

Our News

We love our space



Whilst it has only been a couple of months since we 'moved in' to our refurbished rooms, it seems like we've been where we are forever. Thanks to the vision of Amanda Harmer, one of the members of our SMT, who created plans and supported the project management throughout the summer, we now have a far more flexible space (which is an important word at Dame Catherine's.) We have welcomed lots of new children, especially in our pre-school. You might have seen the photograph of our new starters (4-5 year olds) alongside other schools in the Village Voice and noticed that we have quite a few children this year, which is fantastic. Of course, the garden is as popular as ever and on discovering an old canoe behind the tree the children were really excited to climb inside and adventure to different places.

What's been happening in school?



Remember, remember 5th November!

We wanted to make a special effort to celebrate bonfire night this year. Whilst the organised bonfires couldn't go ahead, we were in a lucky position to be able to gather the children together to do something special. In fact we had a fire on Thursday and on Friday so that more children could join in.

This was a chance to 'feed the fire' but also feed ourselves too after toasting marshmallows (thanks to Deb for remembering to get vegan ones too!)

Class 2 were asked to help measure the ingredients for Lorna's traditional family bonfire toffee. Because it has been passed down from her parents it was in pounds and ounces so this meant a bit of a maths lesson!





Class 2 decided to use this opportunity to develop their history skills thanks to resident historian Chris. The children had learnt all about a warning letter written to Lord Montague, considered primary and secondary sources and taken part in the trial of Guy Fawkes. Chris was then 'volunteered' to double up as Guy Fawkes himself in the re-enactment which was performed to all children outside. Funnily enough no-one else was up for the role once Guy Fawkes had been convicted and they had learnt what happened to him afterwards!

Celebrating other cultures

Learning about other cultures is incredibly important to us at Dame Catherine's and we are lucky to have several families who can help us with this! This is exactly what we did with Día de los Muertos and Polish Independence Day.

The children in school this Wednesday had quite a treat when 2 of our homeschool children brought in a whole range of foods from Poland. It was fantastic to see so many try and enjoy everything on offer. The strawberry juice drink was scrumptious! Even more importantly, we were able to learn so much from the information which had been researched and prepared at home. Such opportunities are an incredible way to learn about certain difficult times in history for example when Polish people were not allowed to speak openly in their own language. We really appreciate families contributing to our learning in the way.



Our learning?

Nursery and Class 1 have been embracing the change of season... exploring the outside environment, painting hedgehog pictures and collaging squirrels. They also went on a squirrel hunt and shared poems about Autumn, creating a beautiful display in Class 1.

Fay's group have investigated bubbles and made bubble print paintings. Children have also created their own, individual bubble poems after a group activity listing descriptive 'bubble' words.

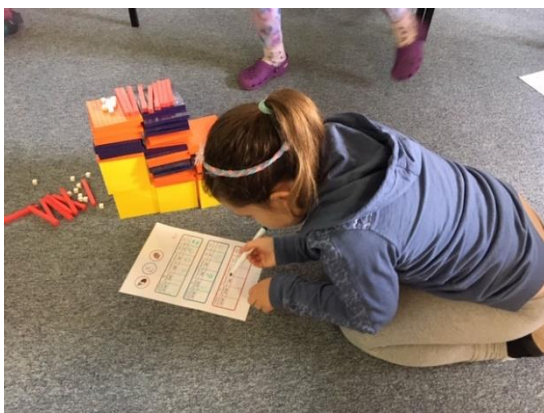
Straight after the holiday Fay's group celebrated the South American festival Dia De Los Muertos (depicted in Disney's Coco) by making observational paintings of marigolds and creating 'Papel picado' (a Mexican paper art).



All Early Years children are enjoying taking part in differentiated letters and sounds activities in small groups, supported by some lively songs from BBC's 'Bounce Patrol'.

Fire is a common theme in both Deb and Fay's group. Children spent some of the week of bonfire night listening to firework sounds whilst creating firework pictures. Our youngest children also behaved superbly when there was an impromptu fire drill as a result of Lorna creating rather a lot of smoke when bubbling up the bonfire toffee in the kitchen!

Deb's class have been learning about the Great Fire of London and what London was like in the past. They've been using a story song with sign language to help them. They have also been joining in with some of the Roald Dahl theme of class 2, using the stories of 'George's Marvellous Medicine' and 'The Giraffe, Pelly and Me.'



