




# Connor Downs

## Academy



April 2019



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## A message from Mrs Costello

Dear parents and carers,

Welcome to our spring term newsletter. I hope you will enjoy reading all about the activities our children have been engaged in since January. As usual, I am incredibly impressed with the wide range of activities that our children enjoy, from the core subjects of mathematics and English to the inspirational outdoor learning sessions. This term we have seen a specific focus on STEAM, which stands for science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics. Mr Buxton Dean has been leading on this area for our academy and also in a wider role, developing STEAM provision in Aspire.

We recently had our spring term monitoring visit from Aspire and the report is excellent. Visiting leaders were impressed with our teaching, learning and leadership and also our children's personal development, behaviour and wellbeing. Our attendance remains consistently above the national average and we thank you, as parents, for all your efforts to help us maintain this high standard. We were especially proud of the way our children spoke so confidently about their learning with the Aspire leaders.

As Director of Inclusion in Aspire, I am especially proud to inform you that Connor Downs Academy is the very first, of the 27 academies in the multi-academy trust, to be assessed as being ready to apply for the Trauma and Mentally Healthy Schools Award (TMHIS, TIS UK). We are awaiting an assessment date in the summer term and will keep you informed about the day. To be the first academy to apply for this award is testament to the hard work of our whole school community, because the award evaluates staff wellbeing, as well as pupils'.

I continue to be very proud of Connor Downs Academy. It is a great pleasure to be Connor Downs' strategic partner, working with Mrs Eddy and the senior leadership team. It is always a joy to come to work here. We have the most amazing children and dedicated staff. On behalf of the whole team, we send our thanks to you for your ongoing support. If you do have any questions, comments or concerns, we are always open to hearing your thoughts and views so please don't hesitate to get in touch.

I wish you a very happy Easter and we all look forward to seeing you again in the summer term.

Mrs Costello  
Connor Downs Strategic Partner  
Aspire Inclusion Director

The overarching aim for English in the National Curriculum is to promote high standards of language and literacy by equipping pupils with a strong command of the spoken and written word, and to develop their love of literature through widespread reading for enjoyment (National Curriculum 2014).


## Reading

Our academy aims to encourage children to develop a passion for reading through regular exposure to rich vocabulary through activities such as: engaging class texts, recommending books to others and our Extreme Reading Challenge.

A recent example of this was World Book Day, where the theme 'Share a Story' was promoted across the whole school. Dressed as their favourite book characters and armed with their favourite books, the children in Key Stage 2 joined forces with those from Key Stage 1 and spent the morning sharing stories together, both inside and outside the school building. It was wonderful to see every child engaging and enjoying their reading alongside their peers – a moment that will surely be treasured. The money raised from this event, added to funds kindly donated by our Friends of Connor Downs Academy group, will be used to purchase non-fiction books linked to class topics, which will help to immerse the children in their cross-curricular learning.

Comprehension skills develop through pupils' experience of high-quality discussion with the teacher, as well as from reading and discussing a range of stories, poems and non-fiction (National Curriculum 2014). Reading comprehension activities have taken place twice a week in all classes from 1-6. Where possible in all Year groups, these have been linked to class topics, with Year 1 learning new and exciting facts about the Polar regions, Year 2 completing activities linked to the Aesop fable, *The Sun and the Wind*, Year 3 acquiring new and exciting technical vocabulary while learning about the workings of earthquakes and volcanoes; Year 4 completing activities linked to crime and punishment; Year 5 with the Great Fire of London and Year 6 with World War II. As a core part of their English, Year 1 and Year 2 are continuing daily phonics. Children in Year 1 are making fantastic progress with the phase 5 sounds.

Reading widely and often increases pupils' vocabulary because they encounter words they would rarely hear or use in



everyday speech (National Curriculum 2014).

At Connor Downs Academy, we aim for children to be independent writers. We encourage them to write clearly and with confidence in any given genre. We teach them to use punctuation and grammar accurately, to be able to proofread their own work and make amendments and improvements. Our system of pen licences encourages children to place value on the development of correct letter formation and neatly presented handwriting. We give children a wide range of opportunities in which to develop their writing skills and display work of which they are proud. Through our English curriculum, we aim to nurture in the children a love of literature and language, and the confidence to continue reading and writing throughout their lives.

### Writing

In Key Stage 1 we have based a lot of our reading and writing around a range of non-fiction texts. In Year 1 the children thoroughly enjoyed writing facts and information about the climate, animals and the daily life of the Arctic and Antarctica. The children used videos, the internet and an array of non-fiction books to collect information and in response write recounts, reports and instructions. Children in Year 2 immersed themselves writing in various contexts about the weather. The children created their own poems based on poem was *Who has seen the wind?* by Christina Rossetti.

In Key Stage 2, immersing children in a variety of text types has developed the children's use of vocabulary and inspired their creative writing. This is evident in Year 3, where the children have written Kennings poems inspired by their topic on volcanoes, using nouns and adjectives to great effect. Year 4 have followed Pie Corbett's method of writing (imitate, innovate and invent) using an extract from a non-fiction text. They learnt how to re-tell the story of Dr Crippen, who murdered his wife and was the first criminal caught using radio technology. They then went on to change certain parts of the story (for example, a character or setting) and then finally, they wrote their own stories based on a criminal act.

Pupils need to learn how to adapt their language and style for a range of contexts, purposes and audiences. In Year 5 the children have examined a range of persuasive texts to identify key features before producing a toolkit to inform their writing. Using their vocabulary books,

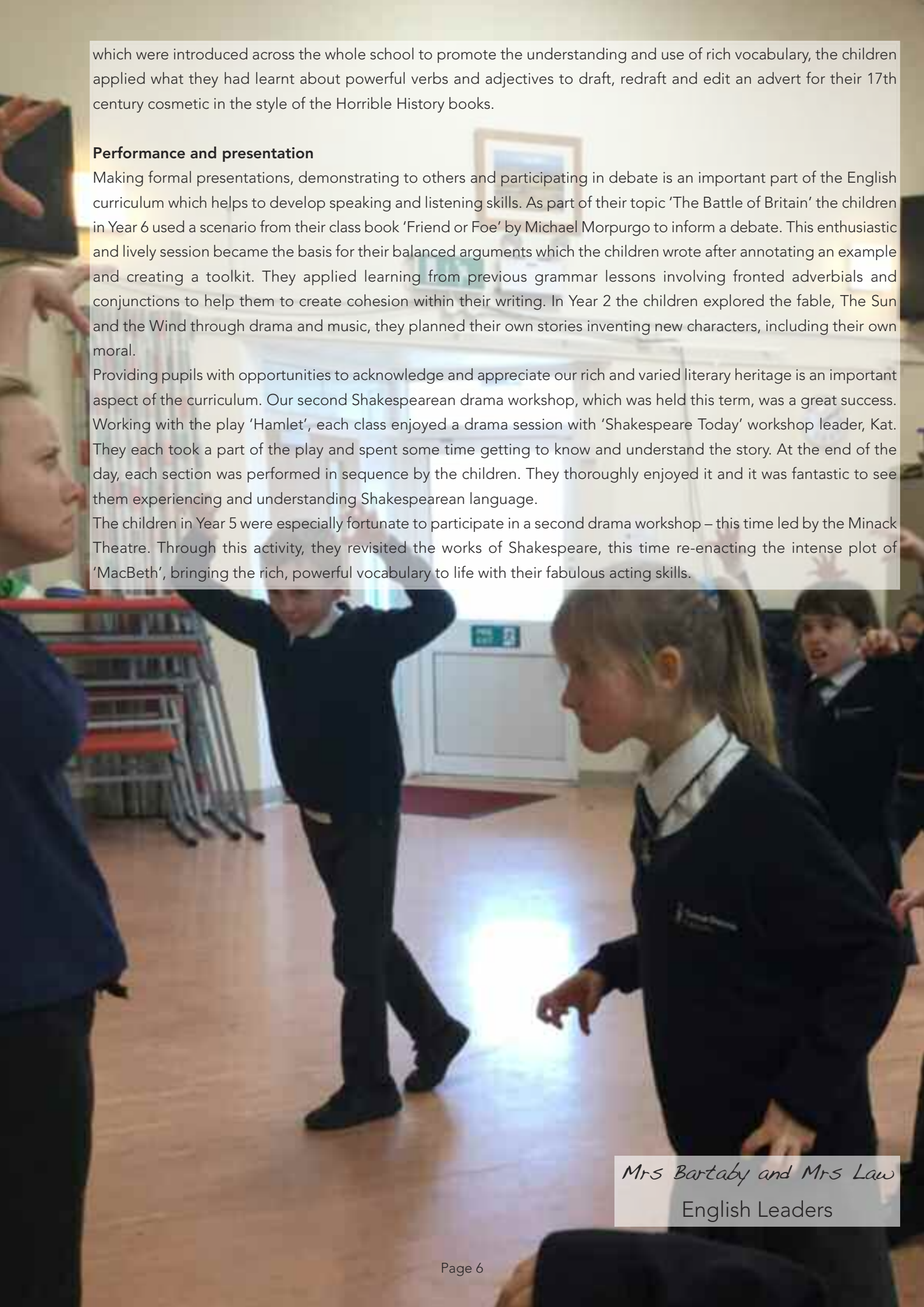
which were introduced across the whole school to promote the understanding and use of rich vocabulary, the children applied what they had learnt about powerful verbs and adjectives to draft, redraft and edit an advert for their 17th century cosmetic in the style of the Horrible History books.

