



This month we have photographs sent from St. Lawrence School, Sevenoaks.

The school and the neighbouring St. Lawrence Church are celebrating their 150th anniversary this month. Horace Wilkinson of Frankfield built the school as a memorial to his daughter Mary, who died as a young child 'with the earnest hope that the children of the district would receive as he, a churchman would desire to be given to his own children.' The school and the church are both built on church land and enjoy very strong links. Further history can be found on the school website: <http://www.st-lawrence-sevenoaks.kent.sch.uk/About-Us/History>

Welcome to the June 2018 Newsletter

2018 Annual Trustees Meeting

NASS held its second annual trustees meeting on Saturday 10th March 2018. The minutes of the meeting can be found on our web site. The trustees re-elected are:

- **Mervyn Benford** - Information Officer
- **Roger Hamblin** - Vice Chairman and Church Liaison Officer
- **Neil Short** - Chairman
- **Kathryn Solly** - Early Years Adviser
- **Barbara Taylor** - Secretary and Governor Liaison
- **Andrew Taylor** - Treasurer

The Chairman's full report is also posted on the website.

After many years dedicated service to NASS we are sorry to report that John Chamberlain has stood down from the Trustees. John joined NASS when his local school was threatened with closure in 1978 and has continued to support the organisation particularly as Treasurer; we will miss his input and wish him and his wife all the best for the future.

We are hoping that head teachers, governors, teachers or parents would be willing to join our committee; we do meet on 4 occasions during the year but attendance at these is not necessary if you can offer help with our activities from home or in your local area. Barbara or Neil will be very willing to talk with you to explain what involvement might entail. Please see if you can find a few hours to help us continue with our work.

Summary of Chairman's Report at the annual meeting 2018

This has been a very busy year! Aside from the usual activities there have been several projects, which have projected NASS onto a wider audience.

The research project, funded by The Laurel Trust, was completed. The findings within the report demonstrated the enormous capacity and potential within small schools and how this is enhanced through collaboration. The final report '**Collaboration not Collision: a Study Investigating the Ways Small Schools Across the Country are Working Together**' was accepted by the Trust and their comments were very positive. 'The Trustees felt that your focus on small schools' collaboration was well-chosen and that the rationale was good as it addressed both the current potential and the future context. They liked your literature review, which was thorough and very helpful. It provided a guide for research questions on school visits and these were consistently applied. They felt your literature review would be supportive to small schools exploring collaborative strategies for effectiveness and efficiency.' The report will be on the website.

The newly developed NASS website has been made clearer to read and navigate but there remains much to do to provide further information and content on the site.

We now have a Twitter account and the Facebook page is being explored and developed. We continue with the termly newsletter in print, grateful thanks going to Mervyn, along with the production of brochures to be sent to schools highlighting the services available via NASS.

Valuable links have been established in the recent past with Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) and this was fully utilised for a conference in November. Participants came from Kent, Cumbria, Essex, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire and there was a pleasing mix of heads, deputies, along with other staff and governors. Thanks to our good friend Will Ryan, who stepped in to lead the day at short notice. He is now an honorary member of NASS.

Other links/ school visits/ meeting etc:

- There have been many interactions between NASS and other groups and individuals over the past year including:
- Paul Armstrong at Manchester University re: Laurel Trust
- Trustees at Laurel trust
- David Reynolds at Swansea University
- Kay Smith at Huddersfield University
- Midori Ueda from N.I.E.R. in Japan
- Andy Lancashire for North Yorkshire C.C.
- Sam Twistleton / Sean Cavan from SHU
- Heads/teachers from research project
- Colleagues from School Food Plan Alliance
- Colleagues who attended the LACA conference
- Small school heads groups in Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Shropshire along with Cumbria heads who attended a meeting about sharing information and knowledge.

Diversity of Religion and Belief

A guidance and resource pack for primary schools in England and Wales

Diversity of Religion and Belief

Peter Hemmings, Elena Hailwood, Conor Stokes (Cardiff University)

NASS has been involved in the work produced by Cardiff University. If you haven't already received the information about the resource pack, it is available, free of charge to download in PDF format here:

<http://orca.cf.ac.uk/110147/>



Meet the Trustees

In this newsletter we introduce **Kathryn Solly** who, with her extensive knowledge as an Early Years trainer, explains the importance of allowing children to experience outdoor activities as part of their educational development.

Encounters outdoors in the early years

What really makes a difference?

Every post I've held throughout my teaching career and now as a specialist consultant, speaker, trainer and author has involved the outdoors.

To this day I remain uplifted and enthralled with outdoors. However, many children today are not having a similar experience and thus will struggle to become stewards of the earth. Outdoors is interactive, full of almost limitless space, resources and opportunities for play-based learning. As it is so flexible, inclusive and versatile in accommodating differences and diversity, children flourish.

Historical background

Since the times of Jan Comenius (1592-1670) who advocated sensory learning experiences outdoors; Robert Owen (1771-1858) who promoted outdoor activity for his factory workers's children and Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852) who founded kindergartens promoting learning in nature, we have been aware of the value of playing in nature. Later Maria Montessori (1870-1952) stressed how the child learnt as a scientist in natural environments, and Grace Owen (1873-1965) emphasising living alongside nature and having real life experiences. This continued with Dr. Susan Isaacs (1885-1948) promoting children's curiosity in natural settings and in the local community and Marjorie Allen (1893-1979) who started the first adventure playgrounds from the Danish forest schools' initiative.

These pioneers have given us a firm pedagogical foundation to base children's experiences outdoors upon. However, as Tim Gill has pointed out this generation of children is the first to be "reared in captivity."

