

BERKHAMPTSTEAD  
SCHOOL  
MAGAZINE

SPRING TERM  
2023

# BLAZER

## SPRING CONCERTS

BERKY CHILDREN  
RAISE THE ROOF!

★ ★  
SPACE DAY ★  
PRE-PREP AIM  
FOR THE STARS!

READING MATTERS  
A FEATURE BY GILL AGG



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## ...THOUGHTS... FROM THE HEAD

Berkhampstead isn't about teaching subjects, it's about teaching children. I believe that we provide an education that is not about possessing the 'answers,' but understanding the importance of the questions. We are a place where the children learn to respect others, become tolerant towards all points of view, not necessarily to accept them as their own, but to understand why someone else might hold them. And our efficacy cannot be measured in numbers.

*However, in recent years...*

**80%** of the children who took the Grammar School test have gained a place

**1140** sports matches have been played against other schools

**70** Independent School Music, Art, Sport and Academic Awards have been gained

*But most importantly...*

**100% of the children are appreciated for their special qualities.**

Glance through this edition of the Berky Blazer and you'll see evidence of these achievements... and imaginative teaching everywhere!

Pre-Prep had the wonderful opportunity of learning so much about planet Earth and how it fits into our solar system, galaxy and space. I too have a fascination with this topic and so took the opportunity to borrow a space suit and what fun the children had trying on the various parts of the suit.

Music matters enormously. Our wonderful Spring Concerts, held at the Pittville Pump Room, once again showed that music is at the heart of Berkhampstead. Every child from Year 2 to Year 6 performed in this fabulous venue - and what performances! I make no apologies for asserting once again that there can be no school of similar size that comes close to us for inclusivity and musicality. It was wonderful to experience the strong feeling of community engendered by the Spring Concert.

In this edition of the Blazer you will find even more about what makes Berkhampstead an extraordinary school. What a privilege it is to be Head of such a school!

*Richard Cross*

Richard Cross  
Headmaster



## ...SPOTLIGHT ON... ELLA MIDDLETON

Miss Middleton joined Berkhampstead in 2015 as a teaching assistant. She has worked in Prep for four years and Pre-Prep for four years, and she is currently based in Year 2. Miss Middleton has been doing a Bachelor of Arts degree in Primary Education whilst working at Berky and will qualify later this year.

**What do you do in your spare time?**

I love walking and have climbed a few mountains, including Snowdon, Scafell Pike, Ben Nevis and Table Mountain - but there are so many more I want to climb! I love the sea, and especially love paddle boarding around Britain's beautiful coastlines. I also love playing the piano and I especially love singing!

**My favourite subjects**

When I was at school, my favourite subjects were maths and music. I loved the way maths would always get me thinking and I enjoyed trying to work out difficult maths problems. In music, I used to love having a go on all the different instruments. My music teacher was so fun and she always encouraged me to have more confidence.

**What is your favourite breed of dog?**

I have to say cocker spaniels. I have two cocker spaniels, Maisie and Tilly, and they are gorgeous (sometimes a little cheeky)!

**What is one of your favourite books?**

When I was growing up, my Dad used to read The Hobbit to me and I used to think it was the most amazing story - full of weird and wonderful creatures and packed full of adventure. The Lord of the Rings is also one of my favourites; I've read it three times!

**What do you love most about your job?**

There are so many things I love about my job. Most of all, I love being able to help and support the children's learning and it's a wonderful feeling to see the lightbulb moment when they realise what they can achieve.

**What do you admire most about a Berky child?**

Their kindness! 'In a world where you can be anything, be kind.' That's my motto in life and the children at Berky display kindness daily.

**Which skill would you like to have?**

I would love to be able to surf. I absolutely love the ocean and I am always envious when I watch people catching those big waves!

**What do you love most about Berky?**

I love how supportive and kind all the members of staff are - it's like having a second family! Whether it be advice, or even a friendly hug when you need it, they are always there to help.

**What would be your dream job?**

A teacher! I have always known I wanted to be a teacher and I am very grateful that soon I will be.



## WATCH THIS SPACE!

The Pre-Prep children assembled in the gym one Monday morning to receive a surprise video call from Commander Cross, who was reporting from space! The commander set the children four missions in order to prove that they possessed the essential requirements - such as communication skills, computing prowess, rocket expertise and physical and fitness ability - to become fully fledged astronauts. Throughout this brilliant day, the four classes rotated to complete these missions, help get Mr Cross back to Earth and receive their astronaut medals. Shown here is the children's reaction to the extraordinary rocket display masterminded by science specialist, Mr Morphew!



# ...NEWS...

FROM AROUND THE SCHOOL



## BERKY GETS GREENER

The Pre-Prep children all enjoyed re-potting spider plants this term, and there is now one in every classroom. We have discussed the eco-pledge, and the reps are busy promoting this to their peers. We hope to receive plenty of completed Berky Eco Pledges soon, and we look forward to handing out badges. You can find the Berky Eco pledges on the website.

The Prep had some very constructive eco meetings with many ideas being put forward by the committee. Much progress has been made over the last few months in moving the school towards a greener outlook. We now have water butts in the Jubilee Garden, and recycling bins for our waste food and plastic. There are also initiatives to collect soft plastics and empty medicine blister packets, and these collections will take place all year. The Jubilee Garden is nearing completion and we would like to thank the Drewitt family for providing nesting boxes, a hedgehog house, insect hotels and a magnificent bird table. The eco committee have done some tidying up in the garden, weeding the raised beds and starting a collection of compost by raking up all the leaves. Well done to both the Prep and Pre-Prep committees. LW & JK-M



## MALVERN ART EXHIBITION

The annual Primary Schools' Art Exhibition hosted by Malvern St James has always offered a wonderful and inspiring showcase of children's art from primary schools across the local counties, and we invariably do very well. This year's noteworthy results include artwork by Seth D. (R), Beatrice H. (R), Max T. (Y2), Miles H. (Y4), Jack F. (Y4) and Tatty H. (Y6) who were all Highly Commended, and Anna H who was the winner of the Year 3 category. We were thrilled! Well done to all our talented artists!



