Acorns

Acomb Primary School

Magazine
2016

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Royal appointment

'You're amazing', Princess Beatrice tells Acomb children

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FROM THE HEADTEACHER

Opportunity has been a key theme this year

We pride ourselves at Acomb Primary on developing six key aims: aspiration, achievement, independence, communication, community and opportunity. We know that children learn best when given real purpose to their learning and this happens in abundance throughout all classes.

Opportunity has been a key theme this year – children have had the chance to perform on stage and at the dance festival, sing in a choir of thousands, represent the school at sport, grow seeds from space, hear live music performed, watch drama productions, go on trips out of school, raise money for charity and be entrepreneurial, turning £5 into a profitable business.

This year saw many more exciting events take place. The first 'graduation' ceremony at the University of York for our children who took part in the Children's University project was a highlight for many children and proud parents.

Trips have taken place to the York Festival of Food and Drink, Brimham Rocks, Harlow Carr and Piglets Adventure Park.

Performing scenes from The Tempest in the presence of royalty was a first for Acomb Primary – Year Five were amazing at the civic opening of the newly-refurbished York Theatre Royal.

We are continuing our aim of becoming a truly great school. I believe that by sticking to the principles of our six key aims and by providing consistency, we will continue to move towards this goal. All of the opportunities that we provide for children will have a positive impact on their learning and on the quality of their outcomes in the 'traditional' subjects that they are taught.

The Acorns Out of School Club has been really well received this year and very well supported. The club has provided childcare for over 100 children, varying from regular every day attendees to one off drop-ins.

Countless breakfasts and snacks have been served, hundreds of lego models made, board games played and goals scored. The children have benefitted from enthusiastic and dedicated staff and I know that parents have appreciated the flexibility that running the club ourselves has offered.

This magazine will give you a flavour of more of the opportunities that we provide for children at Acomb Primary School. It's our third issue and each time we put one together, we find more and more to share and include – we are proud of our school and all of the support we get from parents and families.

Lee Haynes, Headteacher

Acorns Out of School Club's handy service for busy parents

New this year at Acomb Primary School is its own out of school club, offering wraparound care for children from 7.30am until 6pm.

Called Acorns Out Of School Club, the service is growing steadily as working parents and carers can now organise busy lives, reassured that children are being looked after safely on school premises.

"Even though it's at school and a lot of the staff are familiar to the children, it's not an extension of school," said Mrs Mandy Waite, the club manager. "We have lots of games, arts and crafts, tablet computers, a Wii and of course some fantastic school grounds where the children can play in good weather.

"Before school it's a chance for the children to chill out and get ready for the day ahead. Afterwards, they can relax and have fun until they go home."

Breakfast club starts at 7.30am, offering toast, cereals, croissants and jam and that leads into the school day, which starts at 8.45am.

Snacks such as teacakes, filled bagels or baguettes, wraps and muffin pizzas are provided after school between 3pm and 6pm. There's lots of fruit, sliced vegetables and water available both before and after school too.

While both breakfast clubs and after school clubs are available to all year groups, it's proving a lot more popular with the younger children. And it's getting busier, as parents become aware their children are being looked after by staff who know them during the school day.

"There's no upper limit," said Mrs Waite. "We can take on more staff and use more of the school if necessary.

"We are also very flexible – parents can choose a club every now and then, or more regularly."

It's not necessary to register your child to take part – all children on the school roll are automatically enrolled in the club. Places can be booked via the school website or by calling or emailing Mrs Waite directly.

Costs are £3.50 per morning session, after school is £7 up to 5pm and £8.25 to 6pm. There's also a £1 sibling discount. Provision in school holidays was discussed, but following the results of a parent survey, this will not be set up now but will be kept under review.

"We took the service inhouse to help the school community," said Lee Haynes, headteacher. "It's working very well – it integrates with our kitchen and our staff and we have received a lot of positive feedback. It's a real service."

Keeping busy: above, Eve Seddon, Evy Pope and Myles Smith. Left, Jamil Jobe, Bill Collins and Lily-Rose Wheelhouse

Acomb's Bard work pays off

The world's a stage: Top, Princess Beatrice lines up with Acomb children and others at the VIP reopening. Other photos show the children in The Tempest at the Theatre Royal

Budding Shakespearean actors at Acomb Primary School have received a Royal seal of approval.