### **Performance and presentation**

Making formal presentations, demonstrating to others and participating in debate is an important part of the English curriculum which helps to develop speaking and listening skills. As part of their topic 'The Battle of Britain' the children in Year 6 used a scenario from their class book 'Friend or Foe' by Michael Morpurgo to inform a debate. This enthusiastic and lively session became the basis for their balanced arguments which the children wrote after annotating an example and creating a toolkit. They applied learning from previous grammar lessons involving fronted adverbials and conjunctions to help them to create cohesion within their writing. In Year 2 the children explored the fable, The Sun and the Wind through drama and music, they planned their own stories inventing new characters, including their own moral.

Providing pupils with opportunities to acknowledge and appreciate our rich and varied literary heritage is an important aspect of the curriculum. Our second Shakespearean drama workshop, which was held this term, was a great success. Working with the play 'Hamlet', each class enjoyed a drama session with 'Shakespeare Today' workshop leader, Kat. They each took a part of the play and spent some time getting to know and understand the story. At the end of the day, each section was performed in sequence by the children. They thoroughly enjoyed it and it was fantastic to see them experiencing and understanding Shakespearean language.

The children in Year 5 were especially fortunate to participate in a second drama workshop – this time led by the Minack Theatre. Through this activity, they revisited the works of Shakespeare, this time re-enacting the intense plot of 'MacBeth', bringing the rich, powerful vocabulary to life with their fabulous acting skills.



*Mrs Bartaby and Mrs Law*  
English Leaders

# Maths

Mathematics is a creative and highly inter-connected discipline that has been developed over centuries, providing the solution to some of history's most intriguing problems. It is essential to everyday life, critical to science, technology and engineering, and necessary for financial literacy and most forms of employment. A high-quality mathematics education therefore provides a foundation for understanding the world, the ability to reason mathematically, an appreciation of the beauty and power of mathematics, and a sense of enjoyment and curiosity about the subject.

Our aim at Connor Downs is to ensure that all children:

- become fluent in the fundamentals of mathematics through varied and frequent practice with increasingly complex problems over time.
- can reason mathematically by making connections; spotting patterns and relationships; and explaining their thinking using mathematical language.
- can solve problems and show resilience when answers at first are hard to find.

In order to improve fluency, with the support of the Friends of Connor Downs Academy, the school has purchased TT Rockstars for all the children to enjoy and learn their multiplication facts. The children have access to this valuable resource at home and in the classroom and have really enjoyed beating their own targets. This is in addition to the already popular Mathletics which continues to support and deepen children's understanding of mathematical concepts.

At Connor Downs we have adopted the White Rose blocked unit approach to maths so that every step forward is small, manageable and linked. The topics covered in each year group vary but they build upon the strong foundations of the skills acquired along their maths journey.

In Year 1, our children have continued to work very practically with a range of resources. They have used cubes, counters, number lines, Numicon and many more natural resources to support their work in maths. The children can count to 100, forwards and backwards, beginning with 0 or 1, or from any given number. They know the 2, 5 and 10 times table. The children are becoming very confident when adding and subtracting using number lines and

In Upper Key Stage 2, the children will develop a formal written method for multiplication.

a 100 square. The children can identify tens and ones within a 2-digit number. In addition, they can read and understand addition and subtraction sentences both in numbers and words. The children can use mathematical terms relating to length, height and weight. Furthermore, they have practically measured and weighed various objects using a range of resources. The children are showing huge progress in their club 11 tests. Many children have now moved on to club 22 and club 33 tests.

In Year 2 this term, children have had an exciting and challenging maths journey. The children's first unit was multiplication and division. Mrs Kitching saw evidence of reflective enquiry and independent learning as the children demonstrated their skills and understanding. Next, Year 2 looked at measurement: money. The children took their maths learning outside to further develop skills in practical, fun sessions to cement understanding and provide challenge and opportunities for all. The children's reasoning and word problem solving challenges have often been cross curricular. This was followed by geometry and the properties of shapes. Family and carers were warmly welcomed into the class for a maths morning which was a chance to learn together and celebrate how hard the children have been working. Week nine saw the children exploring graphs. The children are currently developing their knowledge of fractions which will prepare them for maths in KS2. The children have been so enthusiastic about club 99. They have transferred skills well and made impressive progress.

In Year 3, our children have continued to develop their skill with multiplication and division. They began the year learning how to use arrays to multiply and divide objects related to the x3, x4 and x8 tables. Then the children used their knowledge to multiply a two digit by a one-digit number using the expanded and short written method. Later in the term, Year 3 learned how to measure and compare lengths. They have converted centimetres into metres and learned how to find the perimeter of 3D shapes such as rectangles and squares. Year 3 moved on to study a block to add and subtract 3-digit numbers using the written column method and solve word problems. The children applied their skill with addition and subtraction to calculate amounts of money and find change. Finally, Year 3 have learned about fractions by ordering tenths and fractions on a number line. The children have also learned how to find fractions of



Looking more closely at multiplication, in Year1, the children will use concrete or practical activities (Figure 1) to double numbers before moving onto pictorial representations to support their learning. As the children move through KS1 they will recognise multiplication as repeated addition.



amounts such as  $\frac{1}{4}$  of 12 and two quarters of 24.

This term, Year 4 have been learning all about fractions and decimals. The children have learnt how to find equivalent fractions, count forwards and backwards using improper and mixed number fractions. They have also learnt how to find fractions of amounts. The children are learning how to identify tenths and hundredths and finding these on a number line. Year 4 are working extremely hard to learn their times table facts up to  $\times 12$  and they regularly complete an online tables test, in readiness for the Multiplication Table Check (MTC) in June. The children have made excellent progress in their times tables and this work needs to continue. Year 4 have also learnt how to find area and perimeter of rectilinear shapes, either by counting squares or by using a formula.