## KINDNESS CUP

One of our most special and coveted prizes, the Sally Lee Kindness Cup, is awarded every half term to a Pre-Prep pupil who has consistently shown care and consideration for others. This term, the Pre-Prep Kindness Cup has been awarded to Francesca I and Guy D. Well done to both of these exemplary pupils!



## CHINESE NEW YEAR

Chinese New Year was celebrated with a delicious lunch prepared by catering manager Rob and his team. We were treated to sweet and sour chicken, egg noodles, spring rolls, prawn crackers and vegetable stir fry, complete with fortune cookies and moon cakes! There were activities and assemblies across the school, and Kindergarten - who had gone all out with practising Chinese writing, using chopsticks and making Chinese lanterns - even took part in a splendid dragon dance in the playground!



## CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

This year the theme of Children's Mental Health Week was 'Let's Connect,' and was all about how feeling lonely and isolated has a negative impact on our happiness, and how important it is to socialise by joining clubs, for instance, and seeing friends. At the beginning of the week, the children came to school in clothes that expressed a sense of freedom, and outfits on show included sports club kits and colourful onesies as well as their favourite clobber! Meanwhile, activities across the school included Kindergarten children saying lovely things about one another to form a 'Friendship Web,' Year 1 created 'Support Balloons,' indicating who loves them and Year 3M were encouraged to make paper chains to help them feel connected to the people and things they care about. At the top of the school, 6ML had great fun connecting by learning a dance together. Assemblies this week were devoted to the theme, and the children discussed issues and concerns in their Citizenship and Wellbeing lessons.

# MUSIC TO OUR EARS

MUSIC HANDS WORKSHOP



We welcomed the charismatic 'Mr O' from Music Hands back to school at the beginning of the Spring Term, and this time the music maestro delivered workshops on iPad music apps - including GarageBand, Figure and LaunchPad - to Years 2 and 5.

Composition and production played a large part in the brilliant workshop for Year 5, and they blended their computing and musical knowledge to compose and perform some truly excellent pieces. Meanwhile, their younger Pre-Prep counterparts not only learned how to drum, but how to be disc jockeys too!

Thank you to Music Hands for such a brilliant day, Head of Computing, Mr Banks for organising it, and the PTA for funding such a worthwhile experience for the two year groups.







# ...NEWS... FROM AROUND THE SCHOOL

## PTA NEWS

It's been lovely planning the fun events we've recently missed and introducing new ones for 2023!

We had our second PTA & Taste The Menu Coffee Morning, where we showcased some of the things the PTA has funded. With the help of Year 5 & 6 pupils, it was a super opportunity to see and hear how the money we raise makes a difference to the children and the school community. Recently, we have been involved in the development of the Jubilee Garden, and have funded Lego Education Spike sets, computing workshops, books and sports equipment. We continue to fund Year 6's cycling proficiency scheme, and most recently, we paid for a new digital piano which can be used for solo performances, assemblies, choirs and productions.

We love to organise events that are just for fun, but it's also beneficial to raise money along the way, and the more we do, the more we can say 'yes' to requests from the school. We also like to be proactive, and make suggestions to fund activities and experiences that enhance school life.



Katie Chapman,  
PTA Chair



## PANCAKE RACES

Prep children perfected their running pancake tossing techniques for this year's House Pancake Races. The event drew an excited crowd of parents, teachers and Reception children - who were watching through windows - who witnessed speedy sprinting, impressive tossing skills and great team spirit. Congratulations to all four houses, who this year were equal winners, and so share the much-coveted frying pan trophy!

## CHARITY NEWS

Everyone was greatly moved by news of the devastating earthquakes that hit Turkey and Syria, so the School Council decided that pupils would take part in 'Whatever You Want' sponsored activities, that might include silences, reading or trampoline jumps! At the time of going to press, money was still pouring in, and the the total - combined with the Easter Service collection - will be sent to the Disasters Emergency Committee Turkey and Syria Earthquake Appeal. We are also supporting Sue Ryder and the Cheltenham Animal Shelter, this year; thank you for everyone's support.



## BERKY CHESS CONGRESS

It was lovely to welcome chess players back to the Berky Chess Congress at the start of the term. After two or three years without this event because of the pandemic, seeing the hall full of keen contestants from Y2 to Y6 on a Saturday proved a real treat. There were prizes for everyone from badges to mascots and from keyrings to rather elegant coasters. Effectively there were two tournaments. The tournament for Y2 to Y4 children was won by Anna H of Y3 who was on determined and rather ruthless form all day. Seb C and Ben R, showing real skill and enterprise, shared the spoils in the Y5/Y6 event. It was lovely to see so many Y2 children in attendance; our younger players all acquitted themselves well and displayed huge promise. MC



WORLD  
BOOK  
DAY  
2 MARCH 2023



## READ ALL ABOUT IT!

World Book Day was celebrated over two days at Berky this year, and as ever, the days were very memorable! Children and staff from across the school and Day Nursery were invited to dress as their favourite book characters, and everyone made a superb effort. We had a plethora of Harry Potters, Hungry Caterpillars, David Walliams and Beano characters, and a host of superheroes and beautiful Disney princesses. And refusing to be left out, the staff turned out in brilliant costumes too - who can forget Mr Jones's Gangsta Granny, Miss Kang-Martinez's Minerva McGonagall or Mr Cross as the Fat Controller? The two days of celebration were a wonderful way to encourage our pupils to talk about their favourite books and be reminded about the joy of reading; a big thank you to all of the parents for providing all the many wonderful costumes.





Berkhampstead has always had a strong focus on reading; from the start, the children read regularly to their teacher or teaching assistant and parents are encouraged to read with their children at home. Reading is one of the most valuable academic skills we can impart, but there is more to reading than just decoding the words – there has to be comprehension of what is read. Unfortunately, children and their parents sometimes get caught up in a competitive ‘race to the finish’ - the goal being to reach the end of the reading scheme - but this can be counterproductive since ‘barking at print’ (voicing the words without comprehension) is both meaningless and joyless.



If your child struggles with reading, it becomes increasingly difficult to find material that is both easy enough to decode and understand, and interesting enough to captivate and motivate; once over in Prep, some children may even feel that there is a stigma attached to not being a so-called ‘free reader’. Arguably, though, we are all free readers at our own level; we all give up on books that are too difficult for us to understand and enjoy.

