community news and dates for your diary.

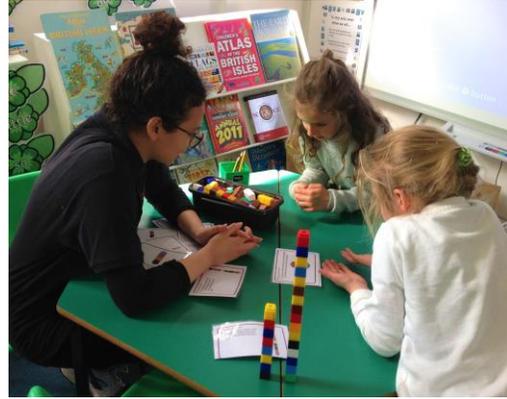
Classroom round-up



This half term in Sunflower we began by exploring the theme of 'Jungle Animals'. Our focus story for World Book Week was 'Giraffes Can't Dance' by Giles Andreae - a brilliant story about overcoming setbacks and following your dream. We then moved on to the theme of 'Babies and Growing Up', as we have had two new baby siblings born recently. We have also been enjoying the Spring weather with lots of outdoor play and exploration, and have been planting seeds and observing how they grow and change.



Rainbow class have been enjoying learning about different fairy tales this half term. We have listened to lots of variations of traditional tales. The children wrote character descriptions, speech bubbles and made a joint class book of Little Red Riding Hood. We have been very busy in the wild garden learning about the swallows' migration and discovering lots of bugs! We have also revamped the bug hotel. We have been working on our fire lighting skills and ended the term toasting marshmallows. We learnt all about the story of Easter and made Easter cards for our families. We have also enjoyed watching tadpoles grow ready for next terms topic 'Lifecycles'.



Mountain class have enjoyed their Solar System topic. We have learnt about gravity, the formation of the Solar System, phases of the moon and distance between planets. We are planning to visit Chichester Planetarium after the holidays. We have enjoyed some visits to the new Forest School site at Stanmer, where we helped fix some of the play equipment to make it safer, and also made charcoal for woodland pencils. In Science we have explored the properties of different materials, and practiced using some new adjectives when describing it's qualities. We really loved listening to a parent's talks about the problem of plastic pollution in the Pacific Ocean. In Literacy we have read different types of poetry. We also learnt about similes, applying them to factual descriptions of the planets: "Pluto is as cold and tiny as a frozen marble" and "Jupiter is as stripy as a zebra!". We were very industrious in compiling a large selection of jokes to sell on our stall for the school's Comic Relief fundraising day.



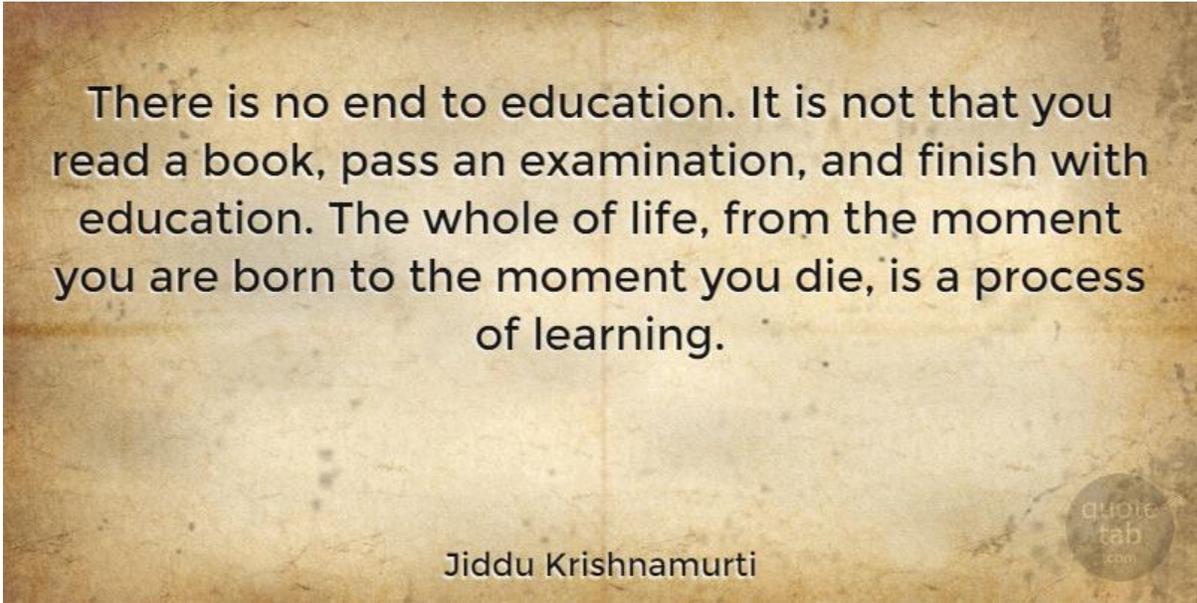
In Ocean Class, it has been a half term full of creativity and hard work. The children were full of enthusiasm in Literacy on the subject of non-chronological reports, where they were introduced to the beautiful children's book *Wolves in the Walls* by Neil Gaiman. We went on to learn a poem "Top Gun of the

