

### Our News

As in every new school year there have been exciting new developments. This year, we have focused on our exciting curriculum. This has meant getting back to the forest school opportunities which are built into our curriculum, with Natalee providing Spanish in each group and making more of our music expertise to benefit the children. We might be a small staff, but everyone plays their part. Jane has enjoyed joining the teaching team twice a week to help Lorna to provide piano and keyboard lessons to our older children. Josh has brought some much-appreciated art expertise to the team. Some of our oldest children have decided they would like positions as pre-school assistants and are learning that there is more to Fay's job than they first thought. Thor was successful in his application and interview (and had some impressive references) and we have more interviews coming up.



### What's been happening in school?



Back in October, during International Space Week, we took the opportunity to learn about how rockets worked, modelling this in various ways with science investigations. Rabbits learnt a little about our solar system and it seems from the photo (left) they were ready to explore. Even if the children didn't quite reach space, they had a good time pretending!



#### Apple Day and Halloween

We celebrated 2 very exciting events in the week before the half term holiday. On Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> October we experienced pressing our very own apple juice from the many apples donated by lots of different families. We tasted 7 different types and enjoyed describing them and discussing our favourites. One of the most popular were the huge apples from our school neighbours which arrived minutes before we did our survey. Fay's group created an apple and conker run. Thank you to Phil, one of our parents who works for the National Forest Company for coming in to teach the older children about our National Forest, importance of tree planting, and to explain a little about what he does as a job.



With Halloween approaching, the rabbits group set about adapting the apple bobbing activity to make it more hygienic.



The staff had as much fun as the children at the Halloween party. Dressing the mummy game proved a lot of fun (and there was a fair bit of cheating going on too.) The older children were good sports. One of the best things about Dame Catherine's is the way they love playing as much (if not more) than the pre-school children! A special thanks to Bria who did most of the organising.

### Polish Independence Day



Thank you to Czarek and Ada for helping us to remember Polish Independence Day on 10<sup>th</sup> November by bringing in lots of goodies. The caramel sweets are definitely a favourite of ours!

### Our Forest of Promises Tree

Our older children have been keeping up with what has been happening at COP 26 and asked the other children to join them in taking part in the WWF Forest of Promises on Friday 5th November during COP26. It was fantastic to see a group of Witty Wildcats really taking charge of creating tree and with the help of Chris (and his height) it was finally installed in its home on the wall next to our staircase. They wanted to add a few animals of course! The leaves display what the children intend to do to help bring about change, but also promises they want world leaders to make. A fantastic feature in our entrance hall!



## FEATURE: A LOOK INTO OUR 'MORE THAN JUST FOREST SCHOOL SESSIONS.'

It isn't always easy to describe what makes Dame Catherine's so unique. We spend a 'decent' amount of time outside to enable children to have quality play and physical exercise. Everyone comments on how fantastic our garden is. How many times parents ask their child what they have done at school, only to get a simple response such as 'we played in the garden.' So we thought we would give parents a little insight into our current forest school sessions and how these are developed at Dame Catherine's.

Our sessions are very much in line with forest school principles and practices, but these same principles are ones which underpin our whole ethos and curriculum at Dame Catherine's. Fostering resilience, confidence, independence and creativity and encouraging children to take supported risks are at the heart of everything we do. Staff at the school co-ran sessions with Deb who undertook the forest school training 3-4 years ago. Even though new staff have joined is, the forest school sessions have remained and Elly is currently bringing her own expertise and love of environmental science to the mix. What we mean by 'far more than just forest school,' is that we also look to link in other areas where in a natural and unforced way. Planning ideas, which Elly has kindly put in place, has suggest how this might link to other work in the classroom.



Children are currently taking part in a project to restore the pond area, which has 4 small ponds and one larger pond. This have involved a lot of discussion and problem solving. Firstly, the staff posed a question which asked children to consider which pond might have more life in it. The children always enjoy identifying and naming and classifying wildlife. Children learned that it is not all about the size of the pond or quantity of water and, after emptying the water to assess the quality of the pond, they discovered that the smaller ponds had more pond life. This led to the decision to restore the larger pond, which has involved team building on a whole school level. The older children have been collecting the larger volumes of water and the younger ones have been working together to get this water to its final destination. The younger children have been collecting resources to re-build the pond which has involved categorising and removing man made materials. This is a fantastic link to the pre-school theme of materials this term. The children had to solve the problem of how to measure the depth of the pond and had the brainwave of using a drainpipe to do this and sought to figure out where they needed to measure from. Older children have used photography to support their learning, capturing pictures of the top and bottom of the pond with our ipads. Of course, this sort of project allows children to choose and there have been lots of opportunities to play - sloshing water over wellies is always a popular activity.

This is just one sequence of sessions set in our very own nature area but it doesn't stop there. Whilst we have a fantastic resource steps away from our building, we are welcome to use to use a local common where we have some shares so are looking to extend our experiences in the near future.