In Year 5, the children have relished the opportunity to compete on TT Rockstars. They have focussed on embedding their multiplication facts in preparation for competitions against their personal targets as well as representing their team in the Battle of the Bands competitions. This has increased their number confidence which has supported their learning in our multiplication and division topics as part of the White Rose scheme of Learning. Our children have developed a formal method for multiplication and division and know how to check their answers with the inverse operation. They have also been asked to calculate and interpret remainders appropriately for the context. The children have learnt to identify multiples and factors, including finding all factor pairs of a number, and common factors of two numbers (National Curriculum 2014). Daily intelligent practice has challenged the children to find and explain patterns in their maths related to each topic. The module on area and perimeter had the children estimating, measuring and calculating the areas and perimeters of different shapes and understanding the reason behind the different units that are used. The pupils have learned to identify, name and write equivalent fractions of a given fraction, represented visually, including tenths and hundredths (National Curriculum 2014) as part of their topic on fractions, decimals and percentages.

Throughout the term, Year 6 have continued to consolidate and develop their arithmetic skills through a range of multi-step, real-life problems involving fractions, decimals and percentages, as well as the four operations: addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. They are now using a variety of strategies and methods with confidence and accuracy. Where possible, maths lessons have been linked to Year 6 topics. The children particularly enjoyed calculating sale prices as part of a lesson on percentages linked to WWII.

Through their learning about measurement, the children have developed their understanding of both metric and imperial units. They have learnt how to convert between different units of length, mass and capacity, through a range of multi-step problems linked to real life situations.

In addition, Year 6 have revised the different angle types and how to calculate missing angles along a straight line. They expanded their knowledge in this area by learning how to find the sum of interior angles in any regular or irregular polygon, using formulae. They calculated missing angles in triangles and quadrilaterals and related this knowledge to real life situations, showcasing their fantastic problem-solving skills.



*Mr Pascoe*  
Maths Leader



This term, the children and staff have enjoyed investigating a range of science activities in their class settings, using the outdoor learning environment and through exciting visits outside the academy. We have also been delighted to welcome visitors to our academy including Dr Foster from CSIA (Camborne Science and International Academy) who launched British Science week with an engaging and inspirational assembly explaining the importance of STEM, (Science, Technology Engineering and Maths). We were also very pleased to welcome Shawn; an engineer and inventor from 'Kids invent stuff.' Shawn ran workshops for each class throughout his visit and set the children the exciting challenge to design a mode of personal transport. All of our inventions were entered into a competition which included entrants from not just the United Kingdom but also from Europe too. We were delighted when we discovered that the winning entry was from Tru in Year 4 with her amazing sparkly, rainbow unicorn. Tru travelled to the Big Bang fair in Birmingham with her family and saw her invention brought to life. Congratulations Tru!

The spring term always provides us with some exciting weather. As part of their "Blown Away" theme, our children in Year 2 observed a range of features and variables relating to the weather. These observations enabled them to describe features of the weather using simple comparisons. We have a variety of different weather measuring equipment at school which the children used to take measurements and to gather data. By experimenting with the weather monitoring equipment, measuring key weather features and comparing the techniques for gathering data, the Year 2's identified which seemed to be working better. Over the course of a week the children collected weather data then presented their findings making cross curricular links to their maths work on statistics.

The weather also inspired the children in Year 1, who have explored the different seasons, both here and in the Artic and Antarctica. They also recorded weekly weather forecasts with pictures and symbols. They thoroughly enjoyed writing facts and information about the climate and weather conditions of such contrasting localities. They investigated what it would be like to live in such a cold climate.

The chemistry in Roald Dahl's story "Georges Marvellous Medicine" thrilled the children in year 1 so much that they wanted to create their own marvellous medicine. As a whole class, they followed a set of instructions from the book and made their very own very special formula. The children loved watching the mixture rise and overflow from the container!

As part of their theme 'Sowing and Growing,' Year 2 children learned about how seeds and seedlings change over time, identified similarities and differences between different plants, recorded and displayed evidence and understood the sequence of stages that plants go through in growing. The children then experienced the excitement of growing their own plants and explored the factors that might affect the growth of their seedlings.

Science week in Key Stage 2 has provided lots of excitement. Children in Year 3 had an exciting morning working with their parents/carers. The children thought about what a chemist would do in their job experimenting with chemicals and observing changes.

Then they enthusiastically carried out their own experiment with coloured liquid to see how far the colour would travel along a paper towel.

They observed and recorded the coloured liquid in intervals using new scientific vocabulary such as; absorbed, ultramarine, vermillion and cobalt.

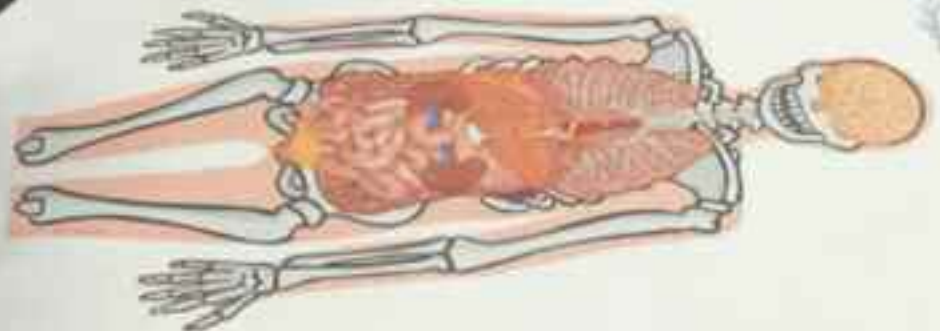
The children and parents/cares worked really effectively as a team to organise their equipment and everyone was very surprised by the results of the experiment. In Year 4, children learning around how sound is made.

Together the adults and children made their own amazing junk instruments and played along to a song, listening for the different sounds created. Our year 5 children investigated friction.

They used force meters and a variety of surfaces to investigate the affect a change in surface makes to the force required to drag an object. They were then asked to explain their findings using scientific vocabulary and explain how they ensured that the tests were fair.

Finally in Year 6, our children enjoyed a session with a science teacher from a local secondary school, who came in to take their learning about light one step further. Using torches and coloured filters, they investigated what happens when different coloured lights are mixed.

They also learned what happens to white light when it is shone through a prism, and investigated whether light travels through transparent, translucent or opaque materials.



Geology has proven to be an explosive subject for the Year 3 and Year 6 children. The children in year 3 have learning about the science behind the structure of an earthquake and how a volcano is formed. They enjoyed learning the technical vocabulary used to describe the features of a volcano and where in the world a volcano can be found. As part of their homework grid, many of the Year 3 children created amazing models of volcanoes. Year 6 children took their previous learning about volcanoes further during their topic 'Angry Earth,' the children designed and created their own volcanoes and 'erupted' them. They thoroughly enjoyed this activity, which required the use of lemonade, food colouring, powdered mints and baking powder to simulate a volcanic eruption. Later, the children linked this reaction to that of a volcanic eruption, comparing how the gases react under pressure.

Both Year 3 and Year 4 have had biological elements in their learning this term. Year 3 looked at fossils finding out what these can tell us about the past and how they are formed as well as examining the biodiversity of South America, looking at the Amazonian rainforest. Year 4 have been learning how to look after a Bearded Dragon in captivity and how it should replicate its natural environment. They have read an information text and answered comprehension questions on the same. Year 4 have been learning about forensic science, DNA and fingerprints which make each and every one of us unique. The children used ink pads to print their own fingerprints and then compared each other's fingerprints, noting how everyone was different.



