

BERKHAMPTSTEAD
SCHOOL
MAGAZINE

SPRING TERM
2024

BLAZER

ISI INSPECTION
AN OUTSTANDING
OUTCOME!

SPRING
CONCERTS

BRING THE
HOUSE DOWN!

WORLD BOOK DAY

CELEBRATING THE
JOY OF READING

INSIDE: SPOTLIGHT ON ZOE MEREDITH-SMYTH | DAY NURSERY NEWS | PANCAKE RACES



...THOUGHTS... FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

As we bid farewell to the Spring Term, it's a good time to reflect on the journey we've embarked upon as a school community. These past few months have been a testament to the boundless capacity for growth within our pupils, staff, and families. At the heart of my reflections lies the theme of thankfulness.

The Spring Term presented us with the challenge of a change of venue for our Spring Concerts. It was wonderful to see the children perform so beautifully. We are very proud to be a musically strong school and it is super to be able to see so much musical talent on show. The children and staff all adapted well to the new venue of the Town Hall, and I was very proud to see all the children from Year 2 to Year 6 play their part.

We are also extremely proud of our inspection report. The comments within it reflect the dedication of the staff, the willingness of our pupils to learn and the huge support we have from parents, families and our governing body. We are so pleased that the inspectors agreed that we are a happy school with excellent results. Mrs Agg has written an article for this issue outlining more about the inspection process.

Our teachers and support staff have again gone above and beyond to ensure that every child receives the support and guidance they need to thrive academically, socially and emotionally. From developing innovative teaching strategies to providing invaluable emotional support, our staff members have proven themselves to be true champions of education. They also managed to pull off some brilliant costumes for World Book Day!

Of course, none of our achievements would have been possible without the unwavering support of our families. I thank you for all you do in supporting your child with learning at home, coming on school trips, hearing pupils read, manning the second-hand shop, helping with PTA events and supporting at matches and concerts. As we look back on the Spring Term I am very thankful for our wonderful community.

Michelle Bareham

Michelle Bareham
Head of School



...SPOTLIGHT ON... ZOE MEREDITH-SMYTH

Mrs Meredith-Smyth is our Head of Early Years and a Reception teacher, who started teaching at Berkhamstead at the beginning of the Autumn Term. She already knew the school well, as previously she had been one of our governors. She lives with her husband Nick and daughter Eden and their beloved dog Ruby. She did her BA (Hons) in Bath and her postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) and Early Years Initial Teacher Training (EYITT) at the University of Gloucestershire.



What was your first job?

My first job was as a waitress in a hotel when I was 15. I continued to waitress all the way through sixth form and university. I loved chatting to the customers and working at weddings!

Did you always want to be a teacher?

When I was four years old, I used to line my teddies up and read them a story. I am incredibly lucky that I have had some truly amazing teachers who have inspired me. I still remember my first day in Reception and finding my name on my drawer. When I finished my A Levels, I wanted to be a fashion journalist or a writer and pursued working in PR for a while. It wasn't long before I realised that teaching was my vocation, and I went on to do my PGCE.

Why do you love teaching Reception?

I have taught all different year groups - and I have a real soft spot for Year 3 - but when I moved to Reception, nearly eight years ago, it felt like coming home. I went on to complete the EYITT Postgraduate degree when my daughter was just two years old in order to become more skilled and to gain a deeper understanding of the Early Years. I love that no two days are the same - which can be daunting - but the magical 'wow' moments are simply wonderful. My passion is early language, phonics and reading and I adore seeing the progress children can make in this area in such a short amount of time.

What is your favourite book?

As an adult, a book that has really stuck with me recently is Matt Haig's 'The Midnight Library'.

What is your favourite children's author?

I love reading Julia Donaldson stories to my class - 'The Scarecrows' Wedding' and 'The Singing Mermaid' are joyful to read.

What do you like about working at Berky?

Having been a governor before I took on my role, I knew that Berky was a special place. The staff have all been so warm and welcoming, and everyone is just so kind. The children are inquisitive and chatty; they make me smile every day. My daughter, Eden, started at Berky at the same time as me, so it has been lovely to share this new adventure with her too.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

Walking our cockapoo, Ruby, takes up plenty of time, and I love to read and go to the theatre as much as possible. My New Year's Resolution was to start horse riding again and I aim to do this much more in the summer. As a family, we love nothing more than snuggling down and watching Strictly or a good film.



PRE-PREP PUPILS AIM FOR THE STARS!

Year 1 celebrated Space Day in style with a packed itinerary of exciting, interstellar activities. The youngsters and their teachers were over the moon to come to school in fancy dress, and the Pre-Prep department was over-run with NASA astronauts, weird aliens, planets and twinkling stars! Needless to say, the activities on offer were out of this world, and included exuberant countdowns to rocket launches - thanks to Head of Science Mr Morphew's wizardry - the baking of moon rock cakes, augmented reality and a mission to construct space paraphernalia out of just about anything found in their classrooms. The day was a huge success, and Year 1 successfully completed their missions. This cohort is most definitely full of rising stars!

...NEWS...

FROM AROUND THE SCHOOL



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, stir fry vegetables, rice and spring rolls, complete with fortune cookies and chocolate mousse served with moon biscuits. Kindergarten children truly entered into the spirit with Chinese lantern making and a splendid dragon dance!



