Acorns

Acomb Primary School

Magazine
2015

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Welcome, Archbishop!

Banging the drum for Acomb Primary School

INSIDE • Delicious lunches • Year 6 awards • Shakespeare Festival

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Acorns is published by:

Acomb Primary School,
West Bank,
York YO24 4ES,
Tel: (01904) 798453.

Editing and design: Tim Moat, ThreeFour Consultancy, York.
Printed by Revolution Inc.
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Acorns plan to broaden children's horizons

"Mighty oaks from little acorns grow" is the saying – and at Acomb, plans are coming together to make sure a new system will firmly take root.

Called, appropriately, 'Acorns', Acomb Primary School wants its children to broaden their horizons outside school.

"We want them all to have new experiences and to do things they have never done before," explained Mr Lee Haynes, headteacher.

"We'll achieve a minimum of three a year and then at the end of their seven years, at their leavers' assembly, hopefully, there'll be a record of over 20 things they have done outside of the curriculum.

"We discovered recently, for example, that half of one class had never visited York Minster. So it's not difficult to have new experiences and it's all part of our ambition for Acomb to be a truly great school."

The 'Acorns' may be cultural experiences or trips to places that have never been visited. Even visitors to the school count, such as the school assembly held by the Archbishop of York and talks by parents about their careers.

Bewerley Park adventure: Year 6s sample the great outdoors in this year's residential, the customary trip to an outdoor centre.

We're all working together

Mr Lee Haynes, headteacher, welcomes the Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu, to Acomb Primary School

There is a real community feel about Acomb Primary School, with everyone working together to make it a truly great school.

We have had a huge array of visitors this year – parents and relatives talking to children about their jobs as 'people who help us'; Animal Intuition with their spiders and snakes; CBeebies filming in the garden; and the Archbishop of York, who presented Year 6 with their 'Young Leaders' Awards.

Taking over the running of the kitchen has been a really positive move, with locally sourced food being top of the list of improvements made.

Feedback on the meals has been incredibly positive. We have more exciting plans for this from September, including a milk bar and healthy snacks for KS2.

Our involvement with Shakespeare festivals has grown. As well as our own festival in June, with all classes performing A Midsummer Night's Dream, Year 5 were part of the final performance at York Theatre Royal before it closed for refurbishment.

Our three-year partnership with the Royal Shakespeare Company and other local schools has brought a huge amount to our children. Two of them are even lucky enough to be performing on stage in Stratford-Upon-Avon!

I'm sure you will enjoy reading more about our work in this, the second edition of our Acorns magazine.

Lee Haynes, headteacher

Acomb staff on their marks for Race for Life

Acomb Primary School staff are pictured limbering up for the 2015 Race for Life and Pretty Muddy events, raising money for cancer research.

Former headteacher Howard Robinson and former teacher Amanda Tredgold both lost their lives to cancer, as did teacher Diane Hatch's sister, Gail and long-serving governor and friend of the school, Tony Morrallee.

"We want to raise money to make a difference to others and to try and beat cancer," said Miss Liz Johnson. Almost £1,000 had been raised in the week before the event and you can help top it up at justgiving.com/acombprimary.

Acomb staff running in their memory are pictured, from left: Claire Morgan, Mel Batey, Liz Johnson, Olivia Bevins, Cath Forrest, Jo Robinson, Cathryn Jackson, Emma Hunt, Emma Peggs, Angie Walker, Diane Hatch, Sandra Fox, Kerry Johnson and Kathryn Bradley.

Not pictured but also taking part are Mandy Waite, Sue Wragg and Jacky Nuttall.

Check out the life-sized sculptures on display

Magnificent papier mache sculptures greet parents, children and visitors to Acomb, following a project that started in Year 5 and spread across the school.

Ms Cathryn Jackson, whose Year 5 class worked together to create an almost lifesize horse, described the results as "stunning". She said: "I don't think I've ever seen a school reception showcase such a varied collection of high quality art work that displays a true commitment to developing new artistic skills and providing rich learning experiences. The problem-solving that occurred throughout the construction of these varied creatures was brilliant!"

Children researched how muscles worked as part of understanding how to recreate the horse's legs in papier mache. Two Pringles tubes helped create the head. Other creations include an elephant, a pig, Medusa and Grumpy from Snow White.