This term, Mr Parker introduced the Accelerated Reader scheme in Prep for Years 3 and 4; it will shortly be rolled out to other year groups. The purpose of the scheme is to allow teachers to monitor children’s reading progress more closely, check comprehension

through short online quizzes and have instant access to individual records of books read and comprehension levels. The children begin by completing an adaptive online quiz to assess their ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development) which then gives them a band of appropriate books from which to choose – they are then ‘free readers’ within that band. There is flexibility and teachers can use their discretion should a child wish to read something else; far from being restrictive, the scheme ensures that children read books of an appropriate level, both in terms of vocabulary and subject matter, and helps them choose books that they will enjoy whilst providing a good level of challenge. As reading for at least twenty minutes a day and achieving around 90% in the comprehension quizzes has the most beneficial outcome, reading is also allotted a significant part of children’s homework, along with reading time within the school day. When a book is finished, a short online quiz determines the child’s all-important comprehension level; the vast majority of children find these quizzes both motivating and fun.

For parents, choosing suitable books for their children can be a bit of a challenge; the scheme gives them access to the Bookfinder which lists various titles within their child’s ZPD and there is an extensive digital library available. Also, our recently reorganised library stocks a wide range of the titles listed.

Although pushing a child too far too quickly can easily transform reading from a lifelong pleasure into an unwanted chore, it is also important to select good quality literature - there are far too many books out there which are of questionable literary merit. Yes, we all enjoy a page-turner; a ‘quick read’, but these should be balanced with more thought-provoking texts. Consider J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter books – rich language, dark, scary magic, complex plot – thank goodness that some excellent children’s writers are succeeding in this dumbed down children’s book market! On winning the Carnegie Medal, children’s author Geraldine McCaughrean observed, ‘They (publishers) question difficult words, certainly if you’re doing picture books or younger fiction. A fellow author was saying the other day that

‘superb’ had to be changed because no child would understand it. But they never will understand it if they don’t read it.’ She feels that young readers ‘... should be bombarded with words like gamma rays, steeped in words like pot plants stood in water; pelted with them like confetti, fed on them like Alphabetti spaghetti’. This opinion was endorsed by the chairman of the Carnegie judges who said the librarians on the panel ‘... heartily endorse Geraldine’s call for intellectual freedom through stories with rich language and complex themes that equip all children with the tools to understand – and, in some cases, change – the world around them.’

I agree! Children need to be exposed to all sorts of books: simple, complex, funny and linguistically ambitious. If your children struggle with books containing more complex language, then choose those books to read to them. Recently, I have been reading my ten-year-old grandson – accustomed to a diet of Lemony Snicket, Beast Quest and Percy Jackson - Kenneth Grahame’s ‘The Wind in the Willows’ (published in 1908) and have been struck by the slower pace of the plot and the old-fashioned quality of the language. Much to my surprise, he loves it! Some unknown words he lets pass in order to maintain the flow of the story, others he asks about, leading to many an interesting discussion.

Please don’t let these classics gather dust... as Roald Dahl wrote in Matilda,

‘DON’T WORRY ABOUT THE BITS YOU CAN’T UNDERSTAND. SIT BACK AND ALLOW THE WORDS TO WASH AROUND YOU, LIKE MUSIC.’



# READING MATTERS

BY GILL AGG

A BOOK IS...

‘A UNIQUELY PORTABLE MAGIC’... STEPHEN KING

‘A DREAM YOU HOLD IN YOUR HAND’ NEIL GAIMAN

‘A VERSION OF THE WORLD’... SALMAN RUSHDIE

‘A DEVICE TO IGNITE THE IMAGINATION’... ALAN BENNETT





## THE CURIOSITY APPROACH



## INSPIRING AWE & WONDER IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Passionate believers in the importance of encouraging a child's natural curiosity, and inspiring their sense of awe and wonder, the Day Nursery staff are working tirelessly to achieve their 'Curiosity Approach' accreditation. The Curiosity Approach blends together elements from Montessori, Reggio, Steiner and Te Whāriki pedagogies, and its ethos is all about stimulating a child's natural curiosity by going back to basics. Natural resources foster children's in-built desire to explore new things, so, alongside the more usual toys, plenty of 'real', natural and 'open-ended' items are provided for the children to play with. For instance, instead of presenting the children with a plastic toy garage - which is likely to be used only for the purpose for which it was designed - wooden blocks, planks and cardboard tubes are available instead so that the children can imagine endless outcomes! If the children are interested in cars, the exciting mishmash of resources may well become a garage, but its outcome is not

limited to this one use. The only limitations with 'curious' resources are the children's imaginations themselves!

Adopting the approach, and sourcing appropriate resources can be environmentally responsible, a consideration which is of great importance at Berkhamstead. Plenty of the resources are natural: conkers, leaves, pasta and fir cones inspire endless activities, and many items are reused and recycled. (The staff scour charity shops for suitable treasures.) Using real and natural resources also teaches children about the value of objects and looking after them. A real china tea cup will break, whereas a plastic one can be mistreated as it is pretty indestructible. Using breakable resources teaches the children to respect and handle them with care. So real kitchen paraphernalia - even glass cake stands - can be found in the rooms. The children are closely monitored!

The environment is key to the approach, and as a result, the Day Nursery is becoming even cosier, and more and more homely. The decor is far calmer than you might expect from a typical Day Nursery. In an aim to reduce visual noise, the walls are painted in a soft grey, and formal display boards have been replaced with homely, framed children's art. School-style tables, chairs and shelving units have made way for the sort of furniture more likely to be found at home: beanbags, cushions and coffee tables furnish the rooms. Lighting has been given careful consideration, and there are floor lamps and dimmer switches, so that lighting is generally less harsh, and can be softened towards the end of the day. Needless to say, the children are also taken outdoors and on walks as much as possible; the new triple pushchair is proving beneficial for the babies' outdoor exploits.