CHARITY NEWS

Having raised a whopping £1000 in the Autumn Term for Emily's Gift, a local children's cancer charity, our thoughts turned to this year's international charity, Rainforest Concern. We were delighted to welcome Helen Brown from the charity, who, armed with a string of alarming facts and figures, has inspired our School Council to plan a special fundraising Rainforest Day for the Summer Term; details will follow soon.



WORKSHOP

Talented twin artists, Sasha and Poppy Sathasivam, leavers of 2015, have illustrated two super children's books called 'ABC Alphabet Stories' and 'Little Gold Ted'. The enthusiastic duo delivered a wonderful workshop to our Early Years and Pre-Prep pupils, and their animated story reading skills and imaginative Little Gold Ted-inspired activities were a big hit with our youngsters. Look out for their next book in the Little Gold Ted series, soon to be published.

KINDNESS CUP

Two of our most special and coveted prizes, our Kindness Cups are awarded every half term to a Prep and a Pre-Prep pupil who have consistently shown care and consideration for others. This term, the Pre-Prep Kindness Cup has been awarded to Meriem T and Sophie B, and the Prep Kindness Cup has been awarded to Alanah F and Sidney R. Well done to all of these exemplary pupils!

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

The theme of Children's Mental Health Week this year was 'My Voice Matters,' and was all about children's right to express their views, thoughts and feelings, and how important it is that they are listened to, and have their views taken seriously. Activities inspired by this year's theme took place all over the school. Kindergarten children, for instance, took turns holding Andrew Bear and telling their friends about a person or place that is special to them. Year 1 discussed things that make them feel happy and relaxed, and other year groups - with a view to boosting their feelings of self-worth - completed worksheets highlighting what they felt proud of. In Mrs Bareham's Citizenship and Wellbeing lessons, Prep pupils looked at how they can use their voices and what is special and unique about each of them.



MALVERN ART EXHIBITION

The Annual Junior Schools' Art Exhibition was hosted at Malvern St James Girls' School on Saturday 9th March, and pupils from schools within the West Midlands, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire areas were invited to exhibit their best art pieces to be viewed by over 200 guests. The work submitted ranged from Reception pastel studies of special toys to Year 2 Lowry-inspired studies in poster paint, watercolour wash and fine-line black pen, to Year 4 pencil and oil pastel cross sections of fruit and vegetables and Year 5 digital paintings. This year's noteworthy results included artwork by Maddie LG, (2S) and Harriet C-W, (5B) who achieved Highly Commended certificates. We were thrilled! Well done to all our talented artists!



BERKY GETS GREENER

As a new member of staff at Berky, it has been great for me to get to know the Year 6 Eco Leaders and the new Prep School Eco Committee members over the last term. I am so impressed with all the fantastic work that is already happening as part of Berky Gets Greener. I hope to build on this and have several ideas of activities and projects that we can introduce and develop.

We were fortunate to welcome Hannah Leatherland from Cheltenham Borough Council's 'Care for our Air' campaign to school at the start of February. She led engaging and informative assemblies, and then met with the Eco Committee. We discussed some local, national and global initiatives that we can get involved in as a school.

The committee decided to look at how staff and children travel to school. We plan to use that data to explore ways in which we can become less reliant on cars and thus reduce air pollution. Hannah has agreed to work with us. Recently, I led an assembly introducing the national 'Big Walk and Wheel' initiative between 11-22 March, again looking at ways to reduce car journeys to and from school.

Exciting times are ahead! JH

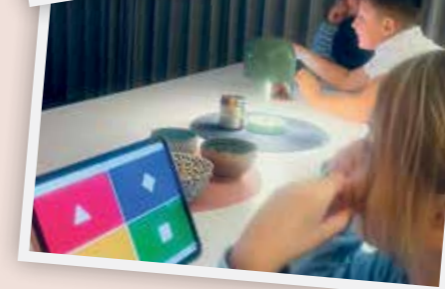
PTA NEWS

After the festive whirlwind of the Winter Term, it's nice to enjoy a slower start to the New Year, and take time to reflect on what went well and what we'd like to do more of in the year ahead. While we all want to stay tucked up during the winter, Mr Cross hosted an online quiz for some free family fun. It was good to see so many friends and family joining in from home.

We have some big events coming up, including our Summer Celebration for parents and teachers at The Frogmill in June. It's the first time we've organised this event so there's lots to do and learn along the way!

The Disco and Summer Festival were two of our favourite events last year so we're really looking forward to them again this Summer Term. The disco is great fun for the children and the Festival is a lovely day for School and Day Nursery friends and families to get together.

All of these events, along with our famous Hamper Raffle, Cake At Break and our brilliant secondhand uniform shop help to raise money for the school. After all the care, time and effort that goes into making



PROBLEM SOLVING

Our pupils sharpened their mathematical skills in a brilliant problem solving workshop run by retired maths teacher, Mr Ede. The children - from Years 2 to 6 - were tasked with solving geometrical puzzles - many of them hand-crafted by Mr Ede - in what proved to be a superb way of helping the children improve skills such as reasoning and spatial awareness.

Katie Chapman
Chair of the PTA



To read the full report, please scan the QR code.



AN INSPECTOR CALLS...

FOR SCHOOLS, THE WORD 'INSPECTION' CAN CAUSE INTENSE ANXIETY; RECENT NEWS HIGHLIGHTED THE STORY OF THE HEAD TEACHER RUTH PERRY, TRAUMATISED BY A NEGATIVE INSPECTION REPORT WHICH CRUELLY SUMMED UP HER 32-YEAR CAREER IN A SINGLE WORD - 'INADEQUATE'.