Children get to know the works of Shakespeare at an early age, leading to regular productions and festivals of the Bard's work.

But this year Year 5 made a big impact with their performance of The Tempest, a tale of revenge and redemption, at the Theatre Royal. Of the eight schools taking part in an ensemble approach, they were the ones invited back to perform in front of Princess Beatrice of York.

The Princess was in the city to officially re-open the Theatre Royal, where she is patron, following its £6m revamp. All of Ms Jackson's class were asked to come in to help with the celebrations.

"Year 5 gave an outstanding performance on the night, continuing Acomb Primary's role as Shakespeare pioneers," said Ms Cathryn Jackson. "They positively shone and I am immensely proud!"

Ms Jackson continued: "It's very special to see how the children develop so much during rehearsals. They learn how to deliver lines convincingly and how their actions support the telling of the story. Confidence grows and anxieties disappear."

Following Acomb's starring role, the Princess was heard to whisper: "That was amazing" to the children.

■ *Thanks to Anthony Robling for the festival photography and David Harrison for the Princess photos.*

School Council gives children their voice

Acomb's School Council gives children a voice and allows them to be at the centre of their own learning.

So says Mrs Mel Batey, Year 4 teacher, who helps co-ordinate the actions of the two children from each class who meet regularly to discuss projects of benefit to the whole school community.

This coming year, Acomb will be seeking Investors in Pupils accreditation. The award means the school is committed to listening to, involving and actively engaging pupils in their learning and the wider school community.

"A lot of what's involved in Investors in Pupils are things that we do at Acomb anyway," said Mrs Batey. "We just need to recognise it more and help children take more ownership of what matters."

This year, the School Council have been working on improving pedestrian safety by creating new 'park and stride' signs and a project on reducing food waste. Next school year sees a trip to the Houses of Parliament and a project to set up eco-bags for sale at school events.

Representatives from each class nominate themselves and, says Mrs Batey, "are excited to be part of it."

She added: "School Council is still developing and there have been some good projects. Part of the appeal is seeing projects through from concept to completion. It would be very easy for the teachers to take over – but so much better for the children to do it."

Full of good ideas: School Council members, clockwise from top left, Tilly Whittaker, Joseph Richardson, Lucia Rebbeck and Alex Pugh

Pedal power wins challenge

Improving the way schoolchildren travel to school was a challenge seized upon by Acomb children.

They finished 11th out of 99 schools in Yorkshire by cycling, scooting or walking, getting parents and carers involved too by leaving the car behind.

It was all part of a sustainable travel challenge organised by Sustrans, who set targets to try to persuade children and their parents to find fitter, more healthy ways to tackle the school run and at the same time promote environmental issues.

Acomb collected a 'giant leap' award by starting with 65 per cent of children travelling to school by walking, cycling or scooting, and finishing the week with 83 per cent using sustainable transport – making Acomb one of the highest achieving schools in the country.

And Acomb came in the top ten per cent of participating schools nationally, when they finished 141st out of 1,680 schools taking part in the 'big pedal'. More children opted for pedal power than the comfort of the car.

Mr Simon White, deputy headteacher and Year 6 teacher, said the initiatives were a big success. "We were delighted that the children, and their parents, made a conscious effort to do well in the challenges and then continued with the more healthy options," he said. "What's more, it can be great fun – some children came to school on rollerskates."

On their bikes: Theo Granger, Amber Martin and Finley Baker

Recognising when extra help is needed

Acomb is an inclusive school where all pupils are valued equally and given the opportunity to be the best they can.

Sometimes children need additional support to help them achieve their targets, with the decision to provide such support made by the school in partnership with parents or carers. It's based on a variety of factors, including academic progress and/or assessments carried out by other professionals.

"At Acomb Primary School we are able to provide support for all pupils," said Miss Liz Johnson, the school's appointed special educational needs co-ordinator. "We aim to remove barriers to learning and develop high standards of education to enable children to reach their full potential intellectually and socially, and be included fully in our school community without discrimination.

"We know when pupils need extra help if concerns are raised by parents, teachers or the child themselves or if limited progress is being made. We also look out for changes of behaviour and might step in when we have received information from other agencies who may be working with the child before they join us."