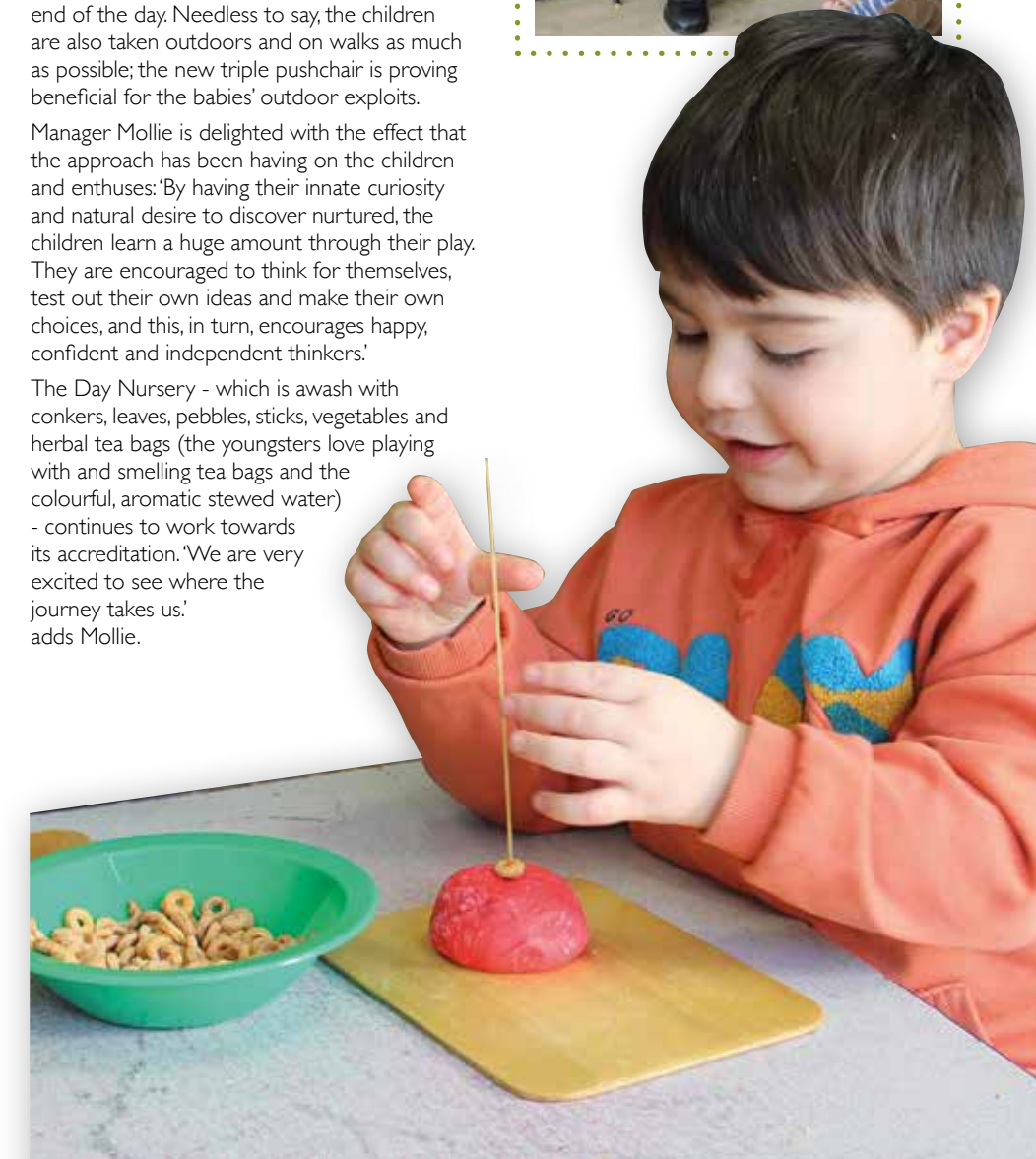
Manager Mollie is delighted with the effect that the approach has been having on the children and enthuses: 'By having their innate curiosity and natural desire to discover nurtured, the children learn a huge amount through their play. They are encouraged to think for themselves, test out their own ideas and make their own choices, and this, in turn, encourages happy, confident and independent thinkers.'

The Day Nursery - which is awash with conkers, leaves, pebbles, sticks, vegetables and herbal tea bags (the youngsters love playing with and smelling tea bags and the colourful, aromatic stewed water) - continues to work towards its accreditation. 'We are very excited to see where the journey takes us,' adds Mollie.

## NATIONAL STORYTELLING WEEK

To celebrate National Storytelling Week, the Day Nursery had great fun dressing up as their favourite book characters, bringing in books from home and sharing their favourite stories with their friends.

Mr Tittley, from the Prep department of the school, came in to read to the Wise Bears, and delighted our Pre-Schoolers with his legendary storytelling! They also welcomed a number of parents who kindly volunteered to come in to read stories. Everyone agreed what a super week it was!







## KINDERGARTEN HAVE ENJOYED A WONDERFUL, FUN-PACKED SPRING TERM

The children absolutely loved the topic of 'Dinosaurs', and completely immersed themselves in their learning. They brought in dinosaur stories, and made up fantastic role play situations where we observed the sharing of ideas and plenty of imaginative play. Making dinosaur biscuits was a highlight!

After lunch, we always take part in quiet, calming activities. One was listening to the 'Carnival of the Animals.' The children were encouraged to mark-make as they listened to the music, draw pictures of the animals and talk about feelings that the music evoked. Inspired by the music, the children thought about how they could move their bodies to represent the animals, and we created a brilliant animal dance.

We gave lots of thought to our emotions during Children's Mental Health Week. We discussed how emotions made us feel, such as butterflies in our tummy, or crying. The 'Colour Monster' helped the children to recognise, understand and label different emotions such as happiness, sadness, being calm and anger. Early Years children are encouraged to express their feelings by putting their photograph next to the appropriate colour monster.

After half term, we learnt about Spring. 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' inspired all sorts of learning: days of the week, counting, healthy and unhealthy eating and sequencing the story, to name but a few. We were introduced to the life cycle of butterflies and compared it to that of frogs. We observed tadpoles in our own pond in the Wildlife Garden.

We enjoyed planting and looking after runner beans, and we now have a fantastic beanstalk. The children have written, copied or traced their names on big green paper leaves which have been placed around our beanstalk. We have linked this to the story of 'Jasper's Beanstalk' by Nick Butterworth.