'Most importantly, the children were seen as happy - learning 'important values' and how to be 'polite, kind and to persevere.'

The good news is that inspections have undergone a significant change. The new inspections are certainly no less rigorous but Inspectors now try to make the inspection experience more positive and constructive. While for the youngest of our pupils in the Day Nursery, there is still a one-word judgement given, for the rest, this has been replaced by detailed reports of the inspection findings in five areas: Leadership, Management and Governance, Quality of Education, Training and Recreation, Pupils' Physical and Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing, Pupils' Social and Economic Education and Contribution to Society and Safeguarding. Recommendations for further improvement are also made. From a parent's point of view, this still indicates whether all the relevant standards are met; it also means some reading is required in order to form a balanced judgement.

Schools know when an inspection is imminent - they come roughly every four years - so the Berkhamstead staff were waiting for the Monday morning call telling them that the inspectors were arriving the next day. Short notice indeed! The call duly came on November 27th, four years after our previous inspection. Even though we knew that we had addressed all the recommendations from the previous inspection, had retained our Gloucestershire Healthy Living and Learning and Mental Health Champions accreditations, had introduced many exciting new academic and pastoral initiatives and had worked ceaselessly to be the best school possible, it was still a stressful time. Would the inspectors understand the type of school we are? Would they appreciate what we do? Would they manage to amass the appropriate evidence in just three intense but short days? Even though this was her first term in her

new role as Head of School, Mrs Bareham remained remarkably confident, calm and serene which helped the rest of the staff to feel similarly. In the Day Nursery, ably led by Mollie Dodds, a similar calm confidence was evident; the staff there also felt well-prepared and positive. Everyone knew that they had worked consistently hard to create the best learning environment possible; they were also keen to get the inspection done and dusted before Christmas! Six Inspectors duly arrived and spread themselves around the three sites and the scrutiny began. By Thursday evening, it was all over and a draft report written which was read to Mr Cross (Executive Head), Mrs Bareham, Mollie Dodds and the Governors, all of whom were thrilled with the very positive outcome. However, the report still needed to be verified, so the contents had to remain confidential. In February, the long-awaited final report arrived.

The Inspectors spoke of the school in glowing terms. They appreciated our 'happy, caring and fun' learning environment and 'broad and balanced curriculum, suitable for pupils of all ages and abilities', particularly highlighting that 'pupils make rapid progress in developing their ICT skills in areas such as coding'. They could see that children were enabled to 'deepen their knowledge, skills and understanding whilst gaining independence and developing skills for life'. Management and governance were described as 'effective' and 'well-informed' and policies and procedures were seen as 'appropriate' and 'carefully reviewed'. The Early Years department was praised as 'a welcoming and supportive environment' in which children 'engage actively in their learning and with curiosity'. They commented that 'teachers know the children well, and plan activities which engage their interests'. They witnessed the 'effective teaching of phonics',

the 'varied and stimulating playtime activities which develop their creative and collaborative skills' and noticed that 'children are excited when they arrive at school'. The Day Nursery was delighted to achieve the top grade of 'Outstanding' in all areas: Overall Effectiveness, Quality of Education, Behaviour and Attitudes, Personal Development and Leadership and Management. The 'high-quality educational programmes' were described as 'well-planned' and 'highly effective', based on children's learning needs and interests. All children were considered to be 'extremely well-prepared for the next stage of education' and, most importantly, the children were seen as happy - learning 'important values' and how to be 'polite, kind and to persevere.' It was abundantly clear to the Inspectors that the Berkhamstead ethos and aims underpin both School and Day Nursery.

The strong pastoral care and robust safeguarding culture in both School and Day Nursery was also noted; Inspectors commented on the 'clear culture of care which promotes pupils' self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence' and felt that the 'promotion of kindness as a core value has a clear impact on their [the children's] attitudes and behaviour'. They felt that 'pupils' behaviour is of a high standard and they have a clear sense of right and wrong'; they observed that 'on the rare occasions bullying occurs, it is addressed effectively', staff applying the behaviour policy 'consistently and fairly'. In summary, the report states that 'All the relevant standards have been met'. There were so many positive statements - too many to recount in this short article - but the full report is available on the School website. Well done to everyone - staff, pupils and parents - for such a successful outcome!



WE WERE RATED 'OUTSTANDING' IN ALL AREAS IN OUR LATEST ISI INSPECTION!

We were awarded the highest possible inspection grade of 'Outstanding' in all areas, an award which was judged by the Independent Schools Inspectorate following an inspection in November 2023. After a rigorous three-day inspection, and a long wait for the final report, we were thrilled with its outcome, and were delighted to announce that:

- The overall effectiveness of our Early Years provision is OUTSTANDING
- The quality of education is OUTSTANDING
- Behaviour and attitudes are OUTSTANDING
- The personal development of children is OUTSTANDING
- Leadership and management are OUTSTANDING

Huge congratulations to Manager, Mollie Dodds and the rest of the Day Nursery team! (*Head to P6 to read Mrs Agg's feature about the inspection*).

COMING SOON



LOTS OF LEARNING!