Acomb's kitchen is a

There used to be 80 or 90 mouths to feed each day. Now, 170 children regularly enjoy a tasty lunchtime meal

With their bright red and blue uniforms, the Acomb Primary School kitchen staff blend in perfectly with the similarly-clad children they feed.

But it wasn't always like this. Up until only recently, cook Sally Fullerton and general kitchen assistants Jackie Fairweather and Pauline Maud wore black and white and followed instructions issued by outside catering contractors.

The write stuff: a thank-you card received from the children

It was a bold move to bring responsibility for the school dinners in-house, but one that is paying off thanks to Sally and her team's enthusiasm, great partnerships with local suppliers – and flexibility to work with the children to create tasty menus everyone enjoys.

"We devise our own menus now, which have a three week cycle," explained Sally. "And we can theme the food alongside what the children are learning, when it's appropriate. We're creating our own recipe book, based on experience and an extension of the food I cook for my own family at home."

As parents can imagine, there's a whole raft of guidelines that the school has to follow with its school meals. Criteria set down by the Food Standards Agency and Children's Food Trust mean Acomb, in line with every other school, has to be stringently hygienic and promote healthy eating and this is something kitchen staff are quick to endorse. All are trained in food hygiene and cleanliness is top priority in a kitchen that's always kept spotless.

It's a long way from when Pauline started at Acomb, some 26 years ago on the old site in Front Street. "Those were the days of turkey twizzlers and frozen burgers," she said. "Everything was fried. It's a lot healthier now." In fact, with the exception of fish fingers and breaded fish, all meals are cooked fresh each day – even the burgers.

And just as school dinners have got better, so too is children's knowledge and

recipe for success

appreciation of what's on their plate. "We'll have the butcher in to explain what he does, to get them more involved," said Sally. "We get the children to try new things and yet we know that some can be fussy eaters – so now and again we'll blend vegetables in with other food, to make it even more healthy."

The government now requires all primary schools to provide free school meals to children in reception and Years 1 and 2. So instead of 80 to 90 meals a day, Sally, Jackie and Pauline now regularly have 170 mouths to feed – a massive increase, making it feel like preparing and cooking Christmas dinner every day. Add provision for special diets for certain children and that's a lot of work condensed into a short period of time.

Reception children are first to line up, on the dot of 11.40am, and then over the next 50 minutes the rest of the school take their turn. The younger children go first so as not to be so overwhelmed by noise and chatter.

"Even though there's 170 of them, you get to know them individually – you know what they'll eat and what they won't," said Pauline. "It's part of our job to be persuasive – to ▶

Eat up: younger children get to enjoy their meals before the older ones join them. Top left, Pauline, Sally and Jackie in action

It's little wonder Acomb Primary School has among the highest school dinner take up rates in York

Flour power: local produce is used where possible – flour is from Holgate Windmill

▶ say, 'c'mon now, you've not tried this before. Come back and tell me what you think'. And it works!

"All the children are well-mannered. Only occasionally do you have to say 'what's the magic word?' But they're getting there."

Pauline says she loves the school and her job. "It's so rewarding. All five headteachers I've worked with have supported the kitchen. I really enjoy it – I'm now serving the children of children who came here!"

There's more involvement with the rest of the school, with youngsters in the gardening club supplying the kitchen with tomatoes, potatoes and carrots grown in the courtyard. Richardsons of Woodthorpe are the local butchers supplying the meat and greengrocer Simon Baynes provides locally grown fruit, veg and dairy produce.

Even the flour comes from nearby Holgate Windmill.

As for favourite choices, pizza always goes down well and spaghetti bolognese, roast dinners, chicken tacos, chilli con carne and homemade sausage rolls are popular. It's little wonder Acomb Primary School has among the highest school dinner take-up rates in York. "It's because the food is so good – and we're so friendly!" says Sally with a smile.

It's all a far cry from her eight years spent in genteel surroundings at Bettys, but in the past five years Sally has worked her way up from lunchtime supervisor to now running the kitchen at Acomb. It's a job that neatly fits in with bringing up her three children. "I absolutely love it here," she said.

"We like to get into the spirit of things – we've put on mad hatter's tea parties to link in with an Alice in Wonderland play and received some lovely letters of thanks from the children."