Physics is a key part of the curriculum. In Year 5, the children have been learning about forces. The topic was launched by an exciting educational visit to Nexus where the children learned about the use of gears, pulleys and levers as part of their science and DT topics. The children were able to make predictions about the force needed to lift a lever before measuring accurately using a force meter. The children recorded their results in a table before writing their conclusions scientifically. Year 5 children have also explored gravity and drag (air resistance). They learned about the famous scientist Sir Isaac Newton and his impact on modern scientific thinking before making their own parachutes and kites that fought the force of gravity. For the children in Year 6 light and how it travels has been a focus of learning. The children created human models to demonstrate the journey taken by light rays to enable us to see. They also used mirrors and torches in a darkened room to find out how light is reflected and to investigate whether light can be reflected from more than one object at once.



Mrs Eddy  
Science Leader

## Art and Design

Artists use their imaginations and talents to inspire, challenge and thrill. It takes skill, passion and practice to develop ones own artistic style. At Connor Downs we ensure that all children are constantly exposed to a range of different artistic styles and influences. We have some wonderfully talented budding artists here and all children revel in the chance to build up their skills and knowledge.

Artists are often inspired by the works of other artists and the children at Connor Downs are no different. Year 2 children began by exploring the amazing landscapes and skyscapes of artists: John Constable and Luke Howard. Inspired by the colours that John and Luke used the children learnt how to mix a range of exciting secondary colours with white (tints) or black (shades). Our Year 3 children have been taking their inspiration from local artist Barbra Hepworth, drawing on her love of the local landscape to create their own artworks. In Year 4, children studied the work of artist Wassily Kandinsky, who used colour and paint in his work. The children practiced their skills with colour wheels mixing familiar tertiary colours. After exploring their own colours and they used their new colours to base a painting on Kandinsky's work: "Concentric Circles". Year 5 took their inspiration from the work and artistic techniques of 16th century artist Rembrandt. The children learned how Rembrandt used chiaroscuro (strong contrast between light and dark) they applied this technique to their own portraits using charcoal, pencil and pastel.

It is not just artists that have been motivating the children. Both Year 1 and Year 3 have been using the natural world as their muse. Winter Seasons was the theme for Year 1, the children enjoyed exploring the changing colours and textures of winter as they went on a winter walk around the school. The children looked for signs of winter and observing and sketching in their sketch books. Whilst doing this they learned how to look closely and draw using different marks to show texture and shape. Progressing their learning further, they then made a winter collage using paper in the cool colours of winter. Inspired by the Outdoor learning environment Year 3 created collages using found natural objects such as leaves and twigs. Working back in class they combined the natural objects with colourful paper layering to create different colour effects and textures. In Year 4, children listened to two different types of music (calm and a piece of exciting vibrant music). Inspired by the music the children used a range of equipment such as oil pastels, paint, crayon and felt pens to create



art work according to how they felt while listening to each piece of music.

Year 6 have remembered World War II through their artwork. Propaganda posters were the starting point. They analysed different propaganda posters, discussing how the bold lettering and strong colours contributed to their important messages. They used these criteria when designing their own propaganda posters. Once finished, the images were viewed by the children; they reflected on their own piece and made comments on each other's work appreciating the poster's vibrant colours and clear messages.

Creating art does not have to involve pencils or paint. In year 2 Digital photography was a focus with children learning how use techniques that investigated form and space . The children learned about the British photographer Slinkachu. They looked at objects from different positions and angles. Then created digital photographs which changed the scale using model people and created images similar to a micro habitat. This was cross curricular and linked to their science and geography work on habitats. Year 4 children created 3 dimensional dragons out of clay. They used tools to draw on features and scales. Once dried, the children painted their dragons creating an amazing display of colourful sculptures.

Creating art based on books has also been popular this term, particularly with World Book Day. Year 5 brought their favorite fictional characters to life on the covers of their chosen books. The children drew their designs mirroring the sketching techniques of their chosen illustrator to create a book jacket. In Year 1, the children have worked hard to practice their drawing skills to sketch and paint characters from various Roald Dahl stories. A particular favourite was 'James and the Giant Peach'. Later the children enjoyed sketched and drawing different rescue services. Year 1 discussed the symbolic colours each rescue service used of red, green, yellow. They especially focused on painting the peoples uniforms and the importance of the different colours.

# Computing

Computing is a key subject for children of today. It is embedded and interwoven throughout the curriculum. Over the last 30 years we have seen staggering advances in the world of computing. I wonder what the next 30 years will hold?

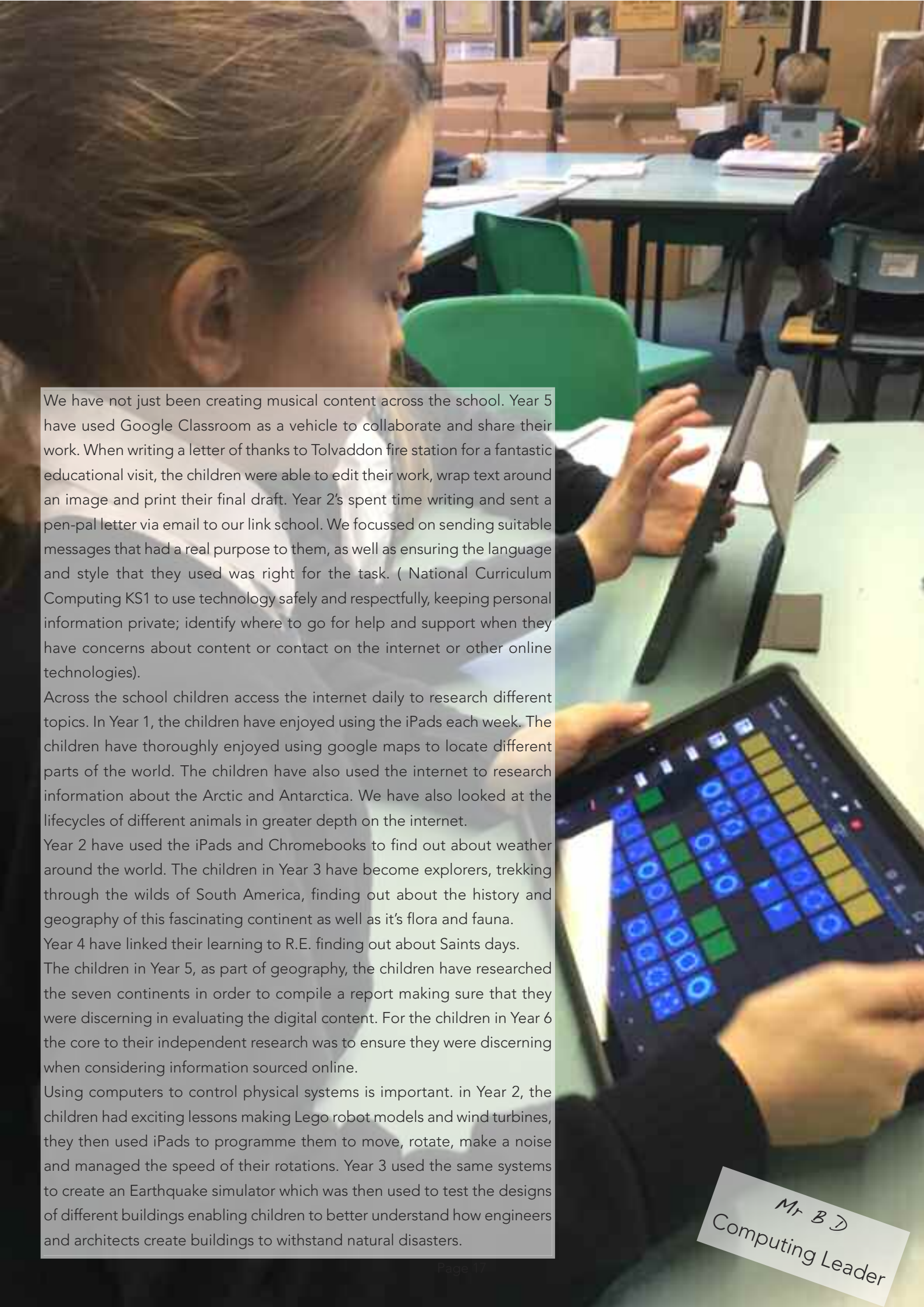
Unfortunately computing is not a risk free activity and it is essential that we embody the pupils at Connor Downs with the skills that they need to safely navigate the online world, not just to stay safe but to consider the truth in the material they are consuming. Children across the school have been engaging in both Mathletics and TTRockstars to boost and develop their own learning in maths. These fantastic programs safely expose children to the online community.

