Acorns

Acomb Primary School

Magazine
2018

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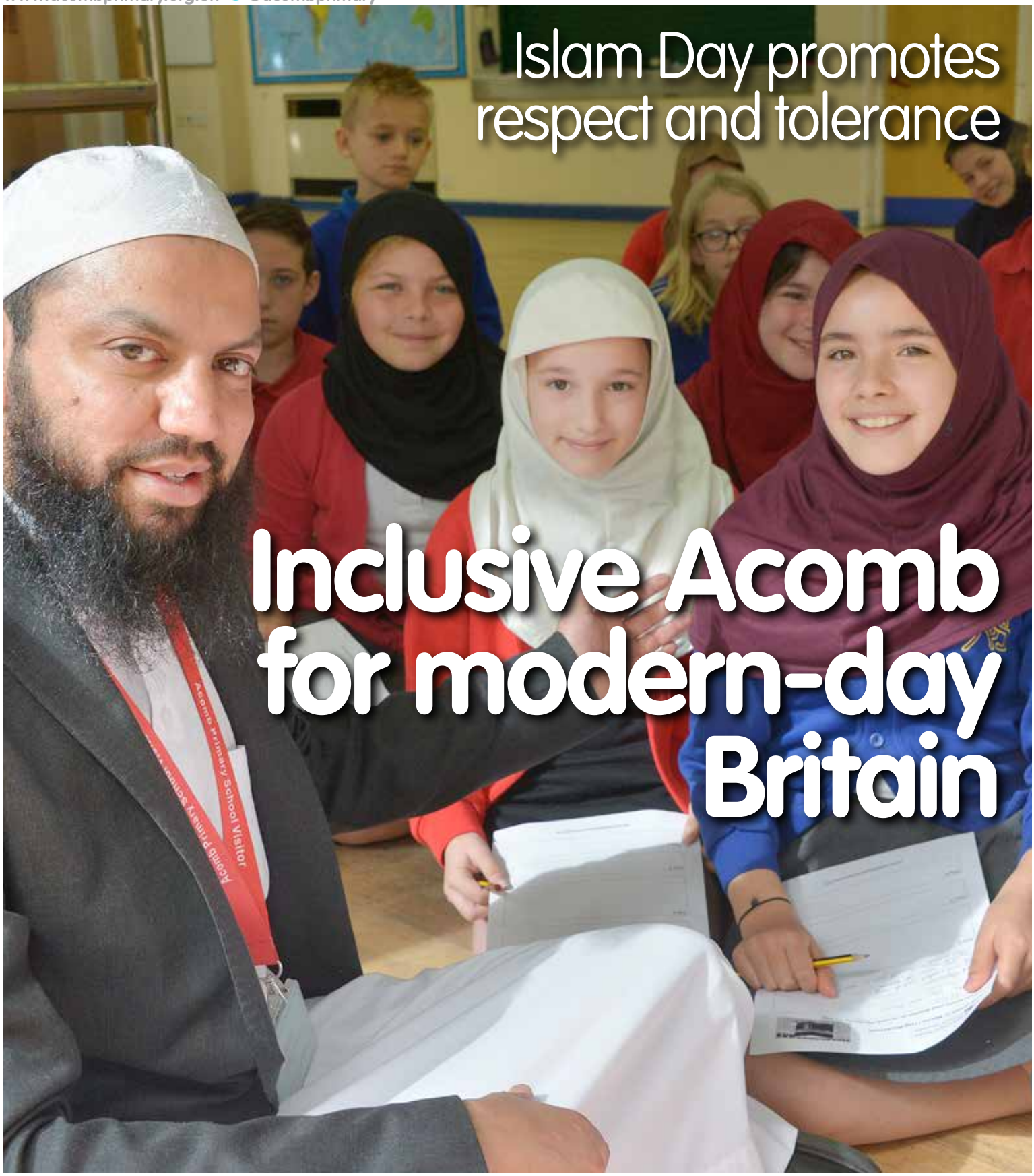

Islam Day promotes respect and tolerance

Inclusive Acomb for modern-day Britain

INSIDE • Sporting success • Fun in fundraising • Inspiring women

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FROM THE HEADTEACHER

A series of firsts in a special year

This year has seen some of the biggest changes in the history of our school.