Chop chop: Sally, above, at work. Left, Pauline

Pleased to meet you

Oakhaven residents enjoy making friends with Year 3 as young and old break down the boundaries

It's hard to know who gets the most out of it – the children or the elderly people – but either way, young and old benefit from getting together at Oakhaven residential home.

"The children really look forward to seeing the residents," said Miss Olivia Bevins, Year 3 teacher. "They're starting to know them and make friends with them and it can be fascinating to hear what they have to say."

The intergenerational connection is arranged by Musical Connections, a lottery-funded organisation in its third year working with schools and York's seven homes and sheltered accommodation.

Acomb Primary School likes to use the experience to extend certain topics that children are learning – adding extra dimensions. Last year, the topic of 'seaside' meant the children could ask the older people how they used to enjoy the seaside when they were young. "We talked about how bathing suits were so much different then," said Miss Bevins.

This year, 'decades' was the topic and children and residents looked at the first-ever cartoon and then others up to the 1950s, combining music with quizzes and teams made up of the children and older people.

Emma Tatnall, one of the Musical Connections organisers who works at Oakhaven, said the scheme tried to involve a school every week. "It's brilliant to see their faces," she said. "Residents love being surrounded by the children."

Float on: Year 3 children entertain residents at Oakhaven nursing home

Together Everyone Achieves More: how Year 6 built their own team approach

An ambitious project to clean up nearby West Bank Park has helped Year 6 children win the Archbishop of York's Young Leaders Award.

Their efforts have also been nominated for the Community Pride primary school project of the year award, run by City of York Council, The Press and sponsored by Benenden.

The Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu, presented his awards to the 29 children at a special assembly and afterwards toured the school.

During the assembly, he explained the virtues of TEAM – **t**ogether **e**veryone **a**chieves **m**ore – and how the Year 6 children had put this into action.

The Archbishop said: "I was delighted to hear about all of the things the Year 6 children have done to 'be the change they want to see' in their local community. I pray that these children will go on to use the leadership skills they have learnt as they move up to secondary school and know that they have been empowered to aspire to great things."

As part of their work in cleaning up the park, the children installed bird feeders, decorated nesting boxes, made a bird bath and cleared the pond and pathways.

Year 6 teacher Mrs Kerry Johnson said: "They have embraced the ethos behind the Archbishop's award and have completed many activities to better our school and local community. The pupils also raised £250 by selling cakes and other creative items in their own time and after school. The money was used to hire an incubator housing 12 eggs. ▶

Above, the Archbishop addresses the whole school in a special assembly. Left, with Mr Haynes and Year 6. Below, in Reception with Mrs Bradley

Young Leaders award 'exceeded expectations'

"The whole school loved watching the eggs hatch into chicks, holding and taking care of them. It was a huge success.

"These are invaluable life lessons and these children will leave primary school knowing that with hard work and dedication they can do anything they put their minds to."

Deputy headteacher Mr Michael Carr said this was the second time Acomb had taken part in the award and he liked the idea of 'be the change they want to see'. "It's nice for the children to focus on something outside the classroom and develop themselves as part of the wider community."

Mr Lee Haynes, headteacher, said the children had really taken ownership of the project and made it their own. "It's exceeded our expectations," he said.

Nearly 25,000 children in over 250 schools are signed up to the Archbishop of York's Young Leaders Award. Results of the Community Pride award will be announced in October at a event at York Racecourse.

After assembly, the Archbishop toured the classrooms

Shakespeare Festival

The works of Shakespeare are an important part of the curriculum at Acomb.

"We firmly believe that all children should be learning about his work and using authentic language from his plays," said Mr Lee Haynes, headteacher. "This year, we decided to study the story of A Midsummer Night's Dream with each class taking part of the story to tell. The results were outstanding, with a huge variety of performance styles on show."

The younger children were supported by Julian Ollive from York Theatre Royal who helped develop their performance skills. Lee and Dawn Threadgold, from Animated Objects Theatre Company worked with Years 3 and 4 to hone their skills, while resident expert Shakespeare teacher, Cathryn Jackson, gave good advice to all.

He talked to the children and was happy to answer questions

The Archbishop in Acomb's early years classrooms

Each of the nine classes performed a scene to tell the story of A Midsummer Night's Dream for this year's Shakespeare Festival. This is the 11th year that Acomb have performed a Shakespeare play

Shakespeare Festival