

Castlecroft News

Special Edition!

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Well what a year!

The Covid 19 pandemic has occupied so much time and energy with school having to devise new ways of working that are as safe as can be, then adapting again as we moved into a January lockdown before reopening and trying to balance meeting the emotional needs of the children with trying to help them catch up.

I am so proud of the way the children and staff have coped during such a difficult time.

Hopefully things will now return to something more stable and normal with an end to the staggered timetable and children able to mix again and our full curriculum can return.

I am very aware of the many opportunities the children have missed out on over the last 18 months. Residential visits, matches and competitions with other schools, performances with live audiences have all stopped and we have not been able to come together as a whole school for an assembly since the school closed on 20th March 2020. These are the things that add real richness to school life and provide some of the happiest memories.

However, this newsletter is a celebration of many exciting events that we have managed to hold and I am really pleased that the easing of restrictions has allowed us to invite a small live audience to both our Rock Concert and our Leaver's assembly.

Our current Year 6 have been an excellent class. Hugely talented, hard working and excellent role models to the other children in school. It is fitting that they should have an audience at their special assembly on the last Tuesday of term. I think after all we have been through it will be a real celebration and a bit of a tear jerker... I'm already dreading having to speak at the end. The photos and music always finish me off.

September will be very different in school. All classes will have been decorated and recarpeted. The corridors will have been rewired with new lighting and sockets and a new fire alarm system installed. Mrs Wales will be on maternity leave excitedly awaiting the arrival of her first child and Mrs Timmins will be our new Reception teacher. We have a 'new' Miss Cox starting at school in Year 6 and 'old' Miss Cox will have got married and will return as Mrs Key. All very exciting! We are going to begin with 3 INSET days in September to allow staff the time to set up classrooms and carry out essential training.

Many thanks for all your support through this most difficult year. I look forward with hope that next year is much more normal!

Happy reading!
Mr Dyall





Sensory Garden

During lockdown Mrs Hayward worked very hard to tidy up the Sensory garden with the help of other members of staff. They re-laid the gravel paths with fresh, bright, shiny stones. One of the paths has been finished off with gravel made out of recycled television screens. The flower beds were weeded and some more wonderful flowers and herbs have been planted. Our bug hotel has been upgraded and its new arrivals are delighted. The benches have all been repainted bringing more colour to the garden and a meadow lawn has been sown.

New features have also been included in the garden like a pond with a solar-powered fountain. A hideout area has been created with a camouflage mural on the surrounding walls painted by the local graffiti artist, Steve Edwards and tree trunks have been provided for a seating area.

It is a perfect outdoor space for learning and sensory stimulation for our children.

The children have been enjoying the garden, safely in their bubbles.

“I like the plants, the jingly bells and the Bug-Hotel.” Lukas Balfour.

“I like sitting in the hidey area playing tik-tac-toe.” Darcy Quinn.

“I like the little frogs in the pond because they are so slimy and I’ve always wanted a pet one.” Erin Morgan.

“I like the water fountain because the water goes everywhere.” Cillian Keane.

“I like playing tic-tac-toe and ringing the bells.” Ameliah Samuels.

“I like the stepping stones because the stones around them look like diamond gems. And I really like the mural and playing tic-tac-toe as it is lots of fun.” Isla Keane.

‘Don’t be a Litter Bug’

By Kacey Leigh-Sillitto and Billy Madden

When we came back to school in September, Year 3 were asked to create different designs using the slogan ‘Don’t be a Litter Bug’ for the graffiti artist called Steve Edwards. We gave Steve our finished designs and he selected two designs to go on an electric box in the Smestow Valley Nature Reserve. On Wednesday 7th October our class got the opportunity to watch Steve spray paint our chosen designs on to the electric box which is along the track by school. He used lots of different colours and nozzles to spray different parts of the designs.

When Steve had finished the ‘Don’t be a Litter Bug’ designs, we went for a walk along the track to have a look at all the different graffiti work that Steve had done to brighten up the track. We saw the wonderful design under the railway bridge which a previous Year 3 had created with Steve. We were all very impressed with the bright, colourful designs but we loved the graffiti of animals the most. We had to rush back for lunch but we all had an extremely fun morning.





