

Our News

Delighted by our Inspection outcome: at the end of a tiring spring term, we were just getting ready for some exciting Easter activities when we got a call from the Independent School Inspectorate to say that we would be having an inspection that week. We were asked not to share the outcome of this until the final report was published, which has taken nearly a couple of months. We now wish to share how delighted we are that we met every single standard with no actions needed. Given the small team we have and seeing how many other schools have 'actions' listed in their reports, makes us exceptionally proud. More than anything, it gives us the confidence that it is possible to meet all government regulations but still do things the Dame Catherine's way. The children were just incredible that week and we can't thank parents enough for the supportive and touching comments they shared with the inspectors in the questionnaires. We will send the report out to parents along with a letter providing more information and background over the next couple of weeks.

What's been happening in school?

In short – lots and lots! We have been making the most of the many events taking place recently, which has meant a lot of fun together. We have certainly been making the most of the garden, with open air plays, gardening, snail hunts - and new play equipment for our youngest children.

With the help of our families with younger children, we managed to raise over a thousand pounds last year to spend on equipment and resources for that age group. Knowing that one of the biggest companies supplying Early Year's equipment was having a yard sale a few weeks ago, Lorna and Bria set out on a bargain hunt. It turned into a massive success, and our school managed to get over £2,000 of equipment for less than half the price. It got even better when Bria went back for the second van load and came back with another few items including a beautiful children's picnic table and wooden dividers absolutely free. Most is now in place in the garden and we are busy finishing off the courtyard areas outside the classrooms. So, there will be more photos soon!





It's not just our school which has some new equipment. The Grange (which houses the cricket pavilion) has fantastic new climbing equipment, funded by the Johnson family (Harpur Crewe Estate) and

featured in the local Village Voice. Having heard about it, we tried it out earlier this week. It is fantastic to be able to use the Grange for our PE lessons and to get some real space to run around from time to time. Our school building might be small, but we are lucky to benefit from an extended environment with the village hall and the Grange right on our doorstep!

Our learning together



The week leading up to the Coronation Wildcats was action packed. After writing their own plans to steal one of the national treasures, Wildcats children performed an open-air play of some of the stories behind the Crown Jewels



including a heist to steal the Stone of Scone, before reaching present day and demonstrating their role in the Coronation. Rabbits created some stunning regalia. Squirrels made some Coronation quiches and Rabbits a Victoria sponge and we were able to enjoy these together at the end of the week. We even created our own tea towel and tote bag to commemorate the event.

No sooner was the Coronation over, than we were into the full swing of Eurovision which created a great deal of learning opportunities. Wildcats explored the plight of Ukranian people, watching a powerful performance of the Ordinary World song at one of the semi-finals. They also created their own welcome for the opening ceremony and used various data from past contests to create graphs and work out different types of averages. Rabbits write their own songs, inspired by the UK entry. And, of



course, there were language opportunities, guessing the countries and languages. We had our own Eurovision contest at the end of the week- 5 past songs, great dance moves and 5 juries voting in 5 different languages (including Ukrainian.)

We use our Off-Piste approach to look at what other groups are learning about and join in with elements where we see a good opportunity. This meant that Wildcats and Squirrels were able to learn about Spanish food which Rabbits had been working on with Maddie last week– and taste some of the amazing paella they had made.



A few of the Wildcats have been going into the Squirrels group recently too, to show them some of the investigative work they have been doing about electricity. They showed the Squirrels group how rubbing a balloon against other materials created enough static electricity to pick up rice crispies and how an electrical circuit works. Thank you especially to Megan, Danielle and Ben from Fay for their kindness and patience.



Our learning

Wildcats

With the question 'What are Europe's Greatest Awes and Abominations?' Wildcats have managed to link in recent celebrations. Their focus has been on London over the past few weeks, including the history of London, using Charles Dickens to help to explore Victorian London a little. We have taught them how to use the London Underground maps. They kindly put a plan together for a teacher's day trip to London. They have also learnt how to use train timetables (and about the Eurostar) and bus timetables, more locally using the spontaneous bus trip to Swadlincote one day a few weeks ago.