First of all, last summer we had two new classrooms installed to extend the number of classes we have from 10 to 12 – for the first time, we now have over 300 children at Acomb. This is an increase of 50 per cent from 2010, when I took over as headteacher.

The classrooms, although regarded as temporary structures, are very much part of the school, providing a learning space for 60 children this year.

The second big change has been the conversion to academy status – taking the school out of local authority control. Although I hope that children and their families have noticed very little difference, there have been some behind the scenes improvements – for example, there are now opportunities for staff to work with colleagues from other schools on developing the curriculum and assessment systems and to moderate their judgements about children's attainment and progress.

There are also improvements to systems for managing and maintaining school premises; we are hoping to have our boilers replaced very soon, providing us with a much more reliable and energy efficient system.

Pathfinder multi-academy trust is an organisation that believes in schools maintaining their own identity, which was a major influence in our decision to join them.

I have been fortunate once again to work with such a dedicated team of staff. Their commitment to the children is outstanding and is reflected in the way in which all of our children are well prepared for the next stage of their education – within Acomb Primary or beyond.

I have seen some excellent activities across the school and am very proud of the work covered this year for the first time on 'inspirational women' in Year Five – teaching children about women from different areas of society who have been a major influence on our lives and seeking to understand why their stories are less well known that their male counterparts.

We also enjoyed our very first careers week this year, with wonderful support from our parents once again, this time coming into school to talk about what they do in their jobs and how education has helped them to succeed.

All in all it's been another inspirational year at Acomb; I hope you enjoy reading this magazine to see just a small snapshot of the many things we do.

Lee Haynes, Headteacher

Putting the **fun** into **fundraising**

Schools are at the centre of their communities and Acomb is always happy to help deserving causes and charities when it can.

This year a single charity has been nominated as the school believed there would be greater benefit, and more impact, for pupils, staff and parents to rally around a single cause.

St Leonard's Hospice is this year's school charity. It provides specialist care for terminally ill people and their families. Their care is free of charge to patients and their carers but not free to provide – St Leonard's needs over £5m per year to runs its services, described by many as a lifeline at a time of greatest need.

The fundraising kicked off with ten staff taking part in an "It's a Knockout" event on the Knavesmire. Donations at nativities, a carol concert and a performance of Hoodwinked, meant over £1,000 was raised by Christmas.

But it was a sponsored bounce in Key Stage 1 and "move-round-the-school-a-thon" in Key Stage 2 – where children had to come up with new ways of getting about – which really caught children's and parents' imagination, raising a staggering £3,066.

Further events, including a chocolate raffle and a film night brought in welcome extra amounts. Miss Johnson and Miss Peggs did the London Marathon and Leeds Half-Marathon respectively and Mrs Forrest took part in the Midnight Walk.

Visitors to school are invited to drop any spare change into a whirly coin collector inside the school's main entrance.

Towards the end of the year, Year 6 children donated some of their earnings from their enterprising "Fiver Challenge" to the good cause.

"St Leonard's is a charity close to our hearts," explained Miss Johnson. "Parents have been incredibly supportive – we'd like to thank them so much for backing us."

Acomb's links with the charity were strengthened further when the school won a competition to name one of St Leonard's new mascots – our suggestion of "Marcel" for the monkey got the thumbs-up from charity chiefs.

At a special assembly at the end of June, Ben Fry from Minster FM, Deputy Sister Lynda Ruddock from St Leonard's Hospice and giant mascot Lenny the Lion came into school. Headteacher Mr Lee Haynes handed over a cheque for £6,000 to St Leonard's Hospice, with an expectation there could yet be more to come.