Sky”, all about Peregrine Falcons. The topic ended with them choosing their own wild animal, working on researching interesting facts, handwriting and layout in order to create a piece of work which will be on display in our classroom. In French, they have been learning to tell the time which they also did in Numeracy. We also had the Let’s Dance performance, which was a very proud moment for all concerned.



Lotus class put so much effort in rehearsing and performing for Let’s Dance at the Brighton Dome in March. It was a very exciting evening and we were all really proud. This term’s topic has been ‘Big Questions’ and we’ve enjoyed some deep discussions about life, the universe and everything! In Art we’ve been learning about sculpture, and making small sculptures inspired by Antony Gormley and Barbara Hepworth. This week we visited the CASS Sculpture Park to see monumental sculptures up close. In Science, Lotus have been exploring evolution and adaptations. We had a brilliant trip to Tilgate Park to study adaptations. The children got to handle animals such as a snake, tortoises, a cockroach and owl as we learnt more about their adaptations for survival. We then went into the park and did a orienteering tree hunt to find out more about different types of trees. We were really lucky to see a host of amazing magnolias and a few early rhododendron flowers.

Head's Up



There is no end to education. It is not that you read a book, pass an examination, and finish with education. The whole of life, from the moment you are born to the moment you die, is a process of learning.

Jiddu Krishnamurti

Future-proofing body and mind; playing the long game.

Children spend most of their childhood at school and all the time they are growing up. As parents and carers, we can ask ourselves: what skills will our children need for this journey and what will help them become successful and happy in their lives? In these times, we also ask how we can ensure our children protected from risks that we perceive and read about, for instance with regard to the internet and screens. Many well-researched articles focus on the declining mental and physical health of our children - it is part of the zeitgeist. How will our children fare when they are older?

It is true that children and young people experience powerful anxiety, confusion, distress and rage at points. Living in a family, making relationships with peers and making mental connections in order to learn are emotional matters. Experiences of disappointment and frustration are as important as achievement and satisfaction. We want to keep distressing feelings at manageable levels for our children for most of the time. At the extreme end, it is thought that in response to prolonged exposure to deprivation or threat, the neurological development of a child's brain becomes distorted such that the 'survival' mechanisms of the brain and body are more dominant than the 'learning' mechanisms. This results in wide-ranging impairments in arousal, cognitive, emotional and social functioning.

Whilst this is not the norm, an awareness of neuroplasticity can help us as parents and educators. There are many things that we can do to 'future-proof' our children and build resilience in the journey of growing up. I use the word 'future-proof' in this context to talk about the strategies, habits and dispositions we can nurture

so that our children can be successful in their future when, as it will, their situation changes.

Our ethos here at The Dharma School, which is universally applicable, is the systematic, consistent and gentle development of a relationship with one's own mind and body. As an example, future-proofing the body involves a wide awareness that 'we are what we eat'. This leads to regular contemplation about how our food got to our plate, how our body uses food, and how much waste we are generating. In turn, children's awareness of their own agency in the world is expanded and deepened.

Here at school our bodies are future-proofed through dance classes, yoga, games, and mindful movements. The body-mind link is fostered by regular consideration of movement and stillness, silence and talking. We can include an attitude of care ('what happens when my body is injured or hurts?') and, powerfully, we can model the healthy care of our adult bodies through exemplification (for example, I can cycle to work or take a PE lesson).