The class started the theme in March by focusing on the causes of WW1 and considering the position of the main countries involved, before exploring the history of Berlin and making sure that they would be able to cope with ordering German food. Their German 'Kaffee und Kuchen' was a very civilized event. After half term the class will return to explore more of Europe and some of its exciting cities.

A highlight has been learning all about electrical circuits – even learning the difference between series and parallel circuits. They have made their own switches, burglar alarms and of course developed many investigations of their own. The aim now is for them to create their own houses from cardboard boxes and use their knowledge and understanding to include some creative electrical features.



Rabbits

The group have been enjoying the outdoors and the good weather has enabled them to transfer lots of their lessons outside too. This has included PE sessions. Elly has been creating gardening themed dances with the children including preparing the soil, weeding, germinating and seeds dispersing. They have planted their own radishes, lettuces, beans, tomatoes and salad leaves.

Inspired by a child who brought in a snail and with lots of the others really keen on snails too, the group decided to spend a Monday morning with Elly finding and naming snails before holding a snail race. Steve the snail won. A few gave up halfway (snails not children!)



The stick insects which Maddie bought in for the children to look after and learn about have now hatched from their eggs. The children did a great job of creating a special place for their habitat.

On Tuesday afternoons the children have been learning how to code using scratch with Chris and Josh.

Before the last holiday, the children were learning about magnetism and used their knowledge to create and complete an obstacle course - trying to get a car around the course without touching it using the repelling forces.

Squirrels

Fay got into the spirit of National Bee Day last week with some exciting bee themed activities, including honey playdough. The children have been observing their tadpoles and learning about life cycles after the children helped to set up their tank. They



have been starting to grow potatoes, peas, beans and radishes – as well as some flowers for the bees.

Children have been inspired by artists from around the world, such as Kandinsky and have been using 'loose parts' to create their own art.



Fundraising news and events

Village Fete: this was an incredible success, and it was fantastic to see nearly all of our families there – and also some of the children who left us last year too, who used this as an opportunity to visit us. There was a real sense of teamwork on the day and we wish to say a huge thank you to everyone who played a part, staff and parents alike. Some of the children played a supportive role in getting things ready, from sorting the tombola to measuring how many tables we would fit in the village hall. I think everyone will agree that the fundraising team did a stunning job. Special thanks go to Lorraine and Rebecca (parents) who worked over many months alongside Bria, whose dedication throughout her maternity leave on this event was above and beyond and Fiona, who we are very lucky to have as one of our very active trustees. The fete raised just over £4,000 for the school but far more than this, was a real opportunity to be part of the local village community and we appreciate the great support we had from places like the Staff of Life in the village. The fete group was supported by several local people, working alongside the fundraising team and we were also very grateful for several donations, including from the Parish Council and the Harpur Crewe estate to help with some of the setup costs.



Summer event for 3-7 year olds (Squirrels and Rabbits)

The past 2 summers we have held a special event for our younger children which has also helped us to raise money for fantastic equipment for this group of children. These events have taken the form of a 'Big Toddler' which families supported by getting sponsors. This year, we have ideas to keep the sponsorship idea, which was so successful, and retain the lovely family picnic afterwards, but create some fun events / challenges for children (and siblings) to take part in, which will be themed. We aim for this to take place at the Grange. We are still coming up with ideas and will get more information out the week after half term but have put a date in the diary for the event (listed in the dates below.)

Melbourne Carnival: after our spectacular winning float last year, staff got carried away and signed up for this year as well! It is a great opportunity to show off our school and a special memory for the children, so we hope that lots of families can join us this year. Our float will be decorated in the theme of 'Up.' We will be getting to know the story after half term but we are grateful for any ideas to help make another stunning float this year.

Dates for your diary

Monday 3rd / Tuesday 4th July INSET Days

Wednesday 5th July Wildcats visit to National Memorial Arboretum

Saturday 8th July (late morning) Dame Catherine's carnival float.

Wednesday 12th July 2.30pm – 5.00pm Squirrels and Rabbits summer event and picnic

Monday 17th July (early evening) End of term event for 7-11 year olds (leavers celebration)

Wednesday 19th – Thursday 20th July Wildcats activities days and sleepover