Internet safety day played a big part in this during spring term. In Key Stage 1, the children have developed a greater understanding of how to stay safe when using the internet. During internet safety day the children explored how they can stay safe and why it is so important to stay safe. They have also been looking at ways in which they can safely collaborate with others across the internet. In Key Stage 2 children have been taking their understanding of internet safety and broadening this further. Years 3 and 4 both looked at what to do if they see something that they find upsetting. (NC – Lks2 - Digital Literacy he/she can recognise acceptable / unacceptable behaviour and content; identify a range of ways to report concerns about content and contact). In years 5 and 6 the children learnt about consent and permission and what this means when using the internet. They also revised what they should do if they experience cyberbullying or are uncomfortable with anything they see or hear when online. Year 5 have also had their imaginations grabbed as they have realised just how connected they are by competing online against class members when they face the challenge of the battle of the bands. This has helped them learn about disguising their identities online through the use of avatars instead of real names.

Using computing technology to create and record sound is a theme that has spread across several year groups over the last term. Years 3, 5 and 6 all spent time using GarageBand on the iPads, learning to manipulate existing music samples to create a longer piece to fit a project. In year 6 this was some performance poetry, and in year 3 the children created songs inspired by South America. Our Year 4 children were not to be left out, learning how a microphone works before experimenting with this to record sounds effectively using an iPad, all as part of their topic "Sounding Off".





A young girl with blonde hair is shown in profile, looking at a tablet computer. She is sitting at a desk in a classroom. In the background, other students are visible at their desks, some using laptops. The classroom has green chairs and light-colored desks.

We have not just been creating musical content across the school. Year 5 have used Google Classroom as a vehicle to collaborate and share their work. When writing a letter of thanks to Tolvaddon fire station for a fantastic educational visit, the children were able to edit their work, wrap text around an image and print their final draft. Year 2's spent time writing and sent a pen-pal letter via email to our link school. We focussed on sending suitable messages that had a real purpose to them, as well as ensuring the language and style that they used was right for the task. ( National Curriculum Computing KS1 to use technology safely and respectfully, keeping personal information private; identify where to go for help and support when they have concerns about content or contact on the internet or other online technologies).

Across the school children access the internet daily to research different topics. In Year 1, the children have enjoyed using the iPads each week. The children have thoroughly enjoyed using google maps to locate different parts of the world. The children have also used the internet to research information about the Arctic and Antarctica. We have also looked at the lifecycles of different animals in greater depth on the internet.

Year 2 have used the iPads and Chromebooks to find out about weather around the world. The children in Year 3 have become explorers, trekking through the wilds of South America, finding out about the history and geography of this fascinating continent as well as it's flora and fauna.

Year 4 have linked their learning to R.E. finding out about Saints days. The children in Year 5, as part of geography, the children have researched the seven continents in order to compile a report making sure that they were discerning in evaluating the digital content. For the children in Year 6 the core to their independent research was to ensure they were discerning when considering information sourced online.

Using computers to control physical systems is important. in Year 2, the children had exciting lessons making Lego robot models and wind turbines, they then used iPads to programme them to move, rotate, make a noise and managed the speed of their rotations. Year 3 used the same systems to create an Earthquake simulator which was then used to test the designs of different buildings enabling children to better understand how engineers and architects create buildings to withstand natural disasters.

Mr B D  
Computing Leader

## Design and Technology

Design and Technology is a wonderful subject, and one that is loved by all children. It nurtures their creativity whilst allowing for brilliant ideas to be imagined and then turned into reality. Much of the work is been linked to other subjects such as mathematics, science, engineering, computing and art. Pupils learn how to take risks, becoming resourceful, innovative, enterprising and capable citizens.

At Connor Downs we love to take our learning outside at every opportunity no matter what the subject and time of the year. Both Year 2 and Year 5 children have been exploring different designs and techniques to create some wonderful kites that allowed the children's ideas to soar. In Year 2 the children learnt how to follow instructions carefully, decorate the kite with big shapes so that you could see them fly up in the sky and to keep the string wound up on card so that it didn't tangle. The children developed their skills of cutting and joining and assembling throughout the project. Great enthusiasm was shown for making, sharing ideas together and of course evaluating the flight of the kite in the school grounds. Year 5 children also followed a similar process but extended their learning with a development of shape and an evaluation of their finished products.

Having the ability to create a successful product is dependant upon the builders knowledge of different materials and the techniques required to effectively use these. In Year 1, children looked to the Arctic and Antarctic for their ideas when making their 3-dimensional polar animals. The children enjoyed creating the animals from a range of different

resources including recycled materials. The children learned how to cut and join different materials together. Year 4 have been inspired by the clay modelling they have done in class and have taken their learning home and produced fantastic 3-dimensional models of dragons using Lego, papier Mache and even cakes. The staff at Connor Downs have all been amazed to see the "life like" eyes, scales, tails and colour that has been given to the dragons by the children. In Year 3 the children explored the properties of willow, looking at the different uses that it can have and different techniques to use it to create structures. Having done this they used their understanding of these to create models of willow structures that they would like to build in Cultivating Futures.