As for class 2 – where do we start? They certainly have energy and an incredible love for learning. The plan was to have a transition month with a little focus on Roald Dahl. No such thing as 'little' where we are concerned though. The more we learnt the more ideas we had, until suddenly we decided we might as well spend the term linking our ideas to Roald Dahl. So we came up with our big question 'is plotting and planning always marvellous?' which allowed us to throw a multitude of ideas into the mix (like the gunpowder plot, looking at planning buildings and a whole load of fun science investigations.)

The idea of developing a theme park 'Roald Dahl World' has been popular and allowed children to suggest what rides they would like to go on in German, come up with their own ride ideas and suggest where the park should be. The Board of directors and developers are getting close to finalising plans and hope to advertise the park very soon.

Some of the children remembered having used greenscreen last year, so we have made the most of our library space and created quite a few films already this term. These included adverts for their own chocolate bars. They also had a go at creating a shadow puppet play about the Chinese Autumn Moon Festival.

Of course, science always plays a big part in our curriculum. The children have had fun investigating how to make gummi worms wiggle, how to create dream jars like the BFG (learning the meaning of immiscible) and trying to inflate balloons by adding popping candy to soda. They then moved on to investigate luminescence which linked well with Halloween activities, especially making a lantern out of a milk carton. The class 2 cloakroom made an excellent darkroom.





Class 2 are finding ways to carry on doing all of the things we love. They had quite a laugh making their mooncakes in their fetching pink hairnets – it added to the fun.

Fundraising news.

- A special thank you to Simon Durston-Smith who raised a spectacular £490 when he ran the virtual London Marathon last month around the local area. He managed to run it in just over 3 hours which secured him a place in next year's marathon, which we all hope will be back to normal!
- Our virtual art show was a huge success, thanks to the highly adaptable Dame Catherine's Arts group. We managed to raise around £3,000 which went a long way to support the refurbishments and the little extras which made everything more special such as the sink, sand tray and new lunchbox trolley.



Children in Need



This Friday (13th) is Children in Need which seems to have quietly snuck up on us this year.

We have decided to take part in 2 activities to support the cause.

Having had tremendous fun last year taking part in the annual duck race sweepstake and we want to do this again this year, so at 1pm we will be glued to the race to see how far our ducks get this year. The Children in Need site suggests a £2 donation if you are able to support.

Our 2nd activity we will run as a little competition so that children can take part no matter which day they are in school. We have been learning just how 'packed full' of celebrations and commemorations this month of November is. In class 2 we listed the following to include in our learning:

Dia de los Muertos, Bonfire Night, the American election, Polish Independence Day, Remembrance Day, Diwali, Children's Day, Thanksgiving, St. Andrews Day (and Chris' birthday.)

We have printed out copies of Pudsey Bear and would like children to give Pudsey a costume for one of these celebrations or commemorations. We would love a donation of £1 per entry. We will leave this open until next Wednesday so that everyone has a chance of taking part.

We will place a box on the bench at the end of this week and beginning of next week for donations for these activities or a general donation. Thank you.



Dates for your diary

Parents are reminded that the flu vaccinations are next Tuesday (17th November.) These are for reception to year 6 only. Jane has sent an e-mail out requesting that parents confirm with us the children who are having this vaccine so that we have our own list as a safeguard.

Looking ahead to Christmas

Obviously we are going to struggle to do all of the lovely family activities this year such as our Christmas dinner with parents, the little Christmas market and switching our lights on the tree which we did last year for the first time. It is hard to plan, given we don't know what to expect. What will be missed the most is the Christmas performance. But this gives us the chance to try something different. We have been dabbling throughout the year with film, so we are going for it and creating our own feature length performance 'loosely' based around Roald Dahl stories. Chris has excitedly been script writing and we are choosing an eclectic mix of songs to suit our various age groups which he is tasked with writing into the script. This will be unlike anything you've ever seen before!



Please watch out for the letter which we will be sending out to parents by the beginning of next week regarding photos and film permissions.

We will provide details of when and how this will be shared / streamed, but we are currently aiming for early evening on Tuesday 15th December (the last Tuesday of term.)