During Andrew Bear's Adventure Week, we spent each morning in the Wildlife Garden experiencing Forest School activities. A favourite one was searching for treasure, such as feathers, shiny stones and twigs covered in moss, and seeds. The children then made frames out of sticks, placed their treasure inside the frame and took a photograph. We enjoyed a Spring walk around the school grounds and found daffodils, snowdrops, tulips and crocuses. We also enjoyed planting sunflower seeds. MM



## THIS TERM, RECEPTION CHILDREN HAVE LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER!

Our topic, 'Once Upon A Time' was inspired by traditional fairy tales. The topic proved a brilliant way of sparking the children's imaginations and hooking them into their learning, and books we looked at this term included 'The Three Little Pigs', 'The Gingerbread Man' and 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff'. We looked closely at predictions, asking the children to think about might happen in the stories, and talking about what had happened. We sequenced parts of the story and created story maps. We also had fun retelling the stories in our own words and talking about the different characters and settings.

Favourite activities included exploring materials to make floating rafts - to ensure the Gingerbread Man could escape the fox - creating fabulous trolls using iPads and baking Gingerbread Men. One of the many highlights of our topic had to be when the children's parents came into school and shared their favourite stories with the children; everyone loved listening to them!

After the success of the first half term, the children were keen to continue learning about fairy tales, so our next topic was 'Happily Ever After'. The children were introduced to the stories of 'Jack and the Beanstalk' and 'Little Red Riding Hood'. We looked at the characters, the homes they lived in, the morals of the story and the layout and sequence of these super, traditional tales. During the topic there were more fantastic opportunities to retell the stories using story maps, pictures and puppetry. The children enjoyed more exploration of materials, and designed a waterproof cape for Little Red Riding Hood. They also became expert gardeners when they planted beans. We encouraged the children to observe changes in the beans as they grew, and to care for them. But the highlight of this term had to be when Dan Tastic Education paid us a visit and wowed us with their fairy tale workshop: the fairy tales the children had been learning about were well and truly brought to life! H R-W & JG





# RAISING THE ROOF

## AT THE PITTVILLE PUMP ROOM!

The glorious setting of the Pittville Pump Room was, yet again, a splendid platform for thrilling musical performances from all our many ensembles. Musicians and singers from Years 2 to 6 performed beautifully in a wide variety of ensembles and styles.



Year 2 featured instruments from violins to ukuleles and many percussion instruments in their exciting, rhythmic rap piece 'I'm Sticking with the Blues'.

We have large numbers of strings playing in Jigsaw and Berkyl Bows this year, and they have made great progress with Mrs Weeks, Miss Ginns and Mr Bacon leading their groups. They make a tremendous sound with four double basses between them!



The Guitar Club, led by our new guitar teacher, Mr Lewis, was enthusiastically welcomed as they played some recent, and not so recent pop standards.

Powerful percussion sounds were also very much in evidence as the thrilling Year 3 and 4 Samba Band took to the stage with 'Samba Mash'. Concentration and great rhythmic skills were obvious as every player watched and responded instantly to Mrs Sallis and her whistle! Finally, all Year 3 and 4 combined their beautiful voices in Junior Choir's performances of 'You've Got a Friend in Me' and 'The Lion Sleeps Tonight'.

The evening concert continued with some of our more advanced ensembles showing their strengths and effective development of ensemble skills. Firstly, we were amazed by Mr Peverelle's Berkyl Beats percussion group; eight players skilfully wove their rhythms and xylophone melodies together in 'Off With Their Heads!' and 'Eye of the Tiger'.

Razzamajazz includes all our brass and wind players with a rhythm section of percussion and bass and their swinging performance of 'Blues Band' led into another new ensemble, Berkyl Blues Band. This group of more experienced players improvised over their own composition 'Blue Cheese Blues' and then they all finished together with a rousing 'Rock Around the Clock'.

Mr Trim's Chamber Ensemble showed skilful and expressive playing in a mixture of classical and film music, both of which suited their distinctive sound.

VoxBox in Years 5 and 6 joyfully demonstrated how singing continues through the school from the youngest in the Day Nursery and it was delightful to hear their songs 'You Raise Me Up' and the witty 'Humpty Dumpty' sung with such precision and style.

Our choice of finale for this year was a medley of songs from 'Bugsy Malone' with all the Prep children throwing themselves into gangster-style New York, 1929, with such classics as 'Bad Guys' and 'So You Wanna Be a Boxer'. A thrilling end to our lively Spring Concerts, 2023. PM







# YEAR 2'S TERM HAS BEEN OUT OF THIS WORLD!

This term, Year 2 have been stars in exploring out of this world material! They have embraced their space topic and spent time designing their own star constellations with the use of play dough and cocktail sticks. Some Jackson Pollock-style painting helped them create their own futuristic solar systems. They even attempted their own Starry Night Vincent van Gogh-style paintings. Their artistic creativity has been paralleled in their writing universe with some super stories based on their exploration and discovery of planets in space. Having started the Spring Term developing some impressive multiplication and division skills, their measuring skills indicated real strengths that would assist them in their astronaut training on Space Day.

The children embraced swimming lessons halfway through the Spring Term and have taken to their new PE activity like ducks to water. Science has seen them becoming greater thinkers, proving their ability to record their science investigations and predict the results. They certainly enjoyed recording the speed at which the dinosaur travelled in the bucket from the class window to the ground, noting how the time taken for the bucket to travel was affected as more weight was added to the bucket.

Finally, what a fantastic way to end the Spring Term with a wonderful Space Day! Upon arrival at mission command, they were tasked with the role of undergoing training to be astronauts. Who knew how rigorous the Berky astronaut training process would be! Or who the mission command captain would be. Let's just say they certainly looked the part. Our potential astronauts rose to the challenge and used their IT skills to ensure their computer knowledge was up to speed, and communicating with the use of walkie talkies. Yet it was their ability to complete several challenges including how to space walk that ensured they passed their training with flying colours! GS



# YEAR 1 BECOME SPACE EXPLORERS!

The term kicked off with the children designing and painting their own aliens. They considered their colour palette and the types of paintbrushes they needed to paint their alien's various body parts! Our young artists also impressed us with their amazing artwork of planets, which they designed on iPads using the Sketches app. They created planet shapes, backgrounds and finally added labels. Combining their artistic and technical skills again, the children were asked to take photographs of clay aliens that they had made in their art lessons. They were encouraged to think about lighting and shadows to produce some really super photographs.