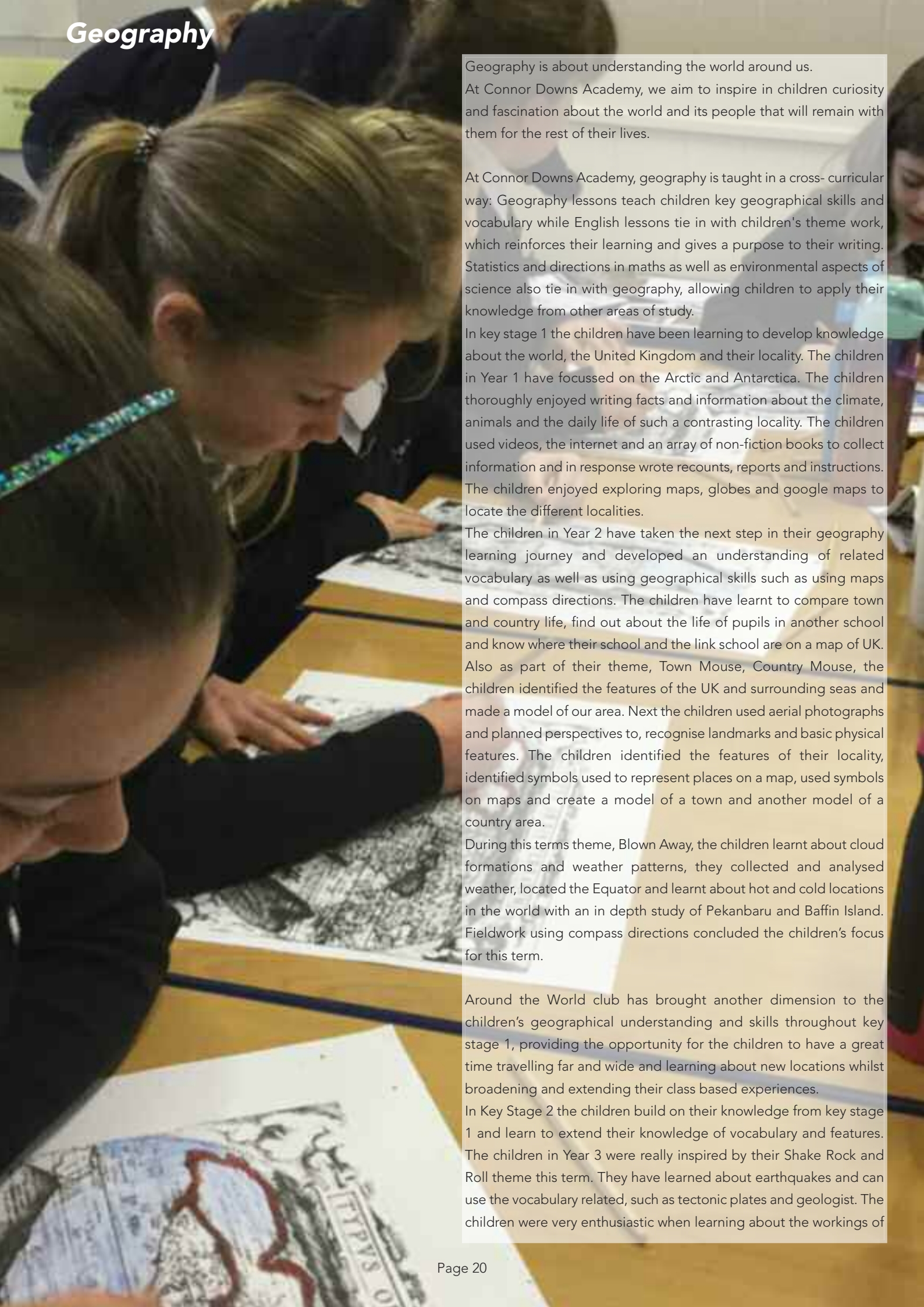
Creating toys inspires children to further develop ideas and techniques. Year 2's design challenge was to construct a moving vehicle for either Town Mouse or Country Mouse, which would travel, from the top of the hill all the way to their door. The children developed an understanding of a vehicles, wheels, axles and chassis. They observed materials and join components used in various ways to create movement and understood the need to use temporary joins. The children included: wheels which were attached securely to the axle or wheels, our vehicle needed to travel in a straight line (at least 50 cm) and carry a small toy figure. Year 5 children enjoyed a visit to Nexus at Camborne School, where the children

learned about the use of gears, pulleys and levers. This provided a great background for the learning of cam mechanisms. The design brief required the children to design and make a toy that incorporated a cam mechanism. First, the children examined a range of cams to discover how they transformed rotational movement into linear movement. Next, the children formulated their own design for a moving toy according to an agreed specification. The children experimented with a variety of tools and designs to find the best strong and stable structure that would form the basis of their moving toy and meet their design brief. The children then learned how to measure, cut and assemble their raw materials of card, dowel and wood safely and accurately. (National curriculum KS2: Pupils should be taught to select from and use a wider range of tools and equipment to perform practical tasks [for example, cutting, shaping, joining and finishing], accurately.) Upon completion, the children evaluated their ideas and against their own design criteria and considered the views of others to improve their work.

We look around us all the time and are inspired by what we see. In Year 6. The children learned how the periscopes were used during the war. They were motivated to construct periscopes using given materials of card, tape and mirrors. Year 6 worked collaboratively, carefully following instructions exactly for their periscopes to work. After great concentration, trial and error and effective team work, the fully-operational periscopes were used around the classroom – the children enjoyed this activity and were interested in how periscopes were used by soldiers during the war. Year 3 saw the effects of Earthquakes during their topic Shake, Rock and Roll. The children worked skilfully to construct and then test how the different structures would react in the event of an earthquake. Year 5 have been exploring the Great Fire of London. As part of this they have been building their own houses ready to burn.



*Ms Speight*  
Design and Technology  
Leader



Geography is about understanding the world around us.

At Connor Downs Academy, we aim to inspire in children curiosity and fascination about the world and its people that will remain with them for the rest of their lives.

At Connor Downs Academy, geography is taught in a cross-curricular way: Geography lessons teach children key geographical skills and vocabulary while English lessons tie in with children's theme work, which reinforces their learning and gives a purpose to their writing. Statistics and directions in maths as well as environmental aspects of science also tie in with geography, allowing children to apply their knowledge from other areas of study.

In key stage 1 the children have been learning to develop knowledge about the world, the United Kingdom and their locality. The children in Year 1 have focussed on the Arctic and Antarctica. The children thoroughly enjoyed writing facts and information about the climate, animals and the daily life of such a contrasting locality. The children used videos, the internet and an array of non-fiction books to collect information and in response wrote recounts, reports and instructions. The children enjoyed exploring maps, globes and google maps to locate the different localities.

The children in Year 2 have taken the next step in their geography learning journey and developed an understanding of related vocabulary as well as using geographical skills such as using maps and compass directions. The children have learnt to compare town and country life, find out about the life of pupils in another school and know where their school and the link school are on a map of UK. Also as part of their theme, Town Mouse, Country Mouse, the children identified the features of the UK and surrounding seas and made a model of our area. Next the children used aerial photographs and planned perspectives to, recognise landmarks and basic physical features. The children identified the features of their locality, identified symbols used to represent places on a map, used symbols on maps and create a model of a town and another model of a country area.

During this term's theme, Blown Away, the children learnt about cloud formations and weather patterns, they collected and analysed weather, located the Equator and learnt about hot and cold locations in the world with an in depth study of Pekanbaru and Baffin Island. Fieldwork using compass directions concluded the children's focus for this term.

Around the World club has brought another dimension to the children's geographical understanding and skills throughout key stage 1, providing the opportunity for the children to have a great time travelling far and wide and learning about new locations whilst broadening and extending their class based experiences.

In Key Stage 2 the children build on their knowledge from key stage 1 and learn to extend their knowledge of vocabulary and features. The children in Year 3 were really inspired by their Shake Rock and Roll theme this term. They have learned about earthquakes and can use the vocabulary related, such as tectonic plates and geologist. The children were very enthusiastic when learning about the workings of

a volcano, drawing diagrams and learning technical vocabulary such as magma chamber, ash cloud and seismograph. Through reading comprehension Year 3 have discovered where different volcanoes are in the world and also learned about the Pacific Ring of Fire. For their theme: Around the World in 20 Days the children learned to locate the different countries of Europe and find the countries that border France. The children loved using atlases to learn about the capital cities and learn about rivers and mountains in each country. The children have located rivers around the world and learned about the source of rivers and used atlas to find rivers such as The Nile and Danube. Also in key stage 2 children are taught to develop skills in locating places on maps and in the world. The children in Year 4 continue to develop their geographical skills; and have been learning how to use Ordnance Survey maps; noting key symbols and following directions using the points of a compass. At the beginning of the term the children learnt about how New Year's Eve is celebrated across the world. They located India, Poland, Russia and the Czech Republic on a world map. Children linked this to their reading comprehension understanding by learning how other cultures celebrate the New Year.