Every day is packed full of fun, engaging and educational activities for children at the Day Nursery, and our youngsters benefit from specialist teaching from the school's MFL and Pre-Prep music teachers, Mrs McCreanor and Mrs Sallis; French is taught to our oldest children, the Wise Bears, and all of our children enjoy Berky Bear Music with Mrs Sallis. Learning opportunities are further enhanced by the extra-curricular activities we offer. The Teddy Bears and Fuzzy Bears welcome specialist company Drama Tots each week. This is a drama, music and movement class, planned to encourage young children to use their imagination, improve their communication and language skills and to have fun - all in an environment with which they are familiar. With Sarah's inviting collection of props, puppets and instruments - and her exuberant way of delivering her classes - her visits are much anticipated by our youngsters! Didi Rugby is another popular visiting class, and an optional activity for our over 2s. Coach Keith teaches the children skills such as sharing and taking turns, and helps them develop mobility, agility and confidence - all in a non-competitive and fun environment. It takes place on the school's MUGA or in the Andrews Gym, depending on the weather.

BERKHAMPSTEAD DAY NURSERY - CHARLTON KINGS

We are delighted to announce the purchase of Lexham Lodge, in Charlton Kings, which will become our second Berkhamstead Day Nursery! A handsome Grade II listed building, similar in style to our Pre-Prep building, it will mirror the aims and values of the existing Day Nursery on Pittville Circus Road to provide a nurturing, happy and stimulating environment for children from three months to four years old. Our goal is to open our doors later this year.



MUSIC TO OUR EARS - MUSIC HANDS WORKSHOP

We welcomed the charismatic 'Mr O' from Music Hands back to school to deliver a workshop to Year 5 on music composition, production and performance using iPads. This year, the workshop fell on World Book Day, so a host of literary characters also became skilful foley artists, performing and recording sounds in the classroom, blending their computing and musical knowledge to compose and perform some truly excellent orchestral pieces. 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.

...NEWS...

FROM PREP



CHELTENHAM FOOTBALL

More than sixty of the Berky community enjoyed an afternoon of football during half term. Cheltenham Town FC took on Port Vale at the 'Jonny-Rocks' stadium in Whaddon Road. The game ended in a superb 3-2 win for our home team, and a brilliant time was had by all. Thank you to Cheltenham Town FC for such a fun time.



MATHS CHALLENGE

Four Year 6 pupils were selected to represent Berky in the annual maths challenge, hosted by Cheltenham College. The room was full of pupils, from as far away as London! Competition was fierce. The day consisted of a series of rounds, challenging the application of maths skills and resilience! The buzz in the room was electric as all the children applied themselves to a series of demanding questions. The moans and groans coming from children around the room was hilarious! We had absolutely no idea where we were in the ranking until the results were read out. Berky had done it again - Bronze medal position, just like last year! This was a fantastic result as the competition was certainly tough this year. Well done, Berky! JH



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!

GLOUCESTERSHIRE SCHOOLS WILDLIFE QUIZ

The Gloucestershire Wildlife Quiz has become a popular component of the school year. This year, our team of Ben R, Tom R, Freddie L and Ben W faced Swindon Village and Christ Church in our heat. Successful answers on UK birds, wild flowers, trees, mammals and reptiles saw us home and dry and victorious. Our most knowledgeable quartet has a semi-final to look forward to after the Easter break. MC



BOYS' HOCKEY

The boys who attended lunchtime Hockey Club played in a match against Rendcomb towards the end of the Spring Term. It was wonderful seeing how the boys were able to use the skills they have learned in practice on a large astro, and both the A and the B teams worked superbly as teams and won their matches. Well done, boys.



HOUSE CAPTAINS

Congratulations to the Year 6 pupils - Kitty H, Estella L, Coco P and Ellie P - who were elected as House Captains at the beginning of the Spring Term. Being a House Captain is a privilege and a responsibility, and needless to say, the staff found it a very difficult decision choosing these pupils as we have so many fantastic children in Year 6. However, we were delighted with the final choice, and we are confident that these exemplary pupils will act as superb role models for their younger counterparts. The pupils joined the existing four elected earlier in the school year.



NATIONAL QUIZ CHAMPIONSHIPS

Berkhampstead fielded two strong teams in the National Quiz Championships. As ever, schools from up and down the country provided stiff opposition for our quizzers. Our teams scored well in the first online heat. Berkhampstead B (Wilf M, Lucas dCV, Teddy B, Lucy W) just fell short of the qualifying score for the semi-final but Berkhampstead A (Alastair M, Angus C, Tamar C, Jack W) quizzed especially well and made it through to the next stage. This talented team then enjoyed a successful semi-final, earning a well-deserved spot in the Grand Online Final which will take place in July. Plenty of time for more revision! Well quizzed, all! MC



MUSIC NOTES

The Spring Recital was a marvellous opportunity for many young instrumentalists to perform for an appreciative audience. It is always a pleasure to see the children watching and congratulating each other for their playing, and we heard several first-time performances. Almost all the instruments taught at Berky were represented with various levels of ability from beginner to Grade 4 standard from strings, wind, brass, percussion, piano and guitar. PM



MUSIC EXAM RESULTS

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

- Initial - Olivia M (Violin**)
- Grade 2 - Ioan C (Violin**), Charlie H (Clarinet+), George J (Drum Kit+)
- Grade 4 - Mollie R (Flute+)

*Denotes pass with merit **Denotes pass with distinction

CHESS NEWS

A busy chess term saw plenty of exciting battles during our lunchtime chess clubs. The Y3 and Y4 players meet on Tuesdays. This club's various league winners are as follows: Division One: Oliver S; Division Two: Rupert S; Division Three: Annie W; Division Four: Devan P. The Y5 and Y6 club's (meeting on Thursdays) league winners are: Division One: Ben R; Division Two: Lara C; Division Three: Sidney R. Two Y3 teams ventured to Dean Close and came away with two close but enjoyable victories. Next term will see the Berky Congress and the House Chess Championship. MC





WORLD
BOOK
DAY

READ ALL ABOUT IT!