English lessons have involved fun role-playing and learning about speech bubbles; they skilfully used speech bubbles to express what an alien might say to them if they met in space! Writing their own alien stories enabled the children to explore their creativity and use all the skills they had recently learnt. They started by carefully planning their story on a story mountain and completed their work by adding illustrations.

Topic lessons involved plenty of interesting facts and figures, including learning all about the first man and woman to go into space, Neil Armstrong and the first moon landing and the International Space Station and Tim Peake. A space exploration timeline, which took several weeks, fascinated our little space explorers, and sparked many animated discussions.

After half term, the children had a fun-filled DT Day making moon buggies from recyclable materials! They carefully planned their buggy designs before executing their plans. The results were brilliant, and we had fun discussing what we liked about their buggies and what we would do differently next time. To end our topic, the children wrote brilliant diary entries about life as an astronaut. This proved to be another lovely opportunity for the children to showcase their knowledge and creativity about space. J K-M





# ...NEWS... FROM PREP



## GLOUCESTERSHIRE SCHOOLS WILDLIFE QUIZ

We have lots of nature experts at Berky so it's always a delight to participate in the Gloucestershire Schools' Wildlife Quiz. To select our quartet of quizzers, all the Prep pupils took part in an in-house quiz. In March, we played our first fixture against The Richard Pate School and won a keenly fought encounter 28-22 which means we will contest the Cheltenham Schools' semi-final in the Summer Term. Answering questions on local flora and fauna and identifying a wide range of native animals were our proud team: Harry H, Ben A, Amelia J and Tom C-G.

## PUPILS SET A FINE EXAMPLE

Our Year 6 computing experts were delighted to share their knowledge of Spheros with their small peers 'across the road'. Every Year 6 pupil was matched with a child from Kindergarten and the pairs worked collaboratively to create pictures and draw shapes with the iPads and Spheros. The lovely morning enabled our Year 6s to develop their leadership skills, compassion and kindness, and for our youngest children to learn from older role models. Both year groups loved the experience, particularly the Spheros race at the end of the lesson!



## CHESS MOVES

The spring saw another bustling and fun term of chess at Berky. The weekly chess clubs were packed as the season reached its exciting conclusion in March. The winners of the various leagues are as follows: Y5/6 Division One - Tom R; Division Two - Joseph W; Division Three - George E; Division Four - Josiah R. Y3/4 Division One - Jasper W; Division Two - Anna H and Angus C; Division Three - Jack H; Division Four - Quinn H and Nancy A.

As well as our Chess Congress (see p. 6), we also played our first chess match for a good while, against another Cheltenham school. A 5-1 victory against Dean Close Prep was recorded; our strong team, captained by Seb C, showed tangible skill and determination in victory. I was thrilled for them. A development team also played and won their match by a narrow 3.3-2.5 margin. We shall be playing Dean Close again after Easter. MC

## CHELTENHAM FOOTBALL

Nearly one hundred of the Berky community enjoyed an afternoon of football at the beginning of the Easter holidays. Cheltenham Town FC took on Burton Albion at the 'Jonny-Rocks' stadium in Whaddon Road. Frustratingly the game ended in a 0-0 draw, but an excellent time was had by all. Thank you to Cheltenham Town Football Club for a brilliant time.



## CROSS COUNTRY

The cross country season has come to an end and it has been another great year for Berky. Plenty of children have represented the school at four events; running in all weathers, from the sunny, warm days of Autumn to the cold, wet (and even snowy) days in March. The hill at St Edward's was a challenge for all our runners, but in true Berky spirit they persevered and all completed the race with most finishing in the top 50. In Year 6, Carly did exceptionally well, finishing in the top 10 in all four races which put her in 5th position overall. Carly went on to represent Cheltenham at the County Final which was held at Newent Community School where she finished in 15th place in a competitive race. Well done, Carly. I look forward to seeing some of the Year 4s and 5s running next year and representing the school. DB



## MUSIC NOTES DEAN CLOSE CHORAL DAY

A small group of singers from Years 5 and 6 took part in a Choral Day at Dean Close School. They had intense rehearsals with Simon Bell, Director of Choral Music, in the chapel to prepare for an Evensong service in the afternoon. After lunch, the singers gathered in the music department to learn a new song in four parts with Mr McVittie, Director of Music of the Prep School. It was a great testament to these pupils' ability to focus and memorise quickly and I was proud of their hard work and great efforts. The service reflected 'Glory' with hymns and anthems including Vivaldi's 'Gloria' and a modern song in a jazzy style 'And we sing Gloria', as well as the Gospel Medley learnt earlier in the day. Well done to all the singers - it was thrilling to hear the choir with over 100 singers. PM

## SPRING TERM RECITAL

The Spring Term recital was a wonderful precursor to the Spring Concerts, and showcased 31 of our Prep School musicians. Plucky pupils from Years 3-6 performed to an audience of appreciative parents and staff; well done to you all.

## MUSIC EXAM RESULTS

Congratulations to the following musicians who have taken grade exams this term:

Initial - Zack P (Drum Kit)  
Grade 1 - Georgiana S (Tuned Percussion)\*\*  
Grade 1 - Emilia F (Drum Kit\*)  
Grade 1 - Annabelle A (Violin)  
Grade 2 - Ben S (Cornet)  
Grade 2 - Barnaby K (Cello\*\*)  
Grade 2 - Sophia B (Piano\*)  
Grade 3 - Freddie L (Trumpet\*\*)  
Grade 3 - Tom C-G (Drum Kit\*\*)

\*Denotes pass with merit \*\*Denotes pass with distinction

## KINDNESS CUP

The Gill Agg Kindness Cup, just like the Pre-Prep equivalent, is awarded each half term to a Prep pupil who has consistently shown kindness, care and consideration for others. Congratulations to Hattie E and Ben A who have been awarded it this term.