## Squirrels and Rabbits

Friday afternoons are turning into 'fun with Bria' sessions. The bonfire night session was particularly creative as the children produced firework art on a large scale, possibly a little larger than Bria had considered when the children aimed higher than the paper. That's one way to get the windows painted! Of course some of the children blended in very well too by the end of the session.



Fay's group have been exploring materials. They have enjoyed sessions learning origami, helped along by our resident expert in origami. A highlight has been all children making their own paper and watching Fay iron the paper. Children have also enjoyed taking old things apart to investigate them. Fay was very amused when she left Chris in charge one session and he got a bit carried away and she returned to find the iron in bits as it was next to the other items. Whoops – a few screws had ended up in the children's pumpkin creations!



Rabbits have been looking at museum artefacts and the painting 'Children's Games' by Breugel to help them learn about toys through history. The group have been making games and dominoes and creating paper rockets. One of their stories 'Lost in the Toy Museum,' links to the Museum of Childhood. Daily drawing sessions in their busy books are popular. Children always enjoy posting messages in the Rabbits class, and in October they responded to messages left by characters like Winnie the Witch who asked them to solve a few problems and get back to her. With Chris' mind working towards our end of term performance, he has started to explore stop animation with the children. Toy Story 5, here we come!

Children in on Wednesdays (rabbits) and Thursdays (squirrels) have been learning Spanish this term and are particularly fond of the greetings song which we hear around school a lot. We even hear the staff humming it around the place ( the children are better at picking up the words!)

## Witty Wildcats

With our big question 'What's our Power?' this term science and DT have party focused on the themes of energy and weather. Solar cookers, anemometers, tornados – we've made them all



A history focus has been the beginning of the industrial revolution. Thanks to Chris they were able to explore life before the industrial revolution in an active way and took their roles very seriously, from the owner of an inn or a lord to an ox!



**School visit to Cromford:** our visit to Cromford was inspiring and the children have incorporated this into their learning throughout this half term. Some children are reading a time travel book about a boy who goes back in time to Cromford in the late 1700s.

The highlight of the day at Cromford was the challenge to build a water wheel out of Lego. This is where Dame Catherine's children came into their own! Of course, after a few tweaks here and there, they all worked.



**Superheroes and comics:** There has been a real interest in the work on superheroes and comics. Children have written news accounts of superhero events, worked on live reporting and planned their own comic strips. In art children have looked at artists such as Roy Lichtenstein and Jack Kirby to get inspiration for their work, but inspiration has also come from our very own Josh who shared his A level artwork focusing on Batman with the children.

**Our own parliament:** after learning so much about using the power of our plate to protect the planet, it seemed a good opportunity to put all the learning into action and set up a parliamentary debate. Over several days the children learned the procedures to propose a bill and debate this in parliament. They enjoyed watching various clips which helped them to master rules such as only addressing the speaker and using terms such as 'my honourable friend.' 'Eyes to the right and nose to the left,' was the favourite.



## Reminders and requests

- We would appreciate donation of any rocks or plants for around the pond as the children are keen to develop a shallow beach type area for wildlife to enter and exit the pond. Aquatic plants would also be welcomed.
- Coat hangers needed. To support us with our routines, so that we can make best use of time outside and dry things easily without crowding the classroom, we have acquired a stand to keep in the shed. If you have any spare coats hangers, especially ones which have clips on, these would be appreciated.
- Indoor shoes: a reminder to all children to make sure that they have indoor shoes which fit in school. Socks do not protect feet as well, and when we had a fire practice a couple of weeks ago, we highlighted the issue of having to vacate the building immediately if they weren't wearing indoor shoes or slippers.
- Nuts and seeds: we have a couple of children and an adult in school who have nut / sesame allergies and we therefore have to put risk assessments in place for these individuals. Part of this risk assessment is to ask parents to avoid sending nuts into school where at all possible. If there are dietary reasons you wish to send your child in with nuts or sesame seeds (or foods containing these), then we ask parents to explain this to us so that we know to sit your child apart from anyone who has an allergy. We have to carefully monitor individuals, especially younger children, who bring in nuts. Whilst we check lunchboxes to be sure, it really supports us if the number of children who bring nuts into school is limited to a few as possible. It reduces risks for individuals, but also means lunchtimes are more flexible for everyone.
- **Dame Catherine's Cookbook:** we are planning to take a brave step and create, print and sell our own cookbook. As well as hopefully being part of our fundraising for this year, the project is also providing our Witty Wildcats group (7–11-year-olds) with an opportunity to share their learning about 'the power of their plate.' The older children are already coming up with some recipe ideas and will lead on this project, but we would like to extend this to families in other groups. If you have any favourite recipes which fit into the overall theme (including low-carbon footprint, Fairtrade, sustainably sourced, plant-based or organic recipes) and which you are willing to share, then please hand these to Lorna, Chris or Bria or e-mail them to [bria@damecatherines.org](mailto:bria@damecatherines.org). Knowing we have lots of parents with different backgrounds, we are also keen to include any recipes for different celebrations throughout the year or from other cultures, so we can all broaden our tastes, so these would be particularly welcome. We would welcome all recipes by Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> November.