Pictures show, clockwise from top, novel ways to get around school, staff from Acomb at the It's a Knockout event, three-legged walking, Year 6's fiver challenge and their loot, presenting the cheque, and Miss Johnson at the London Marathon

Good sports

Congratulations to APS basketball who took home 1st in the Years 3/4 competition and 3rd in the Years 5/6 competition at Archbishop Juniors. We also won top shooting honours!

By keeping its children active, Acomb Primary School now enjoys a culture of fitness

Acomb has had its best year for PE.

We are now one of only three schools in York to hold the Gold Active Travel Award, with this latest award coming after a recent assessment of the school.

Acomb also won the Active PE School of the Year award, beating all other schools in the city.

"I'm really pleased. We have made some quite extraordinary progress this year, providing some amazing sporting experiences," said PE Champion Mr Tom Dennis. "We've invested in equipment and facilities, we now have three pitches on the school field and a massive 76 per cent of pupils are engaged in extra-curricular sport."

There is now a culture of fitness at Acomb which includes the Friday mile – a regular weekly run around the field for all the children (and many of the staff). A broad range of PE activities means there's always something for everyone and visitors from York City FC and York City Knights help to maintain excitement levels.

At a time when the government is concerned that schools are not doing enough to increase the take up of sport, Acomb is leading the way with its own initiatives.

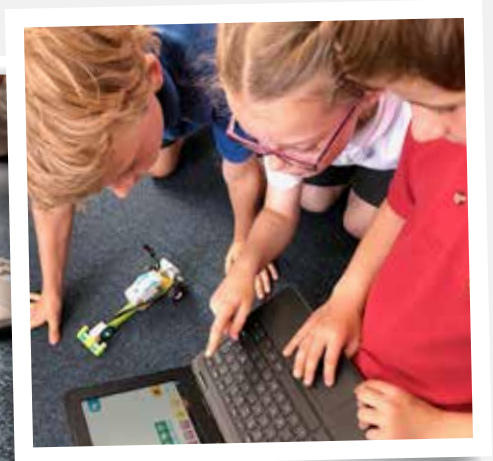
"Parents rightly see PE as such an important part of their children's education," said Mr Dennis. "Yes, we take part in competitive sport with other schools, but it's things like multi-sport clubs in the holidays and basketball club during the week, together with regular pushes to walk or cycle to school that makes PE an integral part of life at Acomb."

Pictures show sports day fun

Coaching session with York City Knights

...and with York City FC

Children are pictured enjoying one of Mr Shimmin's after school and holiday clubs



Acomb gets to grips with technology

The robots are coming – and they are dancing, picking up objects and lifting things.

What's more, they are being built and programmed by children at Acomb as part of increasing involvement in technology. Chromebooks – special kinds of laptops – are being used more and more to enhance learning.

"We were delighted to receive £1,000 technology funding from York Vikings Rotary Club, which we put towards a Lego WeDo Robotics package," said Mr Simon White, deputy headteacher. "The robots we programme have a Bluetooth receiver which is controlled by a Chromebook app and children have a lot of fun making them dance and pick up things."

Children across the school are taking their turn in using the 30 new Chromebooks that have been introduced this year, to support their learning. They share content between themselves collaboratively in a safe and secure environment and use Google classroom to make learning "more meaningful".

Maths, English, science and computing are the main subjects where the Chromebooks are used.

One particular programme helps children compete with each other and with users across the world to increase their skills in times tables, speeding up response times and improving accuracy.

Promoting respect and tolerance

For the first time Acomb held an "Islam Day" to prepare children growing up in multi-cultural, modern-day Britain.

The idea was to promote respect and tolerance for people of all faiths and no faith and help our young people have a better understanding of Islam.