Year 1-Local Walk

By Lola Morgan

On Tuesday 13th October we went for a walk around Castlecroft. We had to use a map to find lots of different places. We saw a post box, the doctors, all the shops and a bus stop. There were lots of trees and leaves on the walk too. We used a zebra crossing to walk over the road safely. It was a fun walk and it only rained a bit.

Ukulele Competition

By Lennon Key

Alan Yates Music launched a competition to win a brand new licensed Beatles Yellow Submarine ukulele supporting 'Kids Music Day'. Mrs Parker kindly entered on behalf of our Nursery. Mrs Parker won the real yellow ukulele, it has a submarine with people in it and a butterfly underwater painted on the front. If I went in a submarine I would like to see a whale and some fish. The ukulele also has a fish with arms painted on it which is very funny for a fish maybe it is a costume. There is a proper fish on the ukulele without arms, it has got fins and a tail.

We love singing 'Yellow Submarine' with Mrs Parker in Nursery, it makes me feel really happy and it is my favourite song. I sing it at home for my Mummy, Daddy and my little sister, Lyla and that makes them feel happy too.



Year 5 Polyphones Workshop

By Anya Ceccarelli and Sophie Sheridan-Westgate

On Thursday 12th November 2020, Year 5 went down to the school hall to meet Mr Clark our school drum teacher. He was going to teach us how to play the polyphones which were all set up in the hall. The polyphones are different lengths of long tubes which we hit with a foam bat. The polyphones were long, medium or short to create different tones. Sophie and I both played the long polyphones but we weren't partners.

First Mr Clark taught us the numbers of the polyphones and which side of the bat we had to hit the tubes with to get the best sound.

After that, we learnt to make a sound which we remembered as 'Humpty Dumpty' because when you said it with the beat, it sounded like you were saying 'Humpty Dumpty'. Then we started to learn a single beat which Mr Clark called a vamp. A vamp is a pattern, usually a simple pattern like one or two chords that you

keep repeating for the purpose of getting into a rhythm.

Then a little spider interrupted the session which was in Erin and Amber's polyphones, they called it Jeff! Amber eventually managed to get the spider out. Once we had learnt all the music, Mr Clark got ready to play the drums and we got ready to play the polyphones, the rest of the school watched us on Teams for our special polyphones assembly. We had all practised doing a solo but only 3 or 4 children did it in the Teams assembly.

Learning the polyphones was a fun experience and all of Year 5 enjoyed the day.

Thank you Mr Clark.

Children in Need Day

By Sophie Knott

On Friday 13th November it was Children in Need Day so we came in to school in our own clothes and gave a £1 to the charity.

We bought cupcakes to raise more money and ate them after lunch, they were really nice.

During the day we had various activities like designing our very own Pudsey, mine was a space Pudsey, I dressed him in a space suit and boots. I enjoyed the whole day as it was a lot of fun and we raised £470 for Children in Need.





Year 3 Stone Age Day

By Tommy Chalstrey, Oliver Janik, Ethan Green and Niall Thornton

We went to the hall on Tuesday 24th November where a lady called Catherine had set up some artefacts from the Stone Age. We dressed up as Stone Age people and sat on animal skins as carpets. We looked at the weapons they used for hunting. There were lots of bones from different animals including a whale's back bone that could have been used as a seat. We all had the chance to make flour by grinding wheat against two flat stones. We were able to use the different tools and cooking utensils that would have been used back in the Stone Age. In the morning we went back to our classroom and made our own piece of felt.



After lunch, we returned to the hall and Catherine had changed all the artefacts from the Stone Age to the Iron Age. There were clothes, tools including pump drills, cooking utensils and weapons that were made from metal instead of stone. We all made bracelets from wool. During this era, they wore armour made out of metal that was very heavy to wear. This was a great day that helped us learn more about the Stone Age to the Iron Age.