## NATIONAL QUIZ CHAMPIONSHIPS

Three Berky teams contested schools from around the country in the first online heat of the National Schools' Quiz Championship this term. All of our quizzers acquitted themselves very well and the Berkhamstead A Team qualified for the semi-final stage which will be taking place in the Summer Term. MC



## MATHS CHALLENGE

As part of the UK Maths Trust, Cheltenham College held their annual Primary Team Maths Challenge back in February, and Year 6's Ben A, Sophia B, Seb C and Emma C were selected to represent Berky. The challenge involved a full day of maths - five rounds of problem solving, working in pairs and as a team of four. Cheltenham Prep and Berky were the only local schools, with some teams even travelling from London! The buzz in the room was electric and Berky devoured the warm-up questions, building their confidence and boosting morale. Five rounds later - involving higher order thinking skills and whole team efforts - the results were announced. Berkhamstead secured third place, while first and second places went to schools from London and Oxford. I was incredibly proud of our team - they had shown true Berky spirit throughout the day, persevering when things got rather tricky and working well to support each other. The questions were tough and would have stumped many adults. Well done, Team Berky, you thoroughly deserved to finish on the podium! JH





# ...OFF WE GO...

LEARNING BROUGHT TO LIFE FOR  
OUR INQUISITIVE PUPILS

## WILDERNESS CENTRE

Year 4 thoroughly enjoyed their trip to the Wilderness Centre. The pupils started by splitting into 3 teams where they then completed a carousel of activities to earn points. Each activity required them to use a different set of skills for example trusting your partner along the blind trail, working in unison when firing the catapult and dividing into sub teams to find all of the orienteering markers. They then used the points raised to buy materials to protect their egg when it was dropped from the top of the building. The designs were all innovative and achieved varying degrees of success. Overall, the children thoroughly enjoyed the day and we were able to work on the skills required to be a successful team and a helpful class member. IP



## DETECTIVE WORKSHOP

Year 6 were visited for the morning by Jenny Williams who previously worked for the police. She led our pupils on a variety of brilliant, hands-on activities demonstrating how science is used to capture criminals. The pupils learnt all about finger printing and chromatography, all the time developing science skills picked up in their lessons. The use of DNA from living cells such as blood or hair roots, dental records or skeletal information was also discussed. To conclude the exciting morning, the pupils were given a crime scene and had to explain what happened by investigating a variety of clues on a body such as mobile phone, invitation to a party, jelly baby in the mouth and many more. The pupils had a great time and entered into the spirit of things throughout the morning. TM



## THE COMMANDERY

As part of our study on the Stuarts, the Year 5s enjoyed a fantastic trip to the Commandery in Worcester. They took part in a variety of workshops which focussed on the life of every day people in Stuart times. In addition to this we got a real flavour of the Civil War. This included handling arms, trying on clothes and armour and marching in formation whilst carrying pikes. The children also experienced how wounded soldiers would have been treated on the battlefield.

We finished the day with a wonderful tour of the buildings, which covered several periods of history.

The Year 5s learned a lot from the day and enjoyed it very much. P McC



## SKILLZONE

At the start of January, Years 4 and 6 children went on trips to SkillZONE in Gloucester. SkillZONE is a fantastic purpose-built environment for learning all about different types of safety. The Year 4 children visited the Water Safety, Park, House, Building Site, Electricity Substation, Road and Farm areas, whilst the Year 6 visited the Magistrate's Court, a Police Custody Suite, Dark Alley, Train and Bus Safety areas. The interactive mobile phone area was particularly beneficial for the children to learn how to make a 999 call. Everyone agreed that they had learned something new about how to keep themselves safe whilst having an interesting and fun time.

Our thanks again to the wonderful volunteer guides. MB



## THE MINSTER & ST MATTHEW'S

Year 5 went to visit the Minster in the centre of Cheltenham and were given a talk by Rev Louise Brown and Becca. The children learnt that there had been a church on that site since AD 700. They looked around the church and found out that it had been a general meeting place, a market and school as well as a place of worship. The children then went over to look at St Matthew's. This is a more modern church and fully carpeted. It had no pews and was just a massive open space, just as the Minster would have been before pews were installed. The children learnt about what the church does in the community; for instance, Becca, the youth minister, was just about to hand out hot chocolate to children in Pittville Park. The church also runs a Saturday kitchen where anyone can turn up for a free meal. MT







U8 | NETBALL

The girls have been superb throughout our netball season. They have improved their passing, movement, shooting and general team play. The most satisfying improvement has been their ability to turn defence into attack and execute their shots efficiently, therefore not allowing their opposition the chance to stop them. As a team, they have been supportive of each other, ensuring that everyone is included and gets their chance to contribute to their winning efforts. They have also worked extremely hard on limiting the opposition by focusing on marking players and not space. Well done, girls! IP

**U8 Team:** Nancy A, Eden B, Isabella B, Alanah F, Anna H, Hermione H, Jemima Hunter-Strudwick, Amelia I, Eleanor K, Iris M, Chloe R.



U9 | NETBALL

Once again, I have been thoroughly impressed by the attitude and the sporting behaviour of the Under 9s at netball this term. They have thoroughly enjoyed playing bee netball and have certainly shown dedication to all its values; bee proud, bee fair, bee friendly, bee strong, bee yourself and bee together. When scores were kept, we had a very strong season with six wins, one draw and two losses. During training sessions, the girls have been developing their skills in the 7-side format too and have progressed tremendously over the season. It has been wonderful to see the enjoyment they clearly have when playing netball in all its forms and the house matches were certainly fast and furious. Well done, girls! C McC

**U9 Team:** Annabelle A, Rose B, Polly B, Isabella B, Lara C, Harriet C-W, Rosie E, Amelia E, Melba F, Eliza L, Olivia M, Matilda M, Emily O’K, Megan P, Florence P-T, Hannah P, Isla R, Allegra S, Evie W, Yaz Y.



U10 | NETBALL

This has been an interesting term for the girls as we have tried to master the rules and regulations associated with bee netball. The rotations through the five positions have certainly challenged the girls’ marking skills as they need to understand the role of all five players, rather than the one position they prefer! However, the girls have enjoyed some successes and developed their match skills. They have worked hard, both individually and as a team, to improve their understanding and confidence when playing in a match - spreading out and using space to their advantage. I am sure when they come to play netball in Year 6, they will remember to drive onto the ball and look for those strong, long passes!

Well done to all the U10 girls - you have worked really hard this season and will go from strength to strength next year! JH

**U10 Team:** Ara K, Charlotte J, Coco P, Ella H, Ellie P, Estella L, Eulalie G, Eva H, Francesca M, Harriet E, Georgiana S, Kitty H, Millie R, Mollie R, Olivia W.



