



School Community Newsletter February 2019

Welcome to our Spring 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



It's been a busy and exciting term in Sunflower. We wish to give a warm welcome to Felix and Brook and their families who joined the Nursery this term. For our Letters and Sounds we have been concentrating on Rhythm and Rhyme and the children have enjoyed our dance and yoga sessions which have included Chinese ribbon dancing, winter and snow dancing, ring games, animal postures and rain dances. We have been exploring the world of shapes in Maths and have been out and about hunting for different shapes. The children have particularly enjoyed our 'Pets' theme with visits from Margot the Rabbit, Charlie the sausage dog and Gaston the Hissing Cockroach will be visiting soon! The children were especially gentle and kind to our visitors. Chinese New Year is always celebrated fully in the Nursery and so Gong Xi Fa Cai to you all (Happy New Year) for the year of the pig!



Rainbow class have really enjoyed their Dinosaur topic. They have focused on the book 'Tom and the Island of Dinosaurs' and created dinosaur descriptions, wanted posters and new dinosaur names. They have studied the dinosaur timeline, found out where dinosaur fossils have been found and investigated rocks. We talked about the meaning of extinction and the importance of looking after our planet. Rainbow class have enjoyed learning the mindful animal movements and are also working through the mindfulness cards which introduce different strategies to help calm our minds. We have had lots of fun outdoors, despite the chilly weather. We have rescued frozen dinosaurs, made

our own dinosaur excavation kits and plaster of Paris fossils. The children had a try at making our first fire and all had a go with the fire sparks and making damper bread. This week we have been learning about Chinese New Year, we made Chinese lanterns and all had a go at using the giant lion head and body to do some rhythmic dancing together!



Mountain class have



been enjoying their Rainforest topic this half term. They have created their own greenhouse environments in Science to help better understand the water cycle and what part that plays in making rainforest weather. They have also been doing some home research on a favourite animal from one of the forest zone. Other Science work on habitats and food chains has helped develop their understanding of the importance to preserve and protect rainforests. We are going to do some fundraising for the Rainforest Alliance, and are very excited about the class trip to London Zoo's rainforest and butterfly zones! In Maths we have been looking at fractions and fair sharing, halving & doubling numbers. In Literacy we have been working on alliteration and connectives, as well as composing some vivid 'Monster Poems'. We recently celebrated Chinese New Year with a lion dance, some calligraphy and observational painting of Chinese lions and dragons.



Ocean Class this term have been on an adventure through legends and fairytales. In Literacy, we explored the legends of mermaids through many different cultures and studied the myth of the great Viking warrior Beowulf. This concluded with writing a legend about a mythical creature. This also linked into our topic of Ancient Greece, where we have been learning about their gods and legends. In our Puja we performed 'Perseus and Medusa' and also our fairytale 'The Princess and the Pea'. In Numeracy, we have been doing measurements and using a ruler which was also helpful when learning

perspective in Art. Thanks to Johanna, they are working very hard at their dance routine which we will all get to see at the Let's Dance event at the Brighton Dome. Finally, Ocean class have been making fantastic progress in French, especially with their pronunciation which is the hardest part of learning a new language.



The topic in Lotus class this half term has been 'Extreme Earth'. We have learnt about different types of wild weather and have been observing the changing weather outside. We're all looking forward to attending the 'Emergency Earthquake and Volcano Show' at the Natural History Museum this week. In Science, Lotus have been looking into the work of Carl Linnaeus and how organisms are classified. We sorted everyday objects into groups to see some of the challenges scientists face when deciding on taxonomic groupings and made keys for identifying sweets. We now move on to studying the vertebrate groups before designing and classifying our own creature. In English we explored the features of persuasive writing, using speeches by Martin Luther King and Caroline Lucas as examples. The class wrote some excellent persuasive speeches about protecting our planet. Everyone worked together brilliantly to put on our class puja- performing a short play, leading a meditation and singing joyful songs! We have also been enthusiastically rehearsing for the Let's Dance performance at the Brighton Dome next month.

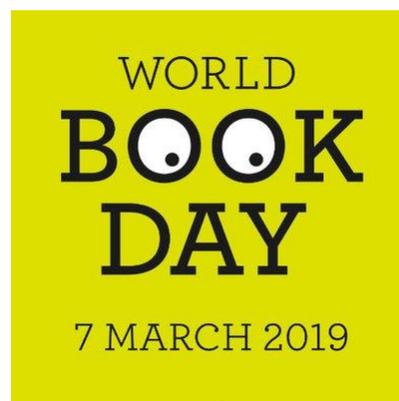
Head's Up

Dear Parents, Carers and Wider Community,
I hope that you are all well and enjoying noticing the very first shoots of Spring. Although we have not acknowledged it, Imbolc ('Imbolg' - 'in the belly') was on 1st February and this ancient festival marks this expectant time and the stirrings of new life.