Snow White and the Eleven Dwarves

By Grace Chalstrey and Sharika Patel

On Monday 7th December 2020 the whole of KS2 performed a play called 'Snow White and the Eleven Dwarves'. Which was so much fun!

Everyone was so excited when we were told that we could actually put on a play this year. Year 6 had to audition for the part they wanted to be in the play. Most of us got the parts we auditioned for and if not we were all happy with the parts we were given. We were amazing at learning the scripts within such a small amount of time.

Year 3, 4 and 5 did a great job learning their dances and songs so quickly.

We had to perform our play with no audience which was a very challenging thing to do because there was no reaction to our jokes and we needed an audience to laugh and clap to give us encouragement. But like they say "The show must go on." The performance was filmed in one day with each class doing their bit at different times, so we didn't mix. Although we did an amazing job we did make a few mistakes which had to be edited, with a brilliant final finished DVD. It was lots of fun and we got there in the end!

It just goes to show what we can achieve when we work as a team. Such a brilliant way to end 2020!



Italian Food Tasting

By Isla Jones and Ollie Thompson

Year 4 had an Italian food tasting lesson on Monday 14th December. We had olive oil and balsamic vinegar which was poured into a bowl, they didn't mix together but when we put our bread in the bowl, the oil and the vinegar soaked into the bread, a lot of the children in our class didn't like this Italian dish.

Most of the class liked the mozzarella cheese with sliced tomatoes and basil, drizzled with a bit of olive oil. We also tried Gnocchi al Sugo which is potato, eggs and flour all mixed together into pasta shapes in a tomato sauce. Some children said the Gnocchi tasted fantastic and others thought it was alright.

Lots of us liked the Panettone which is an Italian type of sweet bread which originated from Milan and is traditionally eaten at Christmas and New Year.

We all loved our food tasting lesson and would like to thank Ms Di Vincezo for preparing all the wonderful Italian food. We hope we can do it again very soon.



How Eggciting!

By Orla Brookes and Ben Stephens

We were really excited to have 9 eggs delivered to Reception which would hatch into little chicks. The eggs were kept warm in an incubator as they wouldn't hatch if they weren't warm. We waited a long time before an egg cracked, we could see the beak of the chick first which it used to peck its way out of the shell and then we saw the chick's wings really easily. Eventually all the eggs hatched and we had lots of fluffy yellow chicks running around the incubator.

We liked having the chicks in Reception as it was fun to watch them playing with each other and when they went to sleep they curled up in a ball and were very quiet unlike when they were awake, they were very noisy. We were able to hold them, they felt fluffy and really soft.

We haven't got the chicks anymore and we miss having them in our classroom to watch.



World Book Day

By Zach Tran

On Friday 12th March we had World Book Day at Castlecroft, the children and all the staff dressed up as their favourite book character. I think half of Year 6 came in their pyjamas for 'Tom's Midnight Garden' a book by Philippa Pearce.

There was a competition put online called 'The Masked Reader' we had to identify the staff who were reading from a book, dressed up so we couldn't recognise them. It was really hard to guess who was who.

It was a good day as we got to do lots of fun activities like write a story in 50 words and create our very own comic strip.

Comic Relief Day

By Alfie Wedge

Red Nose Day was lots of fun. We wore our red noses, my nose was called Tommy. We had a joke competition that made me laugh. We raised £398.10 to help lots of people.



#LotsOfSocks Day

By Millie Pearce



On Monday 22nd March it was World Down Syndrome Day to make people aware of the day we came into school in brightly coloured odd socks.

I wore odd socks to school just like all my friends. My socks were really colourful and made me smile and feel very happy "I can hop with my different coloured socks!"

Dinosaur Drama!