Elsewhere in key stage 2 Year 5 children have deepened their understanding of places through focused studies of areas in the United Kingdom; Europe and North and South America another key focus during key stage 2. The children have used maps and the internet to identify the position of the continents and key physical and human characteristics of the major developments in each. Children have used the chrome books and iPads to research selected continents in more detail and produce a fact file. They have developed their understanding of the terms latitude, longitude, northern hemisphere and southern hemisphere. With links to their topic Poles Apart and the ill-fated voyage of the Endurance the children learned more about the Arctic and Antarctic circles and the extreme conditions at the poles. Using Ernst Shackleton's voyage to the South Pole as inspiration the children retraced his footsteps on the map and understood the difficulty of navigating in such harsh environments. The children developed their understanding of international time zones and used their maths skills to calculate time differences.

To deepen and further develop skills the children in Year 6 have learnt to understand characteristics of a range of the world's most significant human and physical features. They have explored and explained topical geographical issues in their places of study and understood how these issues have changed over time. In this context the children in Year 6 learnt about different types of volcanoes around the world and how/why they erupt including the impact on surrounding areas. They also considered why some people choose to live near to volcanoes.

*Mrs Kitching*  
Geography Leader

# CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS 1451 - 1506



### History

The aim of history at Connor Downs Academy is to give the children a wider perspective on their world and to provide the beginnings of an understanding of the human situation.

Alongside important historical knowledge of people, places and events, children are encouraged to develop transferable skills they can use across the curriculum and in later life, such as perceptive questions, thinking critically and weighing evidence. By stimulating their interest of other times and places children develop an awareness of themselves in relation to their community and the part they can play in it.

In Year 1 the children looked at the differences of rescue services now and in the past. They looked closely at the difference in their job role, uniform and the resources they had to use. The children have also enjoyed learning about Florence Nightingale and learnt about the life and work of Florence Nightingale and what challenges she was faced with and how she overcame them.

The next step in history involves the children using a wide vocabulary of everyday historical terms. In Year 2 the children learnt to ask and answer questions, choosing and using parts of stories and other sources to show that they know and understand key features of events. They learnt to understand some of the ways in which we find out about the past and identify different ways in which it is represented. In planning to ensure this progression the children learnt about the people, events and changes which occurred during The Great Fire of London, which also introduced the children to historical periods that they will study more fully at key stages 2 and 3.

This was also extended further as the children, throughout the school, took part in our annual event, Historical Fun Fridays. This year's theme was Triumph and Tragedy. The children became immersed in their learning within a rich and effective environment. The children learnt about famous historical events, different times and places, researched costume, culture, beliefs and origins that extended their learning beyond the classroom. In key stage 1 the events studied were The Great Fire of London, Neil Armstrong and Christopher Columbus. In key stage 2 events studied in the context of Triumph and Tragedy included The Battle of Marathon, Queen Elizabeth and exploration and Queen Victoria.

Within lessons in key stage 2, children learn to construct informed responses that involve thoughtful selection and organisation of relevant historical information. They should understand how our knowledge of the past is constructed from a range of sources. The children in Year 3 have learned about the artists in the past who have worked in Cornwall including Barbara Hepworth and the Newlyn School artist



Stanhope Forbes. The children used sketch books to record their observations and use them to review and revisit ideas and to improve their mastery of art and design techniques, whilst learning about great artists, architects and designers in history.

In planning to ensure progression through key stage 2 the children learn about British, local and world history. Year 5 have enjoyed learning about the 17th century through the topic Fever, Fire and Fashion. An investigation into the Frost Fairs on the Thames developed into a debate on the barbaric "sport" of bear baiting which developed the children's history and literacy skills simultaneously. The children were taught to construct informed responses that involved thoughtful selection and organisation of relevant historical information.

The children have also used a range of resources to research the Great Plague and The Great Fire of London. They have studied the architecture of 17th century London and produced a model of Pudding Lane. The highlight of the topics was a visit to a local fire station to learn about fire and fire safety. The children then set the models alight to try and gain an insight into the devastating power of fire.

Changes in an aspect of social history, such as crime and punishment from the Anglo-Saxons to the present or leisure and entertainment in the 20th Century is another feature of the children's history journey. As part of their theme Dragons and linked with R.E. Year 4 have been learning about Saints. Dragons are closely linked to stories or protectors of the people (such as Saint George, patron saint of England and Saint Michael). Year 4 used the internet to research and find out the origins and history of the patron saints of the UK.

In their topic – The Good, The Bad and The Ugly, Year 4 have been learning about crime and punishment. The children have learnt about punishments, during the medieval period 1066-1500 including how you became outlaws. During the Tudor period, Year 4 learnt about further punishments including the ducking stool and bridle scold. The children then looked at the period 1750-1900 noting how laws and punishments have changed, and learnt about the introduction of prisons in England instead of sending criminals off to Australia!

Our children construct informed responses that involve thoughtful selection of relevant historical information. Children in Year 6 have considered how their local area was affected during WWII – this included a visit from a WWII veteran. The children asked questions and were fascinated by his stories.

The children created WWII timelines of main events. Reading comprehension based on WWII, including Anne Frank and the heroic actions of Sir Nicholas Winton were completed.

# Foreign Languages

Learning a foreign language is a liberation from insularity and provides an opening to other cultures. A high-quality languages education should foster pupils' curiosity and deepen their understanding of the world. The teaching enables pupils to express their ideas and thoughts in another language and to understand and respond to its speakers, both in speech and in writing (National Curriculum 2014).

We are fortunate to have fortnightly French lessons delivered to our KS2 classes by a language specialist from a local secondary school. These sessions aim to encourage the children to listen attentively to spoken language and show understanding by joining in and responding. When learning to describe their families in French, the children in years 3 and 4 learnt a song: 'Ma Famille - Alain le lait' (membres de la famille) which they performed brilliantly. The children's appreciation of songs and rhymes in French has helped them to remember new vocabulary, which they have applied to

conversations with their peers about their families.

Another aim of this provision is to encourage pupils to ask questions and express their opinions. While the children in years 3 and 4 exercised this through the subject of personal appearance, the children in years 5 and 6 developed their speaking, listening and writing skills by learning to discuss which sports they liked or disliked. When learning a foreign language, it is important to develop accurate pronunciation and intonation, as well as adopting the appropriate structure. Years 5 and 6 were able to practise these skills when participating in activities to develop their conversational skills associated with their favourite sports, as well as naming parts of the body.

The KS2 language club continued to run this term, where the children learnt basic greetings, numbers, colours and how to describe their clothing. This was delivered through a variety of games and other engaging activities. The children particularly enjoyed playing battleships in French, which provided them with the opportunity to give coordinates in French, developing their pronunciation of both numbers and letters.

Mrs Law  
Foreign Languages  
Leader





Maria Augusta von Trapp exclaims that “music acts like a magic key, to which the most tightly closed heart opens” and here at Connor Downs Academy we have had a wonderfully, magical musical spring term, where the pupils and staff across all year groups have embraced learning a new instrument or practised their singing with enthusiasm and joy. Listening to music has many benefits including improving our mental health and well-being and boosting our physical health in surprising and astonishing ways.

In KS1 we teach music as part of our Inspire Curriculum and this can be found across most topic areas. The National Curriculum (2014) states that pupils should be taught to use their voices expressively and creatively by singing songs and speaking chants and rhymes. In Year 1, the children thoroughly enjoy singing in class and sing as often as they can in a range of different genres. The children have continued to enjoy playing musical instruments and have experimented with the different sounds made by each instrument and how this sound can be modified. For example, sounds can be loud, quiet, long and short and the children have learnt how to identify these sounds by listening carefully to the music played. In Year 2, the children have continued their music journey by describing what they hear referring to musical elements, representing environmental sounds using instruments/body percussion and working with others to create a soundscape. The children have learnt the song ‘Town Mouse, Country Mouse’ and sang and spoke it rhythmically (rap), changing the lyrics of a melody and rap and performed in a small group. The children combined singing, rapping and soundscape work in a composition and worked hard to create a complete piece.

