

# Newsletter



## Teacher-led clubs for Term 3

### Monday

Science book review club.

Recorders club.

### Tuesday

Stay and Play

### Wednesday

SATs Club

### Thursday

Sports Club

### Friday

Swimming

## Experience advent

On 5<sup>th</sup> December, class 2 travelled to Meysey Hampton Church for Experience Advent. This was the second of our joint small school events. We spent the afternoon doing activities based on the four themes of the advent wreath, peace, joy, love and hope. These included writing down our Christmas hopes for the world which some children turned into prayers. It was lovely to see how the children could think of others and talk about what they thought would make the world a better place. To represent peace, children thought about Jesus being the Prince of

Peace, some of them were very excited to wear a crown like a prince! They made doves and wrote words connected to peace on them. One of the more difficult activities was when the children learned about advent being a time of waiting and the symbolism of the Advent wreath, At this station they had to sit for as long as they could without speaking! Finally, the children made paper chains on which they could write any words linked to hope, joy, love and peace. This was a very nice way to draw together the activities, and their words showed what they have learned at the other stations around the church.

## Christmas Movie Night and Sleepover

The pupils at Down Ampney enjoyed a very festive movie night this term to celebrate the holidays. We invited the children in Class 1 to watch a series of short movies including 'Shaun the Sheep (Christmas edition)' and 'Boss Baby'. This was shortly followed



by Class 2 and 3, who watched 'A Christmas Chronicles'. With help from the PTA, the pupils were able to enjoy a feast of popcorn and hot

chocolate throughout the films! Class 3 continued the evening at school for a Christmas Sleepover; whereby, the pupils set up their sleeping arrangements in the hall. The children enjoyed a disco, followed by another Christmas film ('That Christmas') before settling into bed. A breakfast of pancakes, fruit and pastries were kindly provided by the PTA in the morning

before the pupils went back to school on Friday. Unfortunately, the wild weather prevented our evening bonfire; however, this only carried the fun over into the next school day. The pupils in class 3 were able to enjoy marshmallows by the fire in our forest school area as a breacktime treat!



## Oracy Competition

Once again, our students took part in the county-wide tracy competition 'Look Who's Talking' organised by the Gloucestershire Association of Primary Heads. Down Ampney have done very well in the past with a county winner and this year, teachers were once again impressed by the wide



variety of subjects the pupils elected to discuss. Congratulations to the class winners who will represent the school at the South Cotswold rounds next term. Topics included brownies, the role of Africa in the war, wreath making, impulse shopping and a wide variety of animals.

## Design and Technology in Focus

This term, all classes looked at cooking and nutrition. Class 1 planned, made, and evaluated their own fruit salad. Each salad had its own theme such as juicy fruits, red fruits, or fruits that needed peeling.

Class 2 created their own sandwiches, having done extensive research into different fillings, and learnt how to slice, grate and peel.

Class 3's focus this term has been 'Seasonality' and because we are in the festive season, the children



were designing gingerbread pieces as a gift or decoration. We spent some time looking at different designs and thinking about which shapes we like. We then went on to designing our own options. On our designs we labelled the different features and identified what we would need to make it.



The final

step of our designing stage was to pick our favourite one that we would make and write down the list of items we would need for it. During the making stage, we worked in small groups to weigh, mix, and melt ingredients to make



the gingerbread dough. Some of us used cutters to make our shapes and others moulded shapes. We baked these in the



oven and came back in the afternoon to decorate. Finally, we placed our gingerbread in gift boxes and evaluated our final product.



## Rev Scoones Worship

We were lucky to be joined by Reverend Scoones for a worship this month to talk about Christmas. We discussed why Christmas is important to us and the children came up with reasons such as spending time with friends and family and giving and receiving presents. As we were discussing, Reverend Scoones was painting on a canvas to symbolise Christmas and reminding us of the true reason we celebrate – the birth of Jesus. The worship finished with some Year 6 children reading from the Bible and saying prayers.



## Christmas in the community



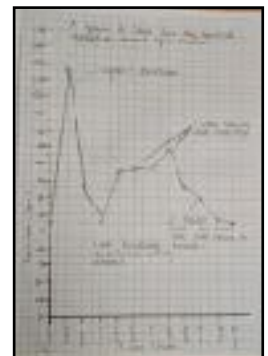
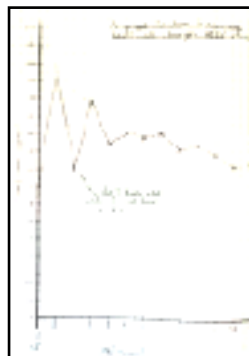
A huge thank you to the PTA for organising such a great event. Well done to the children and families who operated stalls during the evening. We once again, shared the profits from the raffle and bottle tombola with All Hallows Church. The event raised just over £1400 for the school.

## Class 3 in focus

Developing children's subject skills is a key part of learning at Down Ampney. Not only do children learn what, why and who when studying a topic, but also, how.