Imran Kotwal is a Muslim and a qualified teacher with 20 years' experience and he visited Acomb to run a series of workshops in all classes looking at beliefs and practises for a day.

For the workshops, some of the girls wore hijabs – veils worn by some Muslim women in the presence of any male outside of their immediate family.

Headteacher Mr Haynes said such visits broaden children's horizons. "Introducing different perspectives is at the heart of education," he said. "It's important to be able to understand differences and celebrate them."

Mr Kotwal said: "The children gain an accurate and authentic view about Islam and British Muslims directly from a practising British Muslim. The children are able to clarify misconceptions about the faith."

STEM is all around us

Science, technology, engineering and maths – so-called STEM subjects – are big news at Acomb.

Recognised by many as being key subjects on which to base successful future careers, STEM is growing in importance – and is all around us, says science champion Miss Emma Hunt.

"There are so many different jobs that are based on one or more STEM subjects and practical applications in everyday life," she said. "At one extreme we've been to the National Railway Museum when astronaut Tim Peake's spacecraft was there and we've worked with Network Rail on a competition to see who can make the strongest bridge out of straw and sticky tape."

Creating stable structures from midget gems and cocktail sticks is another way of bringing engineering and maths to life. There's also a Year 3 and 4 STEM club for those children interested in taking it even further.

We are fortunate in York, too, to have the unique STEM Centre at the University of York, which helps develop interests of children and teachers.

On World Environment Day children made junk models from what they find in recycling, right through to working alongside a chemical company to test sun cream.

Ideas to prepare for children's futures

Careers Week was another innovation this year at Acomb, with 15 parents coming into school to talk to the children about their jobs.

And it was a varied selection – across the school children heard about what's involved in being a football journalist, an environmental health officer, a pilot, a Disney product designer or a range of other occupations.

Headteacher Mr Haynes said: "We'd not done this before and I wasn't sure if there would be anyone willing. I was keen to challenge gender stereotypes too, and have people from all walks of life. In the end 15 parents came forward, some bringing props and Powerpoint presentations – it was really interesting and the children were very receptive."

A key theme for the volunteers to bear in mind was: "What did they do at school that has helped them in their chosen career?"

The 15-minute sessions were delivered to children from Reception to Year 6. The favourite occupation, in the opinion of the majority of the children, was a computer games designer.

"We'll certainly do this again," said Mr Haynes. The children wrote thank-you letters to the parents who had taken the time to come in.

Photographs courtesy of Ant Robling http://roblingphotography.com/

Shakespeare success – and there's more to come next year

Year 5 perform a scene from Julius Caesar as part of York Theatre Royal's Shakespeare festival. Ms Cathryn Jackson said it was a perfect ensemble piece with clear story-telling by the whole cast and an impressive, confident delivery of the text. The group also performed an extended version of the piece to their families, in a special, second performance in the school hall.

Year 6 performed its customary annual Shakespeare play, this year "A Midsummer Night's Dream".

Acomb Primary School has quite a track record with the Bard of Avon – William Shakespeare is considered by many to be the greatest poet ever to have lived.

Next year, Acomb will be celebrating 15 years of staging his plays.

Shout it out: Among other achievements this year, Acomb Primary School now boasts its biggest-ever choir, with 42 members

Inspirational for all

Inspirational women have been capturing the attention of Year 5 and Year 6, addressing gender inequalities and proving that both men and women are capable of great things.

"In particular we've been looking at the achievements of four women who, in their own ways, have changed the world," said Miss Olivia Bevins, classroom teacher.

Although the topic has been to encourage girls, and has acknowledged International Women's Day and World Book Week, the boys enjoyed it too.

The term-long initiative was researched by the children using their Chromebooks and then written up in their books.

The four women at the centre of the topic were Ada Lovelace, the first 'coder'; Agent Fifi, a female spy in World War II; Marie Curie, winner of two Nobel prizes; and Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman to receive a medical degree in America.