By Henry Shaw and Oscar Woolley

We had a letter sent to Nursery which was in a parcel, we think the letter asked us to look after the big egg for the museum. We came into school one day and the egg had cracked and there were yellow dinosaur footprints all around school. We saw a photo of the green and yellow dinosaur as Miss Smith and Mrs Jones had seen it on the car park by Mrs Wallace's car. There were two scratches on the door where the dinosaur had escaped, he had gripped on to the latches with his claws to open the door. The dinosaur was as wide as our arms can reach or maybe a bit wider as our arms can't reach that far and he was way taller than us.

We spent the day looking for the missing dinosaur, we didn't find him but if we did we were going to show him our toys we have in Nursery and play with him.

It was a really exciting day as the egg had cracked and we loved exploring to try to find the dinosaur.



The Great Castlecroft Easter Egg Hunt

By Malaya Coulter

On April fools' day we had our Easter egg hunt. Year 6 were the first to do the hunt and we found our eggs on the school field and in the sensory garden. Then we hid the eggs for each class bubble. For the infants we hid the eggs in easier to find places on the infant's playground. Then for the juniors we put the eggs in harder hiding places like window sills and behind the benches.

When each class found the eggs they put them in one big bag so that the eggs could be shared out equally at the end of the day, so it was fair.

It was a lot of fun, I enjoyed hiding the eggs more than finding them, but I really enjoyed eating the ones we found.



Tadpoles in Nursery

By Finley Foxall and Jasper-James Grant-Rush

Mrs Wallace brought some frogspawn into Nursery, the eggs had little black dots in the middle which would grow into tadpoles. We watched them grow in the tank, they had little tails which wiggled around and it looked like they were flying in the water when they moved.

Soon they will grow some arms and legs and the tail will go, when this happens they will be called frogs which are green and black.

A frog goes 'ribbit, ribbit' which sounds really funny.



Today Chickens came into Nursery

By Ellie Duce, Arya Lyne and Ava-May Fairley

Mrs Wallace brought 2 chickens into Nursery in a cage on Monday 17th May, the chickens didn't have any toys in their cage like a dog would. The chickens had white and brown feathers with red combs on the top of their heads. They looked soft and when we stroked them they felt very silky. We fed the chickens with food that looked like seeds and they pecked the food up with their beaks, making a clucking noise. The chickens flapped their wings and we felt the wind from them on our faces. We liked having the chickens in Nursery as they fluttered at Mrs Wallace and we thought that was really funny, we all laughed.



Reception's visit to Rays Farm

By Sophia Paal and Callum Wedge

On Monday 24th May we went to Rays Farm on a coach, it took us a long time to get there but we didn't mind as we sang all the way. When we got to the farm we got off the coach and met a lady called Val who told us what we were going to do on our day and how to wash our hands properly.

Mrs Wales put us in two groups, our group saw the animals first while the other group went on the Woodland walk. First we went into a little barn to see some mini animals like guinea pigs, rabbits, chickens and a kid which is a baby goat. We then saw lots of different owls which had different coloured eyes, we saw one with orange eyes and another with brown. Some owls sleep in the day and some all night. There were some big owls that were half as big as us.

We saw two reindeers called Frosty and Mistletoe, they were very big and strong so they could pull Father Christmas's sled on Christmas Eve.

There were llamas, sheep, turkeys and a deer called Ivy who was really friendly and we fed her, we had to hold our hands flat so she didn't nibble our fingers, it tickled our hands when she took the food. Val told us that one of the goats was naughty as one Christmas he went into Santa's Grotto and ate 25 pieces of wrapping paper.

After lunch we went into the goat's field and stroked them, they felt soft like a pillow. We then went on the Woodland walk which was very muddy as it had been raining all day but we had our wellies on so we could squelch through the slippery mud. We saw a dragon and fairies made out of wood. We also saw lots of different sculptures and flowers on the walk.

We had a lovely time at Rays Farm and didn't want to come home as we were having so much fun.