WORLD BOOK DAY
7 MARCH 2024

World Book Day - one of our most favourite annual events - provided a welcome opportunity for pupils and staff in the School and Day Nursery to dress up as their favourite fictional characters! There was a wonderful array of characters to be seen including a host of Harry Potters, Roald Dahl creations, Where's Wallys and

Hungry Caterpillars. And who can forget Head of School, Mrs Bareham, as Alice in Wonderland, Mrs John as Cruella de Vil or Mrs Baker as a very stern Miss Trunchbull? The day was really good fun - packed full of literary activities - and 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 the parents for providing all the many brilliant and imaginative costumes, and to the kitchen for preparing a literary feast of gingerbread men, 'Superworm's Garden' (Rob's imaginative twist on a spaghetti dish) and Wonka chocolate bars!

WE PLANTED RUNNER BEANS, PLACED THEM IN A WARM, SUNNY SPOT AND WATERED THEM REGULARLY, AND WE NOW HAVE A FANTASTIC BEANSTALK.

A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY

We had such a cold start to our Spring Term, but this did not hinder our enthusiasm. We enjoyed our STEM week with Mr Banks and the Year 6 children teaching us how to use Spheros. We made some intricate marble runs and studied the artist Andrew Goldsworthy to make lots of amazing models from natural and manmade materials.

We celebrated National Storytelling Week with everyone bringing in their favourite story, which provided an eclectic range of stories to share. We presented the children with a variety of props, which led them to act out scenes from some well-loved stories such as 'The Gruffalo', 'The Three Little Pigs' and 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar'.

During the second part of the term, we learned about spring. During our Forest School sessions, each child was given a small stick, and whilst reading the story of 'The Tiny Seed' by Eric Carle, the children independently chose from a selection of different coloured lengths of wool. They wound a specific colour around their stick to represent how the story made them feel and to help them retell parts of the story later.

We planted runner beans, placed them in a warm, sunny spot and watered them regularly, and we now have a fantastic beanstalk. The children have been learning to write, copy or trace their names and, to enhance the area, they have written their names on big green paper leaves which are placed around our beanstalk. We have linked this to the story of 'Jasper's Beanstalk' by Nick Butterworth.

We took delivery of some living eggs, and over two weeks, we observed the hatching process, and then the chicks growing and changing daily. We talked about how we have changed and the children described all the things they can do now but couldn't do as a baby. MM Caterpillar'.



WE COLLECTED TADPOLES FROM THE POND IN THE WILDLIFE GARDEN AND HAVE LOVED WATCHING THEM CHANGE AND GROW FROM TINY FROGSPAWN TO LITTLE FROGLETS.

The Spring Term has been full of excitement for the children in Reception. We came back after Christmas enthusiastic to share news about the new toys we had received from Santa. This led beautifully into our topic of 'Toys!' Throughout the term, we used stories to guide our learning on toys such as Shirley Hughes's classic 'Dogger', after which we tried to imagine how it would feel to lose our most precious cuddly. Mr Cross paid us a visit to share his most treasured childhood toys, including a Rubik's cube and a special wooden marble game that his father had designed and made for him.

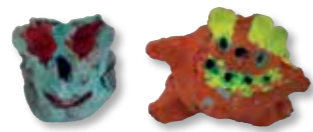
We explored the use of oil pastels in art to draw our favourite toy and these lovely pictures now adorn the walls in our classrooms. Reading Julia Donaldson's 'Paper Dolls' inspired the children to create their own family of paper dolls as well as honing their cutting skills!

We were pleased to welcome Miss Jolliffe to the Reception team for her PGCE placement during the Spring Term. She has been a real asset to Berkhamstead School and has delivered some wonderfully engaging lessons during her time with us, namely our practical science sessions on how to grow and care for plants.

Throughout the second half of term, our focus moved to the joys of Spring as we hoped for warmer weather. We collected tadpoles from the pond in the Wildlife Garden and have loved watching them change and grow from tiny frogspawn to little froglets. The children were disappointed to return them to the pond at the end of term as they had become very attached to their class pets, ensuring they were fed and cared for every day! We were also lucky enough to observe the hatching of our 'Living Eggs' - a wonderful reminder of how magical new life can be! Z M-S



YEAR 1'S TERM HAS BEEN OUT OF THIS WORLD!



The children have absolutely loved our topic this term as they've blasted full speed into Space. In English, the term started with the children recounting the story of 'Whatever Next'. Their imaginations were captured by this delightful book, and it was a pleasure to read their versions, which they enthusiastically read to Reception on World Book Day. After half term, the children had another opportunity to make their own books, this time non-fiction.

They have identified lots of facts about each of the planets and chosen which they would like to include in their information books.

A real highlight was our space-themed day; everyone loved dressing up and what an effort was made - there were some fabulous costumes. There were tasty moon cakes made and we were delighted to invite two very special guests: Mr Morphew to help with exploding rockets and Mr Jones to take us on an amazing AI journey through Space. The day was great fun and enjoyed by everyone.

In art, the children have created their own aliens out of clay, used marbling to make their own planets and painted amazing pictures of Space. Science has seen the children learning about different groups of animals, as well as planting sunflower seeds; there is stiff competition to see whose grows the tallest.