Future-proofing the mind- inclining it to happiness and kindness- is something to be practised. There are beautiful, ancient techniques (for instance, metta bhavana meditation) that can be adjusted to be age-appropriate for all. Again, eating can be used as a fertile arena for mindfulness. Put simply, mindfulness of eating is 'just eating', rather than thinking about other things or talking or watching TV whilst eating. Mindfulness is becoming interested in what is happening in the present moment. We can use our senses of taste, touch, sight, hearing and smell to ground us in what is happening right now. Similarly, mindful walking is just walking and mindful breathing is just breathing. Children do develop the habit of switching in to a more mindful state and are able to use it in times of stress or worry, to zoom out of the sense of tightness that those emotions create.

Why not try it now? See how it feels.

Finally, I would like to emphasise play as a sure-fire method of future-proofing. Yes, play! Even older children need to play much more, I think, than we realise. Play is one way children explore, try to make sense of and communicate their emotional life. The ability to play also affects neurological development- improving imagination, resilience and well-being.

I wish you a very playful Easter break and look forward to children playing more when they return to school on Wednesday 24th April!

Clare

Community news

Gratitude

A final big thanks to Helen for her manifold contributions to Dharma School music for the last 3 years. She will be missed! She has developed the classroom music, been an inspiration at summer fayre events and been a stalwart of the samba band! I have particularly loved her recent Tuesday night band club. Thank you!

Continuing 'watering flowers' in music, we are very grateful to Sophia for her smiling weekly lessons in piano and violin. It is obvious from the pujas (and the waiting list) that our children are growing and developing in playing and enjoying music!

This term Mountain Class have appreciated weekly visits from Varndean student Serine, who has been on placement with us. She has very helpful in Maths, and is especially popular for preparing a Solar System Top Trumps digital literacy activity in ICC! We are sad to say goodbye to her and grateful for all she has done.

Seminar on Well-being in a Digital World

On Wednesday 15th May from 6.30 - 8.30 pm, Paula Healy (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OM_lFijB9rA) is coming to the school to give a talk regarding screen time and its effects on young people. Paula has completed an MSc in Cognitive Neuroscience at the University of Sussex. Her research dissertation focused on computer game playing and addiction. Since then, she has been offering interactive seminars on the effects of excessive screen exposure in childhood.

"Concerns are regularly raised through the scientific community, education professionals and media about the long-term adverse effects of compulsive screen use on education and mental health. Young people today live in an age of anxiety, loneliness, distraction and addiction. My seminars identify and address the issues around disproportionate electronic media exposure in the psychologically vulnerable young brain.

As well as raising awareness, the content aims to help parents support young people adapt strategies to engage with these digital tools in an organized and productive way. Ultimately, it will help them feel happier, find school and homework easier, have better memory and focus and feel calmer and more connected with their peers."

There will be no charge for this event but we envisage that it will fill up and, as we have limited capacity, if you are interested, we would like you to put your name/s down on a list held at reception.

Open Mornings

Our next Open Morning is on the 26th April. Many prospective parents hear about us through word of mouth which has always been a powerful means of marketing. Please continue to promote the school by talking about us at every opportunity! Are you following us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)? Sharing our news to your networks via our social media is a great way to spread the word about our unique ethos.

Diary dates

Weds 24th April: First Day of Term

Friday 26th April: Open morning, All School Puja

Saturday 27th April: Ground's Day, all invited, more details to follow

Monday 29th April: Meditation group resumes after school on Mondays; all welcome.

Friday 3 May: Clare's puja

Monday 6th May: Bank Holiday, school closed.

Friday 10th May: Ocean puja

Wed 15th May: 6.30-8.30 pm Paula Healy talk on screen time.

Friday 17th May: Lotus puja

Friday 24th May: Flower-watering puja

Monday 27th May - Friday 31st May: Half term

Monday 3rd June: INSET day, school closed.



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S C H O O L S
ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL AWARDS
2017 WINNER

For further news and information please visit our school website

<http://www.dharmaschool.co.uk> and connect with us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

Main Photo: Dressed up as our favourite book characters for World Book Day.

Parent Community Newsletter

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