Year 4 trip to Cadbury World
By Dale Birtles

Year 4 went to Cadbury World on Tuesday 15th June. When we arrived there we had our temperatures checked so we were safe to go in. First we went into a room where a man called Colin told us about the Mayans and cocoa beans, we already knew a lot about the Mayans as we have done a topic on them in school and I already knew a lot about chocolate. When we were leaving the room we sniffed the cocoa beans which smelt really good. Then we looked at old advertising for chocolate bars and old machinery that they used to use in the factory. We also went into rooms where we sat down and the chairs started to shake us around like we were cocoa beans and we learnt about Mr Cadbury and how he started to make chocolate and make lots of money.

We went into a place that looked like a big kitchen and a lady showed us how to temper chocolate and we wrote our names on the tables with runny chocolate, which was messy but a lot of fun. After that we tasted delicious melted chocolate with two of our favourite toppings added, I was so excited to taste the chocolate. We all went on a ride in little cars around Cadbury Land, we saw lots of dancing chocolate beans which was really funny to see.



After lunch we went into the 4D cinema, we had to wear special glasses so the film looked very real and the chairs kept moving so we felt like we were actually part of the film. I wanted to watch the film all over again because it was sooooo good! At the end of the trip we spent our money in the shop then got back on the coach for a very long journey home. I had to put my chocolate in the fridge when I got home as it had melted on the coach.

I had the most awesome day of my life so far, it was even better than when I visited a castle. I would like to live at Cadbury World so I could eat chocolate every day.

Roman Day
By Owen Hughes, Millie McDougall, Mya Rai and Oliver Tompkins

On Friday 18th June, Year 3 took part in a Roman Day lead by Timezone.

We chose a princess and a king and their body guards, Isla was the princess, Lukas was the king, Millie McDougall was the king's bodyguard and Tommy was the body guard for the princess.

The king and his tribe were told that the Romans were going to invade so we needed more people to join our tribe. We tried to encourage the princess to marry king Lukas but they said no.

The Roman came to teach us how to survive. We took our spears and shields to practise our formations and marching, the Roman also told us about discipline. We made a bridge in case we ever had to cross over water.

We looked at the Roman armour and tried it on, it was really heavy to wear.

In the afternoon we found out about Roman education, we looked at Roman numerals and their alphabet. We used bees wax tablets and stylus, feather pens, ink and paper.

It was a great day because it was a lot of fun to pretend to be Romans and Celts.





Year 1 visit to Walsall Arboretum **By Magda Stanley**

On Tuesday 22nd June we went to Walsall Arboretum. We identified different trees and flowers. We found out how old trees are with string and a tape measure. We also did some bark and leaf rubbings. Next we had our lunch then we had a walk



around the lake with a lot of ducks on it. Finally, we had an ice-cream and played on the park. It was so sunny and we all had a great day!



Our Trip to Kingswood **By Raynor Garner, Erin Hickman and Ryan Lovegrove**

Year 2 went to Kingswood Activity Centre on a really big coach on Tuesday 29th June. It was like being on a fast roller-coaster. We split into two groups when we arrived, our group went on the zip wire first, Miss Griffiths pushed us so hard we nearly touched the tree. Ryan went on the zip wire one handed, he looked like Superman. It was very exciting going so fast.

The balance bars were very tricky as you had to keep your balance all the way round the course but it felt really good when we finished without falling off.

We then built dens in teams with sticks, we had to drag the sticks as they were heavy. After we had put the sticks together we wrapped them in sheets so they weren't just plain old stick houses. It was fun being in teams as in a team we could build the very best den. Then we did tree climbing and all tried to get the highest.

After lunch we went on the habitat trail, from clues we had to find out what animals they were and where they lived, all the answers we on numbered posts. We had to whisper the answers to our partners so no one else heard, then quickly move on to the next clue. We really enjoyed learning all about the different animals on the trail.

Before we went home we did pond dipping, we caught pond snails, newts and water beetles, we put them in magnifying pots so we could look at them closer and then we carefully tipped them back into the water. Finally, we saw some hamsters called Lilo and Stitch and rabbits called Funk and Tinkerbelle. We didn't stroke them as they were in cages.

We took our wellies off, gathered all our things together and got on the coach to go back to school. It was a brilliant day at Kingswood because we got to do a lot of activities that were so much fun.