One of the highlights this term has been our DT Day. The children were tasked to invent their own space buggies out of recycling collected over half term.

What a creative bunch - there were lots of brilliant ideas.

What a fabulous term, full of fun and excitement! C M-L



YEAR 2 ARE FULL OF THE JOYS OF SPRING!

Spring well and truly sprang for our Year 2 children! They returned from their Christmas break with renewed enthusiasm and vigour, and were greeted with their new spring topic - 'Castles!' Pupils learnt all about the features of castles, what makes a safe and secure compound and how castles have developed over time. They designed and created their own, trained as knights and warriors, and even attacked castles (their own, made from construction materials) with cannonballs (also known as beanbags). With Mrs Smith as their Liege and Mr Jones as their Knight Commander, they thoroughly enjoyed their topic.

Spring has also brought about the study of both local plants and animal habitats in their hands-on science lessons, which have featured children exploring the school's grounds, magnifying glasses in hand, hoping to chance upon a Ghost Orchid or a secretive, sneaky squirrel. Computing has provided much enjoyment as well; children have taken and edited photos, created digital self portraits using iPads and have spent a number of weeks building programmable Lego models, including a boat, an arctic sledge and a submarine! Such fun!

The Year 2 children have somehow managed to find time for their other subjects too. English has involved recounts, poetry and narrative work, whereas maths has included money, measure and a deep focus on multiplying and

dividing; arrays, commutation and equal sharing. You name it, we've done it! RE and CWB have looked at the life of Jesus and Staying Safe respectively, while Year 2's art sessions have allowed children to acquaint themselves with the techniques of collage and ink printing. All children have also started weekly swimming sessions, such an important life skill. All this alongside PE, French, music, phonics and reading - how do we fit it all in?! As the great Robin Williams once said, 'Spring is Nature's way of saying, "Let's Party!"'; may the party continue for the superstars of Year 2! KS



SPRING CONCERTS

BRING THE HOUSE DOWN!



Our prestigious Spring Concerts were held this year in the Town Hall for the first time and staff and children reacted very positively to the exciting experience. 'A grand stage', 'beautiful hall', 'lots of space', 'comfy seats with a good view' were the most repeated comments from the children and they also told us that their parents liked sitting in the balconies and using the bar!

We were treated to a wealth of wonderful performances from each instrumental and choral ensemble from the youngest (Y2's Medieval music) through the beginner strings 'jigsaw' to Berky Bows and the Chamber Ensemble, Guitar Club, Razzamajazz, Berky Blues, Samba Shed, Berky Beats, Junior Choir and VoxBox. The progression from beginners to those with several years' experience

is evident and it is a great thrill to hear and see the children developing their skills and confidence on the stage.

Our final item brought all the Prep children together for a medley of songs from the recent film 'Wonka' with excellent narrators and soloists from Y6, accompanied by a live band. The enjoyment of the singers was palpable and I think most of the audience could have participated, word-perfect, had they been asked! PM





...OFF WE GO...

LEARNING BROUGHT TO LIFE FOR OUR INQUISITIVE PUPILS



OXFORD SCIENCE CENTRE

Year 1 went out of this world (almost!) for an incredible day at Oxford Science Centre. To support our term's learning all about SPACE, the children went inside a planetarium and were blasted into space! We visited the moon and several planets of our Solar System; the children were particularly fascinated exploring the planet Mars! Star constellations and stunning galaxies were also highlights. At the centre, the children also got to explore the 'Exploration Zone'. A range of hands-on, science-based activities inspired and enthused the children; they made giant marble runs, explored magnets, changing temperatures, creating circuits, making rockets that flew up into the sky from the air table and exploring microscopes! Who knows... maybe these skills learnt could help one of us to become an astronaut in the future! AS



SKILLZONE

This term, both the Year 4 and Year 6 children went on trips to the SkillZONE Centre in Gloucester. SkillZONE is a fantastic purpose-built environment for learning about all different types of safety. The Year 4 children visited the Water Safety, Park, House, Road, Farm and Shop to learn about the risks in each place, whilst the Year 6 visited the Magistrate's Court, Police Custody Cell, Bus, Train and Dark Alley. Everyone agreed that they had learned a lot about keeping safe whilst having an interesting and fun time. Thank you to the wonderful volunteer guides. MB



WARWICK CASTLE

On Wednesday 6th March, Year 2 found themselves enjoying all the fun of the castle - Warwick Castle to be precise! The first thing they encountered was the Bowman. He was very impressed with Year 2's improvisation skills as they watched him and had to react to the arrows shot in battle. Fortunately, he aimed the arrow in the opposite direction to the children and they just pretended to dodge the arrows! Having braved the portcullis and entrance, Year 2 were most impressed by the grandeur of the Great Hall. It was then time to approach the Conqueror's Fortress. After some careful negotiation of the slopes and steps, Year 2 were delighted to see the wonderful view from the top. They made their way down from the fortress and headed to the birds of prey area. What an amazing show, with birds of prey swooping above their heads. The final part of the trip was the amazing Horrible Histories Maze and, despite the children's best efforts, they didn't manage to lose any of the staff! GS

THE MINSTER & ST MATTHEW'S

Year 5 went to the Minster in the centre of Cheltenham and listened to a talk by Charlotte Burcher-Barnard. She told us about the history of the church and that it is over a thousand years old. There used to be a school at the church which at the time was the only school in Cheltenham. Our pupils asked some intelligent questions about the building, and we learnt about the services at the church and about meetings that happen during the week to help the members of the church. We then went to visit St Matthew's on the other side of the road. This church was built when the congregation at the Minster had outgrown the building. The children were able to point out the differences between the two church buildings and saw how the space in the church could be used differently, with different styles of worship. We also learnt how the church is linked to churches in Sweden, how it helps women in South America, and also how the church feeds over a hundred people in Cheltenham, giving them free food, shelter and warmth. MT



CHELTENHAM LADIES' COLLEGE

Year 5 were invited to Cheltenham Ladies' College to experience some secondary school science investigations. Their sessions were led by Mr Gill, the Head of Science, and were based on Patterns in Chemistry.

