

Head teacher Blog – December 2018

This Week...

I love this time of year in school, the atmosphere is heady with excitement. And that's only the staff! If Mrs Miller could start the countdown in September, she would. Her room is a homage to everything Christmassy, so much so that when the big FC came to deliver the presents, he chose Woodlands Class's wintry wonderland – pictured below, as a suitable place to give presents.

Cash for kids donated nearly £4000 worth of presents. What a wonderful gesture – local families have bought toys for the children to enjoy and this charity coordinates the donations to ensure that no child misses out. Some of the toys go home for families to enjoy on Christmas morning – FC delivers them in secret keeping young imaginations alive and renewing our faith in awe and wonder!

Some classes have been to an SEN friendly performance of Snow White in Blackpool, they enjoyed the experience enormously. I really welcome the move towards signed performances, 'noise friendly' performances and the realisation that all children enjoy these magical experiences in different ways.

Other classes have had shopping trips to buy presents for family members – I know not all of you will fully appreciate the rather random items the pupils have chosen – but the point is they chose them with you (sometimes themselves!) in mind and that is the true meaning of gifting!

The dress rehearsal on Monday of 'Camel lights Action' was an acting triumph. Loved every minute but the best bit for me was the tango performed whilst sitting on stools on castors! Genius. One bit went wrong as one couple sailed across the stage the wrong way – but it added to the joy of the performance and was very funny. Dan from the office and our IT tech also joined in wearing disco wigs and dancing with Seedlings class – I bet they didn't expect that when they applied to work here! Our ex pupils came to watch from Sir Tom Finney High. They have all grown about a foot since July 2018, we had hugs and handshakes and it was LOVELY to see them.

Mr Murphy was the DJ and overall party coordinator on Tuesday. It was good to see children playing party games and receiving prizes (chosen by the school council) On the subject of prizes and winning – we have somewhat of a dilemma every Friday. We have two teams (red and blue). The pupils in the losing team feel the disappointment so keenly that it spoils their time at school. So from January we are simply having a star of the week noticeboard on the wall in the hall.

The highlights of the week are overshadowed by some fabulous achievements this term. On Friday we are celebrating with an awards assembly – the nominated pupils will all receive a medal to keep forever, a scroll to remember why they won it and an opportunity to have a photo of the event. My personal highlights are Mason getting the courage, stamina and sheer chutzpah to walk longer and longer distances, Lexi feeding herself and managing to stay in the hall, Aliz using her walker, JJ using PECS outside school, Jacob reading and seeing Koobra regularly attend school.

Then lo and behold another fantastic thing happened – Luke ate Christmas party food (for the very first time). I know that many of you understand that for some pupils with a diagnosis of ASD, Christmas isn't that great – too many changes and disruptions to routines coupled with unfathomable social expectations!

You will also understand that much of this progress is not part of a recognised assessment tool promoted by the Department of Education, hence we making the move towards using *evidence for learning* to capture all these landmark achievements. More news of this in the New Year.

Lastly, all the staff have worked so hard for this 15 week term. The pupils have to settle in and in some cases made friends and found their niche, new staff have to undertake initial induction and all staff have had, intensive interaction training, Makaton, administration of medicines, (plus other training e.g. tracheostomy) safeguarding training, moving and handling and team teach training! It is exhausting keeping up with new information and keeping abreast of the latest research, we do it because we really enjoy working in this special environment and there is a genuine desire to be the best we can.

In addition, the creation of specialist classrooms within the school has had a massive effect on progress and pupil outcomes – all positive. I am so proud of my staff and our pupils.

I wish all of you a wonderful break over Christmas, plenty of family time, snuggles on the sofa, sharing stories, playing games and relaxing, (and eating mince pies)

Gail

As promised – Jess Miller, FC and his elves (from Multipave!)