We are cooking something up in the upper part of the school - our dance offering for 'Let's Dance'. This Brighton and Hove dance celebration for schools and groups runs for the week beginning on Monday March 11th. We are performing at the Brighton Dome on Tuesday 12th March in the evening and tickets for parents of performers are available through the office. One of our Let's Dance team will be

contacting you very soon regarding costumes and there may be some more communication about extra rehearsals.

World Book Week is 4th- 8th March this year. We are using this week to continue promoting a love of reading at school and at home. We will be celebrating World Book Week in school and each class will choose a quality book for the week. We are again planning to dress up as our favourite book character on World Book Day which this year is on Thursday 7th March. We would like to ask parents to bring in £1 or a donation for each child dressing up, as part of 'Book Aid International- www.bookaid.org. This initiative sends books to places in need including to refugee camps.



We also want to have a donated book stall in the playground at lunchtime on World Book Day. If you have any books you no longer want then send them into school on from Monday 4th March. Children will have the opportunity to choose one free book from the donated book stall. **This year we are asking children to bring in photos of themselves as part of our 'get caught reading' campaign.** Catch your child reading in an unusual, but safe place (perhaps over half term?) and send the photo for our display to office@dharmaschool.co.uk. If you have any free time during book week and would like to volunteer to come into school and read with children then please let the office know. At the end of the week your child will bring home a £1 book token that they can use to buy their own book.

Turning to the virtual world, I want to let you know about a helpful and informative website for parents - www.internetmatters.org which has produced this useful infographic about screen time.

Five top tips to manage children's screen time

Help your child make the most of their time on and offline

1 Set a good example with your own device use

Children will tend to model their behaviours on you, so if you start reading a book, they may follow your lead.



2 Talk together about the time they spend online

Understand what they're doing, and explain your concerns.



3 Agree an appropriate length of time that they can use their device

Put in place a family agreement to set some boundaries and don't break them.



4 Get the whole family to unplug and create 'screen free' zones at home



5 Use technology and apps to help manage screen time

For example, the **Forest** app enables them to grow a beautiful forest each day they don't use their phone for a set amount of time. The iPad's **'Guided Access'** limits the time you can access any given app, which can be great for younger children.



Finally, I want to leave you with a reflection on impermanence (anicca, in Pali - one of the three marks of existence). I have been reading a pamphlet by Ajahn Munindo ('Sanity in the Midst of Uncertainty') and I wanted to share some of it with you. The reflections I have had are about how change, though initially sometimes stimulating and welcomed, can also be disorienting. This is particularly so for children who, oftentimes in my experience, can become anxious in the face of rapid change. Not all change, of course, is negative. But it is certainly true that the pace of change, through technological and scientific progress, is accelerating.

Rapidly changing circumstances can lead to feelings of instability and that the ground is shifting in a way that is hard to tolerate over time. Ajahn Munindo counsels us to adopt a stance of 'strategic optimism' (rather than habitual pessimism) whereby we intentionally develop an optimistic attitude informed by mindfulness, sense restraint (see my last blog) and skilful reflection. This approach can come across as naïve. However, staying present moment to moment and seeing things as they really are is what is implied here. In addition, as a great aid to this, paying attention to not-thinking and consciously interrupting our mental chatter we have access to a different quality of discernment or intelligence. This is, in fact, our Buddhist ethos at the Dharma School, in a nutshell.

Happy Half Term!

Clare

Community news

A warm welcome to our new PE teacher

We are pleased to announce that James Cosham, with a teaching qualification in PE, will be teaching for Ocean and Lotus and running the after school sports club from Wednesday 27th February. We welcome him to the Dharma School!

Gratitude

Many thanks to Caroline Lucas for taking time out of her busy schedule to visit our school. She listened to the concerns of the children, explained her job and Parliament, sang and meditated with us. She said she enjoyed the calm atmosphere of the school and wished she could have stayed longer!

We are grateful to Venerable Kassapo for an extraordinary and interesting puja this morning (as well as the Prajnaparamita mantra). Venerable Kassapo is a Buddhist monk who developed an interest in the Dharma at 8 and started meditating daily at 11. He then became the youngest fully ordained monk in the UK. He grew up in England but currently lives in India and has supported the Dharma school for many years. He now teaches young Tibetan Lamas in India and translates both texts and talks from Sanskrit and Tibetan.

Open Mornings

Despite the snow, our recent Open Morning attracted a good number of prospective parents. Many had heard about us through word of mouth which has always been a powerful means of marketing, so 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

Fri 1 March - flower-watering puja

Fri 8 March - singing puja

Tues 12 March - Let's Dance at Brighton Dome
Fri 15 March - Open morning and Rainbow puja
Wed 20 March - Community Meeting
Fri 22 March - Mountain Puja
Wed 27 March - Parent-teacher interviews
Fri 29 March - flower-watering puja
Fri 5 April - term ends, closing puja



For further news and information please visit our [News & Events](#) page on the school website and connect with us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

Main Photo: Winter fun in the playground!

Parent Community Newsletter

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