Mr Gill led with a discussion about what the pupils already knew about patterns in science, then proceeded with a demonstration from the periodic table showing that as you added lithium, sodium and potassium to water, they became more reactive.

The pupils were then invited to have a go at their own investigations, mixing a variety of chemicals together and noting patterns that were created. The pupils had a great time and have been invited back for another visit next term to investigate patterns in biology. A big thank you to Mr Gill and the team at CLC for this wonderful experience. TM

MUSEUM IN THE PARK

To celebrate our topic on toys, the Reception children visited Stroud Museum in the Park. We were greeted with possibly the wettest day on record, but the children embraced the puddles and splish-splashed their way through Stratford Park.

Throughout the day, we were able to play with the artefacts such as wooden cup and balls, spinning tops and metal farm animals. We explored the oldest and simplest of games such as 'pick up sticks' and even learnt some games that we have brought into our classroom including 'Queelio Cockio, who's got the ballio?' The museum was full of fascinating exhibits, and we were thrown back in time to a Victorian classroom as well as being able to play with old train sets and board games.

The children represented the school beautifully, and the staff at the museum praised their exceptional manners. Z M-S



THE COMMANDERY

The Year 5s enjoyed a wonderful trip to Worcester to support their studies on the Stuarts. Our first workshop was Get Ready for Battle where the children learned about the pikemen, musketeers and the cavalry from the Civil War. We had a chance to try on some of the armour; handle the weapons and then took part in an interactive pike and cannon drill.

The second session was about stepping into the shoes of everyday Stuart people. We learned about their clothes, what they ate and how they lived. We also saw how wounded soldiers were treated in battle and had the opportunity to handle many artefacts.

A tour to explore the rich history of the Commandery capped off what was a fantastic day. P McC





U8 | GIRLS' NETBALL

What a brilliant netball term. The progress the girls have made this term has been fantastic. We have begun to pass with more accuracy whilst allowing for the movement of the runner and our shooting has greatly improved. The girls' teamwork and desire to find space has enabled them to navigate the opposition swiftly, thus providing more scoring opportunities. We continue to work on our defence, ensuring we cut down the space for our opponents and look for the opportunity to intercept. We have had a mixed bag of results with lots of wins mixed in with a few unlucky defeats. Well done, girls! IP

U8 Team: Olivia B, Eleanor C, Betty D, Isla E, Maddie E, Lillian L, Tilly M, Florence P, Florence R, Annabelle S, Eden S, Lucy W, Chloe W, Annie W



U9 | GIRLS' NETBALL

The 'Bee Netball' values have definitely been in evidence with the U9 Netballers this term; Bee proud, Bee fair, Bee friendly, Bee strong, Bee yourself and Bee together. They have thoroughly enjoyed playing Bee Netball and have certainly shown dedication during training and at the matches, so once again, I have been very impressed with their attitude and the sporting behaviour. Over the season there have been many wins and a few character-building losses too - great for balance! The girls have been developing their skills in the 5 and 7-aside formats 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! CMcC

U9 Team: Nancy A, Isabella B, Eden B, Tamar C, Alanah F, Anna H, Starlar H, Hermione H, Jemima H-S, Amelia I, Eleanor K, Iris M, Amara M, Alayna M, Chloe R, Beau R



U10 | GIRLS' NETBALL

Wow, what a season! The girls have worked hard to develop their skills and match play within the Bee Netball game. One of our teams has maintained a winning streak throughout the season and are an impressive machine! They have developed a confidence on court and are happiest when driving the ball forward. Every member of the squad can switch from tight marking to attacking play within a heartbeat! Our other teams have had mixed fortunes but have learnt through some of these tougher matches. 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. 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 hard this season and will go from strength to strength next year! JH

U10 Team: Annabelle A, Rose B, Polly B, Isabella B, Lara C, Harriet CV, Rosie E, Amelia E, Melba F, Olivia M, Emily O, Megan P, Flo PT, Hannah P, Isla R, Allegra S, Remi T, Evie W, Yaz Y



U11 | GIRLS' NETBALL

We have had a variety of results throughout the season. We have had some good wins and some big losses, but we worked well and enjoyed some brilliant games in the first half of term. Each girl has played her role well within the squad and adapted as and when needed. Modern netball is about being versatile and having the skills and attributes to play a variety of positions, and many of the girls have worked hard on their range of skills. A handful of girls have shown their natural strength in defence, working hard on marking and interceptions. Most girls have worked hard on their shooting, and due to the Bee Netball rotation rule during games, they were all forced to play a shooting role. A core few girls have shown their strength in centre court, supporting play and being quick to respond to change in play. Well done for a good season, girls, and good luck next year; I hope you continue with your netball. CK

U11 Team: Hattie E, Eulalie G, Eva H, Kitty H, Ella H, Charlotte J, Estella L, Frankie M, Coco P, Ellie P, Millie R, Betty R, Mollie R and Olivia W.

