

Well, what a week to end another amazing month! Jubilee week for our children has been simply marvellous! If you have missed the flood of photos and videos on Twitter then head to our website which links them all (you don't need to be on Twitter, you can just have a look at the bottom of the page).

I used some of my military links when I managed to persuade WO2 Matt Screen, Band Corporal Major of the Household Cavalry, to support us! Matt was amazing! He filmed himself answering questions about being a member of the 'HCav', about learning to play a musical instrument, about being a part of doing actual fanfares for the Queen and other Royal family members and about failures and mistakes he had made. He also gave up his time to participate in not one but two live question and answer sessions with the junior children, which they loved (particularly the question about the itchy hat!). We also had the pleasure of receiving a personalised message from the Pipe Major of The Royal Regiment of Scotland (who piped for the Queen the week before!) and a shout out for 3 special members of our school community.

To round off the musical aspect of learning for the children, the school welcomed in Jim from Edsential to share brass instruments and fanfares, something organised by our music lead, Mrs Barrett. Not only that but as you know, we have our very own brass expert, Mrs Donaghue, who played for the infant children. Using a range of instruments and also Information Technology, all of the children were able to create and perform their own fanfare!!!

The entire school spent the 4 days learning about the different decades of the Queen's life, what she has survived and suffered, what she has done and seen, with the children making and illustrating their own timelines. They examined the portraits that have been created of her, in various media, by a range of artists and each year group created their own portrait in a variety of styles. The art work was stunning and testament to the talent not just of the children but Art and DT lead, Mr Barnes, whose passion for the subject is clear for you all to see.

The children spent time researching the Queen's carriages, creating some detailed and professional looking 'exploded diagrams' that showcased the many historical artefacts that make up components of it, before designing, creating and evaluating their own carriages in DT.

As if that wasn't enough, as you may indeed remember, some months ago the children did a homework project on 'Puddings fit for a Queen' with your help, and the winning pudding, as selected by the school cooks, was Lemon Posset! This recipe, submitted by one of our children and his sister who had made it at home and tested it, was then made and shared with the children today by the school cooks as a surprise (it took 50+ lemons, 3KG of castor sugar and 12L cream to cater for all of the children)!

One of the children made both Dr Carr and the school dog, Gus, some royal accoutrements and naturally there was the red, white and blue dress code for the week that culminated with the entire school wearing patriotic attire today for our Jubilee lunch. Staff were keen to do their usual fund raising for the homeless and chipped in their £1 for the privilege! We also had a parent send in doughnuts to thank us for our hard work this half term and today I received an email from Nuffield in Chester offering our staff a free pass for next week! HOW KIND IS THAT! [@Nuffieldhealthchester](https://twitter.com/Nuffieldhealthchester)

What a week of learning, and what a week to set up the half term and the national celebrations for the Queen and her Platinum Jubilee, once again highlighting the way that we work with a range of interesting people to enhance the learning experience for our children!

This month we have welcomed in some post graduate students from University of Cumbria who worked in the outdoors with our Year 3 children. Our links with UoC will be strengthened in the coming years, we hope, and this visit was the first of many. Mrs Liversey did her first outreach visit for Liverpool Hope University where she participated in Quality Assurance activities. I think she is a natural in this domain and will no doubt add real value to the team both at Hope and also in our school. She has been coaching Miss O'Hara in terms of student and initial teacher training support this last academic year and I know that Mrs O'Hara has loved it. It is one of the most rewarding parts of the job of any leader (and there are many) when you are bringing on the talent of the future. The job of student mentor has become so much more difficult and contentious to when I did this role as a deputy and this makes me even more proud of Mrs L than I am already.

We obviously have completed the Y6 SATs, and the Y2 ones – we were grateful to our governors who were able to come and observe the way we do things and indeed the LA who did a 'spot check' and were impressed with our exemplary practice.

As we continue to wait for our Ofsted visit, where we hope the hard work of our entire community will be recognised with a change in grade to 'GOOD', we simply continue with business as usual. We plan ahead for next year (destroying the urban myth that we 'wind down' for the summer!); we maintain the momentum with learning; we engage with Local Authority moderation (this year it is Key Stage 1); we welcome visitors and share practice, we look at staffing, class composition for next year as we discuss a potential move towards mixed classes in the lower juniors; we think about optimising learning environments and making changes to our site - so much to do! We have shared the diary dates for next half term and term dates for next year already so if you don't have them, do make sure you follow up and ask us to resend.

We are all excited to be opening school up again this year, after the last few years of missing out, and we can't wait for Sports Days and class assemblies, open days and leavers events. It is such a magical time of the year for our children as we consider transition and plan for new starters. It is a time when we can begin to celebrate some of the wins we have enjoyed this year and they are all about the children – this week we have discussed the progress of Y4 in their times tables ahead of the national tests in this area; the way that Y6 have successfully completed SATs; the way KS1 managed their SATs despite some anxious children; and the way the entire infant department have been collaborating on driving up phonics standards both for learning and also ahead of the Phonics Screening Check after the holiday. Much of this success is to do with our extremely productive and positive working relationship with the majority of all of you! It takes a village, as they say, to raise a child, and we have to work to ensure that your children, our children, are supported and thriving.

On the topic of excellent relationships and supportive parents, can I thank all those of you who have done Mystery Reader duties – everyone has loved this! And as for those of you who have made and donated 'Story Sacks', I am humbled by your kindness and generosity. You have no idea how grateful we are for these incredible additions to our reading material.

To 'Tee Up' next half term, the first week back will see our school hit social media in a big way when Commando Joes, our Character Education programme, launches the Woodlands Primary School Missions – if you recall, your children did a homework project way back in October half term where they continued a story after 'walking through a gate in a wall'. Having picked some of these, we then spent the entire INSET day in January as a staff team planning how we could use the ideas of the children to create curriculum lead and pupil grounded missions for Commando Joes – which we bossed! Staff then facilitated the missions and from there we worked with the CoJoe team to professionalise the end product and create the newest missions for this national company... our school, our staff, our pupils on a national platform being celebrated.

Next half term I will be announcing our intent to run a daily 'parents and tots' session in school for the community. The finer details have yet to be ironed out but this will be an opportunity to pop in and once we have ascertained the take up we will develop from a social session to things like baby massage and baby yoga, Makaton and so on. Watch this space!

As an aside, I am hoping to attend a selection event for 2 days the first week back – for a once in a lifetime experience. I have been shortlisted to be part of the 4-person team, the first all-female British Army team, to row the Atlantic in the winter of 2024. Can you imagine? If successful and selected I could be rowing 2 hours on and 2 hours off on my 50th Birthday... I would have 2 and a half years to train for it but that dream could be shattered if Ofsted choose to surprise us that first week back because I would not want to be anywhere other than here when they come. We shall see! I already feel like I have won the lottery to have my health, to have my beautiful children, our lovely school dog, to work in our school and to have amazing colleagues to work with, so I am not sure I could be as lucky as to also be chosen to row the Atlantic but one never knows. Watch this space!

Have a great half term everybody, enjoy the Jubilee celebrations and we will see you all on the 6th June!