## Dame Catherine's Fundraising

**Village fete:** our summer art show not only helped to raise much appreciated funds for the school but also demonstrated a fantastic team spirit in terms of fundraising. It might have been tricky over the past 18 months to hold events, but now the fundraising group is back, with some new parent members too, and bursting with ideas for planning the Village Fete. This will be on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2022 so please save the

date. We are so lucky to have some friends of Dame Catherine's who live in the village working as part of the group. One of the highlights will be our very own dog show. So, start training now.

**Christmas raffle:** we would like to put together one or two nice Christmas hamper baskets to raffle. Luxury hamper items such as nice biscuits, cordials, chocolates, mince pies, bottles of wine etc. Tickets will be available soon. The raffle will be drawn on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> December.

**Help:** we are always looking for people to help out, so if you would like to get more involved, please get in touch with Bria.

## Coming soon

### **Children in Need: Friday 19<sup>th</sup> November**

This week, we will be taking part in lots of Children In Need celebrations and activities.

As many of our children are in school part time, we will be running various activities throughout the week, so that as many children as possible can access at least some of the activities.

**Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> and Thursday 18<sup>th</sup>:** cooking and baking to fit in with the 'Great British Bake Off' theme.

**Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> November:** Pedal for Pudsey challenge. (We'll be broadening this to scooters, roller skates and go karts.) Children can bring their own bike/scooter/skates to school if they wish.

**Friday 19<sup>th</sup> November:** Strictly Come Dancing dance party! (Another Children in Need theme.) This is also an opportunity to dress up in lots of sparkles and glitter!

We have set up a Justgiving page for any donations you may wish to make or any sponsorship for our Pedal for Pudsey challenge.

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/dchscin>

## Christmas Plans

Please put **Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> December** after school into your diary and join us for our mini Christmas market out in our courtyard area. Obviously, this event aims to support a little fundraising, but it is largely a social event which will mainly be in the open air so we can welcome wider family members. This will take place from 4pm until around 5.30pm. Enjoy a few refreshments including hotdogs, buy a few decorations made by children, and soak up the atmosphere. There will be music, singing, lights and Santa too. We will be practising a couple of Christmas songs to sing (for all to join in!) with our little band. We hope to display some extracts of our cookbook so that we can encourage everyone to place an order (they could make nice Christmas presents.) Obviously, this event aims to support our fundraising, but our main goal is to use this as an opportunity for a social event.

**End of term performance:** we have thought long and hard about how to manage this. We know that it is a lovely opportunity for wider family such as grandparents to see children as well as parents. For various reasons, we aren't able to put on a whole school performance on more than one evening and we are conscious that we would potentially need to accommodate close to 100 people in the village hall. We realise however that performing live is important for the children. In past years we have also catered for families for a Christmas lunch. Given that the number of families has increased, we have reservations about this event getting crowded and we don't want to limit the number of tickets. We have therefore discussed how to hold events which will retain the most important features for our school. Our aim is to create a film for our end of term production (as we did last year – although goodness knows how we'll top that one.) There will be Christmas elements, but this will not exclusively be a Christmas performance. A film will go out onto our you tube channel, but only visible to those who have the link and mean that wider family members can enjoy the performance. We will use existing permissions for this and will contact families

where we don't have permissions to check whether they wish for their child to be in the film. However, on the last Wednesday of term, we aim to invite parents in 2 separate groups to showcase in the village hall, so that they can enjoy a few live elements for their child's age group and have some Christmas refreshments together.

Relax, have a chat and refreshments and enjoy a mini showcase from your children.

9.30am Parents of children in squirrels and rabbits. (Welcome in the village hall from 9.10am)

2.45pm Parents of children in Witty Wildcats. (Welcome in the village hall from 2.30pm)

All children, no matter which day they attend, will be welcome to take part in the performance. For those children who do not usually attend on Wednesdays, squirrels and rabbits can come into school from 9am until after the performance finishes. Witty Wildcats are welcome to join anytime from 2pm.

### **Our last day of term.**

We have chosen to follow some other local authorities rather than Derbyshire this year and finish school the week before Christmas rather than a couple of days before.

Our last day will be Friday 17<sup>th</sup> December. Many schools finish at lunchtime at Christmas. We will officially finish the day at 3pm. If any families need to collect children earlier as they are travelling ahead of the weekend, they are welcome to do so. For parents who are working and need childcare until 4pm, please let us know in advance.

## **Dates for the term**

**Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> - Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> November** : Children in need activities

**Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> November**: Flu vaccinations (nasal)

**Thursday 2nd December**: DCHS Christmas Market

**Friday 10<sup>th</sup> December** : Christmas jumper day.

**Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> : Christmas show and tell (mini performance)**

**Friday 17<sup>th</sup> December** : last day of term. School finishes at 3pm