Colours: Eva H, Ella H, Coco P, Charlotte J, Millie R, Olivia W, Eulalie G

Outstanding: Ella H, Coco P, Charlotte J, Eulalie G



U8 | BOYS' FOOTBALL

It is always great to see teams develop throughout a term and this year's Buffaloes, Bisons and Bulls were no exception. As always we played mixed ability teams with the boys varying their positions in each match to get an experience of the game from different angles.

The boys played well in their respective teams and always kept their heads up, aiming for the win. Our positional, defending and attacking play all improved and we are pleased with our results. A pleasing season. Well done boys! TM

U8 Team: Ralph A, Ezra B, Rocco B, Jonah B, Edward D, Guy D, Leo D, Archer D, Jack O'K, Arturo, P, Jacob P, Devan P, George R, Seb R, Arlo R, George R-S, Rupert S, Benjamin S, Ollie S, Felix T, Max T, Jack W



U9 | BOYS' FOOTBALL

Both sides have worked hard all season in training and in the matches showed an 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 three out of the six games played and drawing just the one. The As kept the same goalkeeper for the entire season, and it was a credit to him that we conceded so few goals. In attack, we started the season with an excellent 7-1 win at Cheltenham College



and despite some indifferent performances mid-season we finished with a solid 3-0 win against King's. The Bs also recorded an early 7-2 win at Cheltenham College but then struggled at times to find the net and, despite some closely fought games and frenetic performances, recorded three draws and two wins. 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

U9 Team: Freddie B, Ted B, Ioan C, Magnus D, Jacob H, Quinn H, Arthur H, Eddie H, Seth L, Max LG, George L, Ellis M, Toby M, Milo R, Ollie S, Eddie S, Ethan S, Dion W



U10 | BOYS' FOOTBALL

The U10 boys have had a fantastic and successful football season. It was a challenging start and the boys lost the first couple of matches. In training, they worked hard on defending and they began to work well as a team. I have been impressed with how well they have adapted to playing in different positions and they have supported each other with words of encouragement in the second half of the season. This half term, the boys have won most matches and they demonstrated great sportsmanship in the last match against The Richard Pate School. This was a great way to finish the season. DB

U10 Team: Hughie B, Olly B, Leo C, Angus C, Lucas DCV, Charlie F, Jack F, Fergus G, Jack H, Charles H, Miles H, Tharusha J, Atlas M, Archie M, Henry P, Rishik R, Toby R, Isaac SR, Charlie W, Jasper W



U11 | BOYS' FOOTBALL

The U11 A team have enjoyed an excellent season, which has seen them make great progress as a team. They had a mixture of some fine victories against Rendcomb, Hatherop and Kitebrook and some hard fought draws against Ashley Manor, King's Gloucester and The Richard Pate School amongst others, and a couple of losses. They played an attacking brand of football and scored 21 goals with seven different players finding the back of the net. This sums up how well they worked as a team, with everyone contributing positively. They have been a hard-working group and very encouraging towards each other and that has made them a difficult team to beat. They have been an absolute pleasure to coach and they have really demonstrated the Berky spirit throughout the season. Well done to all of the team. PMcC

It has been a great season for the U11 B team with some great moments and results and plenty of discussion on tactics! The boys have had great enthusiasm for football and overcome a lack of some skills with plenty of passion and fun. Defensively, Luis, Freddie and Ben R in goal set the tone and were determined not to let anyone through. In midfield, Hugo, Jack and Tom R worked really hard with Hugo's left foot, Jack's strength and Tom's work-rate being valuable to the team. Both Ben S and Tommy had plenty of chances in attack, and both scored great goals. Ben W played the roaming role and appeared in all parts of the pitch even when playing in goal! The two results against Ashley Manor and the one against King's were the highlights of the season, but the overriding sense from all the games was the fun had by all. Well done, boys! RC

U11 Team: George E, Jack F, Thomas G, Ella H, Hugo H, George J, Freddie L, Alastair M, Luis MR, Wilf M, Zack P, Isaac R, Sid R, Josiah R, Ben R, Tom R, Ben S, Ben W

Colours: George E, Ella H, George J, Alastair M, Wilf M, Zack P, Isaac R, Sid R, Josiah R

Outstanding: Ella H, George J, Wilf M, Josiah R



FLIPPING BRILLIANT!

Yet another successful House Pancake Races event took place immediately after half term, and children from Years 3 to 6 participated with huge enthusiasm.

Onlookers were extremely impressed with the proficient pancake flipping skills of the pupils, and there was considerable excitement as the children were cheered on by their houses. Overall victory went to St Andrew's and St George's - who share the much-coveted frying pan trophy - but it has to be said that all the houses performed to a very high standard and should be proud of their achievements.

The annual House Pancake Races are a long-standing tradition at Berkhamstead, and were introduced by Executive Head, Richard Cross in 2010.



The Blazer is printed on carbon balanced and FSC certified paper using vegan based inks.



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WWW.BERKHAMPSTEADSCHOOL.CO.UK

BERKHAMPSTEAD SCHOOL, PITTVILLE CIRCUS ROAD, CHELTENHAM, GLOUCESTERSHIRE GL52 2QA
TELEPHONE: 01242 523263 EMAIL: office@berkhampsteadschool.co.uk [berkhampstead_school](https://www.instagram.com/berkhampstead_school) [@BerkyCheltenham](https://www.facebook.com/BerkyCheltenham)