U11 | NETBALL

This was a season of ups and downs but the girls played with commendable grit, spirit and determination throughout. The girls demonstrated plenty of decent skills during game time but weren’t always quick enough to the ball, losing out on several 50/50s as a result. There were plenty of areas that showed promising improvement over the course of the year. Marking and defending both showed progress very nicely while the girls’ movement around the court was much better by the end of the season. As a group we didn’t record a huge number of wins but, with so many close results, we can reflect with no little satisfaction on an enjoyable and successful term’s netball. CK

**U11 Team:** Emily B, Sophia B, Emma C, Nina C, Esi D, Esha D, Georgia E, Emilia F, Alina G, Arwen H, Frankie H, Carly H, Chloe H, Tatty H, Amelia J, Yvie L, Chloe M, Alba N, Erin P, Erin R, Alexa S.

**Colours awarded to:** Sophia B, Esi D, Esha D, Alina G, Frankie H, Chloe H, Alexa S.  
**Outstanding awarded to:** Frankie H, Chloe H.



U8 | FOOTBALL

The Buffaloes and Bisons both had great seasons of football. The boys were mixed up at times between the two teams and all played well no matter who they played. It was lovely to see the boys develop their footballing skills throughout the term and seeing evidence of this in their matches. For most matches we were dominant, but were challenged by some of the teams we played. Even on the matches we were losing, the boys kept their heads up and tried their best. A well-played term of football, well done! TM

**U8 Team:** Ioan C, Jake H, Quinn H, Arthur H, Eddie H, Barnaby K, Seth L, Max LG, George L, Ellis M, Toby M, Milo R, Oliver S, Eddie S, Harvey W, Dion W.



U9 | FOOTBALL

Both sides have worked hard all season in training, and this showed in the matches where they made a steady improvement in both their skills and confidence. Captaincy was shared weekly with all boys working together as a unit and always supporting each other. It was a very successful season for the As, winning eight games and drawing just the one. The As kept the same goalkeeper for the entire season, and it was a credit to him and his defence that we conceded very few goals. In attack we often looked sublime; our passing, ball retention and high ratio of shots on goal saw our match tally hit a mighty 48! The Bs, on the other hand, struggled at times to find consistency, and despite some closely fought games and frenetic performances, recorded just the one drawn match against RPS and a win against Rendcomb. Both teams always played with an enormous amount of energy and enthusiasm and all should be proud of their achievements this term. Well done, boys! SM

**U9A Team:** Hughie B, Oliver B, Lucas D C.V, Fergus G, Jack H, Miles H, Toby R, Charlie W, Jasper W (GK).

**U9B Team:** Leo C, Angus C, Charlie F, Jack F, Charles H, Tharusha J, Archie M, Atlas M, Rishik R.



U10 | FOOTBALL

The U10A boys have enjoyed a great season. They listened well in training sessions and applied what they had been practising on match days. Their first match was against Hatherop, and although we lost, there were plenty of goal scoring opportunities and the boys learned a lot. The next match, against Kitebrook, was a great, competitive game, and finished in a draw. Following this, the boys played Hopelands and won. The next game was at Beaudesert and this was one of the best performances of the season. The boys kept the pressure on for the whole match, defending well and rarely letting the ball into their half. We won! The St Edward’s match was a tough game which unfortunately we lost. However, the boys bounced back when we played The Downs and we enjoyed a superb win of 4-0. The final match of the season was against King’s, and it finished in a draw. There were lots of goals scored this season and the boys have made good progress. I hope they build on this next year.

The U10B team played with much spirit and enterprise all season. Perhaps the term’s highlight was the splendid 3-2 victory over Beaudesert where a combination of grit, skill and superb and brave goalkeeping saw the lads snatch a cracking victory from the jaws of defeat. DB

**U10A Team:** George J, George E, Ted L, Alastair M, Wilfred M, Zack P, Isaac R, Sidney R, Josiah R.

**U10B Team:** Jack F, Tommy G, Hugo H, Freddie L, Luis M-R, Ben R, Tom R, Ben S, Ben W.



U11 | FOOTBALL

The U11 teams have really enjoyed their football this term. I have been impressed with the attitude from all of the boys.

The first half of the term saw us play some strong sides and, although there was much endeavour and some good football, we struggled to get on the winning side. There were many positives, though. We always competed well and had the ability to score goals. We were down and out at Kitebrook, losing 5-1 at one point, only to make a comeback and just lose by 6-4. Matches at Beaudesert were also closely contested. I felt that with the boys’ positive attitude and excellent work ethic that the tide would turn for us.

The second half of the season saw great improvement. Positive results at the Downs by both teams, followed by wins against King’s, Gloucester and Rendcomb were a great finish to the season. I was particularly pleased with the improvement in skills and better decision-making over the course of the term.

Well done to all of the Year 6s. P McC

**U11 Team:** Ben A, Lawson B, Freddy B, Seb C, Tom C-G, Alex C, Will H, Harry H, Bertie L, Floyd R, Ben S, Gideon T, Joe W.

**Colours awarded to:** Ben A, Lawson B, Freddy B, Seb C, Tom C-G, Alex C, Will H, Harry H, Joe W.

**Outstanding players awards:** Lawson B, Tom C-G, Joe W.





## OUR BOYS ARE AHEAD OF THE GAME

Hockey has always been the girls' winter sport here at Berky, and due to popular demand, we introduced a boys' hockey club for pupils in Years 5 and 6 five years ago. Focused on developing core skills through match play and small-sided games, the aim was to develop basic skills that can be transferred into games situations: close stick skills, moving with the ball, passing, receiving and tackling.

The boys are a mix of some who play hockey for local clubs outside school, and others who are new to the sport, and all clearly enjoy the weekly lunchtime club. Mr Mildren - who runs the club with Mr McCreanor - has coached sport in Prep Schools for over 35 years - commented, "I intend to make sessions structured but always fun, and I hope that an introduction of another sport gives the boys more choice in finding a sport they might wish to pursue."

Rugby, football and cricket are played competitively by the boys in the Prep School, and our boys' hockey team enjoyed a fixture against Hatherop at the end of term.



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