What children need



The most important elements of outdoor play and learning are the following:

- Time to develop at their own pace
- Agency and some influence over their experiences via child-led play where adults take a back seat
- Belonging as part of a community
- Competence and the sense of feeling successful

These can be easily achieved in nature via outdoor play-based learning. Nature provides the elements, resources and experiences which can satisfy unique and group needs such as:

- Excitement - to do something for the sheer thrill of doing it.
- Novelty - to hunt for, find and express their unique identity.
- Risk - to pursue unfamiliar territory or experiences with uncertain outcomes.
- Connections - to make links and relationships with peers and others in various social ways

As a society we "value creativity and innovation more and more but we provide fewer and fewer opportunities for children to explore" Gopnik (2016). Nature is a custom-built learning resource which we ignore at our peril.



Potential benefits

The whole curriculum is waiting outside to be discovered. This includes:

- Free physical movement and activities to stimulate both brain and body in developmentally-appropriate ways
- Multi-sensory experiences which provide for cognitive, physical, emotional, social and spiritual learning
- Space to explore, inquire, discover, innovate and have real adventures
- A place to both make a mess and get messy
- A place to challenge oneself and one's mind and body through real experiences and adventures
- A place to grow your self-esteem and confidence leading to enhanced well-being
- A place to interact, observe, talk and make meaningful relationships
- A place to use your learning for real reasons e.g. woodworking, gardening, cooking etc
- And in turn to count, measure, estimate, read, write, imagine, create etc.
- A chance to experience 'wildness' in 360 degrees on beaches, in forests, in parks and gardens



Children also benefit in other ways including:

- Children with greater access to green spaces displayed improved attendance, better health, positive behaviour, cognitive development, better motor skills, psychological restoration and physical activity
- Children have higher achievement in reading, maths, science, PE, drama and greater motivation to study science when given longer term experiences outdoors
- Vulnerable children, lower achievers, those with SEN, minority ethnic groups showed the greatest benefits.

This article continues in our next newsletter.

General Data Protection Regulation

Like all organisations the new Data Protection policy affects NASS. We have drawn up a policy, which has been agreed by the Trustees and is available to anyone either on the web site or by request to quarrenden.tay@btinternet.com.

The majority of the data we hold is of contact details for schools and whilst a few are personalised the majority are either head@/admin@ and we only use these to contact members with details of NASS activities. We do not share any of this data with other organisations. We trust that as members you will wish to be contacted and accept that we will do so from time to time but should you not want details held on our computer please do contact us, if you wish to know the data we hold please let us know and we will send it to you. No financial data is recorded but any notification of direct payments to our bank account will be held on the e-mail received notifying such payments.



Research by NIER into Small Schools and Federations

Midori, from the National Institute of Educational Research, Japan, came to visit again this year. This was the third year that she has visited as part of her research on small communities and their schools. This time she was studying schools working in federations: she particularly wanted to visit a newly formed federation to find out about what it was like to be an executive headteacher, managing two schools, splitting the time between two sites and getting the schools to work together.

Mrs. Lisa Horton, the executive headteacher of Thames Bridge CofE federation kindly agreed to meet Midori and talk about setting up the federation between the two village schools, Culham and Clifton Hampden. After an opportunity to ask questions and learn about how the schools were developing their links, Alison Hook, the lead teacher, took



her around the two schools. Midori was surprised at the school buildings, especially when she was taken upstairs in one of the schools and told that this was where the headteacher used to live - this didn't happen in Japan.

Midori said how useful she had found the talk and visit to the schools. Next year will be her final visit and then she will be writing up her research findings. Her work is related to addressing the issue of the falling birth rate in Japan with residents in the villages wanting their schools to remain in their communities.



National Association for Primary Education

We have received the following letter from NAPE inviting applications for Remembrance Day grants.

Dear Members, Friends and Colleagues

We have received this information from a charity called Remembered, which aims to commemorate the Fallen of the First World War.

This year is the centenary of the end of the First World War and we've teamed up with the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust to help communities, including schools, host a fully funded commemorative silhouette installation, without having to worry how to pay for it.

The silhouettes represent those lost in the First World War, whose names appear on local war memorials around the country, bringing them back into their place of worship, their school, their workplace or wherever their absence was felt.

These micro-grants can fund up to 10 silhouettes to support Remembrance Day activities for the centenary of the First World War.

Applications will be open until 30th June and schools can apply here:

http://www.covenantfund.org.uk/?page_id=215

www.therebutnotthere.org.uk

The 2018 Armistice project for the charity Remembered (Reg No. 1173739)

33 Ranelagh Gardens
Royal Hospital Chelsea
London
SW3 4SR

I hope that this will be useful to schools who would like to mark this historic occasion.

Peter Cansell
NAPE Information Officer

Celebrating Forty Years



The National Association of Small Schools began in 1978 in response to the concerns of the government at the surplus space in schools resulting from the falling birth rate. Molly Stiles, a school governor and parent, already involved with DOVE (Defenders of Village Education), prompted the emergence of NASS to defend village schools from closures arising from the falling school rolls. She was ably helped by her husband Raymond, a former secondary headteacher.

Molly's contacts in Parliament and DfE raised the profile of the organisation in challenging the closure threats to village schools. NASS went on to work at raising awareness of the worth of small schools through regular meetings and other contacts with government Ministers, DfE officials and Church and Charitable Trust organisations. Now NASS is consulted when policies are being amended by Ofsted and DfE, contacted by press and media for comments on matter involving small schools.

Long may NASS continue!

If you have any contributions for our newsletter please email us on info@smallschools.org.uk or write to us at:

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