This term, Class 3 have been focussing on developing their Working Scientifically skills; the skills that can be applied across different areas of scientific learning. The children undertook two types of testing: comparative testing and fair testing, both leading to data collection, presentation and interpretation.

The first investigation was to measure their heart rate while undertaking a range of different activities using data loggers with heart rate monitors and stop watches and compare which activities resulted in the



highest heart rate. Children then set up their own fair test heart rate investigations, deciding what and how to measure, given a range of different

equipment. Children had to consider how to ensure their testing was fair by controlling variables and present their data in tables and graphs. The final investigation they undertook was a comparative test of lung capacity among the class. We set up buckets half full of water with upturned 2 litre bottles full of water and children blew into the bottles using rubber tubing, displacing the water. They then calculated how much water was left in the bottle to enable them to calculate the air displaced, which equated to their lung capacity. We found it fascinating how it differed among the children, and we discussed what factors may affect this, such as height, age and amount of regular exercise done.

In Geography, children conducted a transect; an analysis of a straight line across a landscape. Children used a range of local modern and historical maps to explore how the local area has changed over time, due to settlement changes. They looked at



evidence of historical buildings identified on maps, as well as new buildings and developments. Children used maps to research factual information about locations and features, then made field sketches of evidence found on the buildings and related their findings to maps and aerial photos. Transects are a useful way to study an area and the children will be developing this skill further when looking at other areas, such as when we look in more detail at streets in Cirencester later in the year.

## Carols in the church

To celebrate the end of term and the start of the Christmas holidays, all the pupils at Down Ampney walked down to the church on the last Wednesday of term to sing some Carols. We were joined by Reverend Swanton and parents to watch the children sing and talk about why we celebrate advent as a Church of England School. The school choir, who have been practising their songs on a Monday afterschool, sang three songs including 'Winter Wonderland' and 'That's Christmas to me.' The rest of the school joined in with some songs we have been practising in worship which was shortly followed by some readings. Both pupils and staff had a great time and was a very festive way to end the term.

## Pantomime

The whole school enjoyed travelling to Swindon Arts Centre to watch The Father Christmas Show and



collect a gift from the man himself. Huge thanks to the PTA for funding the coach and to the Co-Op in South Cerney for providing the popcorn and treats.

## Nativity

On the last day of term Class 1 staged a wonderful nativity called Christmas Counts.



## Academisation

December is often a time of reflection and never more so for me than this year as I step down as Chair of Governors at the end of this month as the conversion to Academy status is legally complete and the 'new' school joins the Corinium Education Trust (CET).

When I first joined the Governing Board, as the Local Authority Governor, the long term sustainability of the school was probably the most pressing issue we faced with the numbers of pupils in the school being around 30. It was clear that for whatever reason the school was not the school of choice for many within our catchment area.

The number of pupils on roll appears to have been very variable throughout the life of the school although direct comparisons are difficult in different eras. There were as many as 70 on roll in 1881, but not with regular attendance, while in 1989 the school was officially the smallest in Gloucestershire with only 17 pupils. That would simply not be viable today.

There are now close to 60 pupils on roll and there is clear demand for places beyond local authority planning figures and there is, of course, potential for that demand to increase once the current round of house building in the village is complete.

That demand is down to the excellent team of staff at the school which is now so well led by Mrs Gray, the headteacher. The increase in numbers of pupils and wider recognition of the quality of education being provided has been key in enabling the

conversion to an Academy at the right time for both the school and CET.

As a Governing Board we were conscious that this decision was huge as there is no going back from this. We firmly believe that this change is in the best interest of current and future pupils. It will keep the school on a secure and firm footing for the future with the potential for expansion beyond historic norms. Furthermore, there will be better support for the school which we have already seen in advance of the formal switch. Whilst still not easy as funding remains tight, we also judge that there will be a much better prospect of getting the 1959 'temporary' classroom replaced with a structure that is fit for 21st century education.

It is a somewhat cathartic experience to sit down and write a final letter to someone. It has been a very busy, varied and enjoyable last six and a bit years on the Governing Board. Whilst there have been challenges, not all of them straightforward, I firmly believe we have achieved a great deal over that time, even in the face of some unprecedented obstacles.

The New Year brings a new chapter for the school with very bright prospects. I have been privileged to have had the opportunity to Chair the also excellent governance team. As the governance model for the school changes now is the time for a new Chair to help take that forward. I wish everyone well and will remain a firm advocate for the school and expect it to go from strength to strength as part of the Corinium Education Trust.

Geoff Smith, Chair of Governors.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- Monday 6th January - INSeT day
- Tuesday 7th January - Term 3 begins
- Wednesday 8th January - Active literacy and numeracy event
- Friday 10th January - Swimming starts
- Wednesday 22nd January - Beyond the child event at Hatherop
- Tuesday 28th January - SCARF PSHE day
- Tuesday 4th February - Prayer Space at Kempford
- Wednesday 5th February - In the Net, online safety play
- Thursday 13th February - Dance Festival
- Friday 14th February - end of Term 3