All parents are encouraged to contribute to their child's education and the class teacher may suggest ways of how you can support your child.

The school offers pastoral support for all pupils and more specifically those who are encountering emotional difficulties. A dedicated ELSA (emotional literacy support assistant), in Acomb's case Miss Claire Morgan, has responsibility for pastoral support. Importantly, she also has some time set aside to work when needed with individual children.

The pastoral support teacher runs a playtime group three times a week to encourage and develop social skills and parent drop-in sessions are available.

If a child has a medical need, then a care plan is compiled with support from the school nurse and in consultation with parents. This is then shared with all staff who are involved with the pupil. Staff receive training as necessary from the school nurse or other health care professionals.

Where necessary, and in agreement with parents, prescribed medicines are administered in school but only where a signed medicine consent form is in place, to ensure the safety of both child and member of staff.

If you have a smartphone, or a computer connected to the Internet, you can join the 768 people who follow Acomb Primary School on Twitter. Since it was set up in December 2013, first of all to allow parents to follow their children's progress at the Bewerley Park residential, over 1,100 short messages or photographs have been 'tweeted'. It's an additional means of keeping in touch with parents and the wider community. Here's a selection of some of the tweets...

Follow Acomb Primary School on Twitter @acombprimary

Children achieve degrees of success

Eight children from Acomb Primary School have been proud to 'graduate' from the Children's University – complete with ceremonial attire.

The Children's University aims to promote social mobility by providing access to high quality out-of-school hours learning activities for children. At the heart of its work is an ambition to raise aspiration, boost achievement and foster a love of learning.

An important principle of the Children's University is that participation is voluntary and it is intentionally something other than school – with a different feel, different activities and often taking part in a different location.

The Acomb children who graduated at a special ceremony at the University of York had each completed 30 hours of activities outside school.

Miss Emma Hunt, Year 1 and 2 teacher, said: "The children did really well and this was a big thing for them. It's an excellent scheme and promotes independence."

Acomb takes the road to Rio by cycling, running or swimming

It's a long way from Acomb Primary School to the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro – but Acomb children and their families have collectively already been there, and back, and have the passports to prove it.

To celebrate the world's biggest sporting event, and to promote a healthy lifestyle, teacher Miss Liz Johnson came up with a novel "Road to Rio" challenge.

Each child was given their own special passport and asked to record mileage from physical activity every week, including walking to and from school, bike rides, jogging or swimming. Families could get involved too, with a whole school target of 5,868 miles – the total distance there, from York – to be reached by the end of the summer term.

"It really caught everyone's imaginations. I was overwhelmed by the response," said Miss Johnson. "Each week we'd add up the miles from everyone's passports and plot the progress on a map in the school hall.

"York Sport Village kindly loaned us a rowing machine which we placed in the reception area and staff, children and visitors used it to help add the miles.

"Families went above and beyond what we expected. Some managed 200 miles a week. One dad ran a lap of the Knavesmire before school every day!"

As a result, the 6,000 miles goal was easily achieved – in fact enough miles were clocked to add in a return journey, from Rio to York. The entire task took just five weeks.

"We all got so much out of this," said Miss Johnson. "Years 3 and 4 were in charge of collating all the information, so it helped with maths, everyone did more physical exercise – and we all now know about the Olympics and how far away Rio de Janeiro is!"

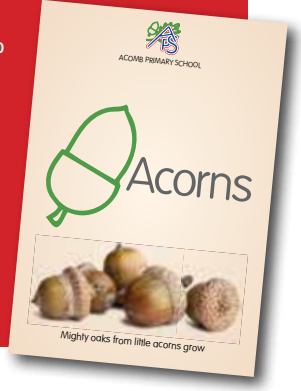
■ Pictured with the Road to Rio map are Samuel Bradley and Niamh Sweeney. Below, adding up the miles in Miss Johnson's class

New experiences scheme takes off

'Acorns', Acomb's new experiences scheme where children log the things they've never done before, got off to a tuneful start at its official launch.

A musician from the College of Music provided what was for many children their first experience of live music.

The idea is to keep a special journal of new experiences, at least three a year, that are outside the normal curriculum. These 'Acorns' may be cultural experiences or trips to places that have never been visited so as to broaden children's horizons and perhaps spark interest in new topics.

Visitors to the school, with interesting things to say, count too.

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