In KS2, the National Curriculum (2014) states that pupils should be taught to play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices...with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression. Year 3 have explored the music



of South America, particularly enjoying the flamboyance of Latin American music which encompasses a wide variety of styles, including influential genres such as bossa nova, merengue, rumba, salsa, samba and tango. The children have learnt how to create original music from samples and electronic instruments using iPads and GarageBand. As part of their topic 'Sounding Off', Year 4 have been learning that sounds are created when something vibrates, sending waves of vibrations into the ears of the listener. The children have enjoyed making their own junk instruments and playing them while singing 'Row, row, row your boat.' The children learnt how to keep to a steady beat and sing in time with each other. They have been learning how to appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great musicians and composers. They have thoroughly enjoyed learning all about the different instruments played in an orchestra, listened carefully to the story of 'Peter and the Wolf' and noted that each character is given a different instrument from a section of the orchestra. For example, when they hear the strings section playing, they know that these are played for Peter's part.

In Year 5, the children reflected on their experiences of music through the media, advertising and the music industry. They discussed the songs that were important in their lives and the reasons why. As part of the topic Fever, Fire and Fashion, the children embarked on a historical journey back to the streets of Pepys' London and identified the musical instruments that were common at the time like the flageolet, recorder or lyre. The children learned a variety of songs about the time to enhance their historical and musical knowledge. In addition, the children listened to a variety of recordings of music from the 17th century and recorded their responses to each piece. The children then learned to keep in time whilst singing in tune with clear diction a "round" of London's Burning before writing their own lyrics to accompany the tune. In Year 6, as part of their 'Angry Earth' topic about volcanoes, the children were asked to perform a rap and to create a soundscape or a backing track, using an app on the iPad. The children relished the challenge, enjoying layering and looping different sounds and carefully considering the tempo of their compositions, to fit the rhythm of their written work. The results were fantastic - the children all gave engaging and entertaining performances. As part of Children's Mental Health Week, the children used instruments to show particular emotions, considering how pitch and tempo could contribute to this. They performed their compositions to the class, who had to guess which emotion was being conveyed.

*Mrs Patterson*  
Music Leader

## Outdoor Learning

Outdoor Learning is an important part of daily life at Connor Downs Academy, connecting our children with nature while encouraging them to interact with the natural world in a supervised setting. We are proud to announce that recently we have achieved a bronze award from the RSPB for our participation in their wild challenge programme and a Level 3 silver award from the RHS for our achievements in their school gardening challenge.

Children in Year R have been exploring cultivating futures as part of Muddy Mondays, discovering the natural world through encounters with our animals that include giant African snails, stick insects, rabbits and ducks. They have also enjoyed collecting eggs laid by our chickens and feeding our frogs and fish. Our Year R children have particularly enjoyed digging up the soil to discover what mini-beasts could be

found. Recently they have also been planting a variety of seeds including two different potato varieties whilst learning about potatoes for a science experiment.

Children in Years 1 and 2 have had an amazing time exploring cultivating futures, learning how to use garden tools safely, planting a variety of seeds and bulbs and preparing our poly-tunnel for the Spring. While learning about living things they have particularly enjoyed observing our animals and comparing their features to help them understand how to classify different animals. With Miss Pedley our Year 2 children have also been learning about wildlife and their senses. They have also enjoyed learning about hedgehogs and making clay models of these.

Year 3 children have been polishing up on their gardening skills, preparing our flower beds and sowing a variety of seeds including spring onions, carrots, potatoes, beetroot and radishes. They have observed the changes in the seasons, watching as the bulbs that they planted in November emerged through the soil, producing a great display. Many have been learning about the importance of caring for the environment that included a visit to the Bodmin Recycling and Waste Facility where they took part in a selection of activities and a tour of the facility. With Miss Pedley they have been learning how to care for animals, the habitats in which they live and adaptations of barn owls.

Year 4 children have continued with their topic about living things and their habitats, building up their knowledge about vertebrates and invertebrates. Recently a group of Year 4 children took part in a live BBC Winter Watch programme where they interacted and completed a variety of worksheets before




discovering the wide variety of birds that visit our nature area and recording these for the Big Schools' Birdwatch. With Miss Pedley, they have continued with the RSPCA's compassionate class programme, learning about how to care for animals and the five freedoms.

Our Year 5 children have been learning about the climate around the world through interactive weather maps, globes and BBC weather forecasts. They have also been exploring outside using a compass, map reading and recording weather data using our weather instruments. They became scientists for the afternoon, learning about the anatomy of a daffodil by dissecting them and observing closely. Children have been learning about the decline of our wildlife in their habitats including the effects of pollution. They have also been learning about chickens whilst comparing the anatomy of a chicken to a human.

Our Year 6 children have been learning about the characteristics of a design engineer and about how James Dyson invented the first bagless vacuum cleaner. They have dismantled a Dyson cleaner along with the accessories before putting them back together. They have also been getting their hands dirty, sowing a variety of seeds and carrying out plant investigations. They have particularly enjoyed learning about the role of an RSPCA inspector using role play. They have also designed their own leaflet about how to care for a pet and the costs involved in owning one.

*Mr Costello*  
Outdoor Learning  
Leader

# Religious Education

A young girl with her hair in a bun, wearing a dark blue school cardigan over a white collared shirt and a striped tie, is smiling at the camera. She is holding a red paper bag with both hands. The background shows a classroom setting with a desk and some colorful items.

At Connor Downs Academy, we follow the Cornwall Agreed Syllabus for R.E. Over the course of the term, the children have studied Christianity, other world religions and Curriculum Kernewek. During the spring term, each year group have continued in their work in these areas. This work is supported by visits from Open the Book (who lead some assemblies) and whole school assemblies led by Mrs Eddy. In Year 1, the children began the term looking at the Chinese New Year. The children learnt about their religious beliefs and enjoyed learning about the many traditions and festivals the Chinese celebrate. The children have noted the importance of kindness and caring for others by writing poems and designing posters. In Christianity, the children have learnt about Easter and why it is an important time of the year to Christians. In Year 2, the children have also been developing their understanding of Christianity, in particular 'Salvation' as an important theme in the Easter story. The children began by taking a springtime walk during their visit to Duchy College looking at signs of Easter and new life. They discussed the signs that tell us that Easter is coming and then shared the Easter story expressing their thoughts, feelings and questions. The children enjoyed making Bible timelines using artwork and keywords.

Year 3 have been learning about the 'People of God' in the Christian religion. The children have learnt about the Bible and how it is separated into the Old and New Testaments. The children have listened to the creation story and discussed the actions of the Snake, Adam and Eve. They thought about how the story helps Christians live their lives, particularly when it comes to making the right choices. As part of their Old Testament studies, the children have learnt about the story of Noah and discussed the reasons why he helped the people and the animals by building the ark. Year 3 have also learnt about how Cornish people celebrate their patron St. Piran. They listened carefully to the story of St. Piran, how it is believed that he discovered tin while building a fire on Perran Sands and the significance of the black and white cross in the Cornish flag. Year 4 have been learning about Islam and Christianity. The children have learnt about the festival of Ramadan and the importance of fasting during this time. In Christianity, the children have learnt about the kind of world Jesus wanted - a world of kindness, peace, love and joy. The children learnt how Christians apply these qualities in their own lives. Through a comprehension text, the children have studied and answered questions on the Easter story.

This term Year 5 have been studying Christianity. The children have been investigating a range of biblical texts



to try and understand what Christians mean when they say that God is holy and loving. The children have developed their understanding that the Bible is telling the story of the relationship between God and humanity. They have examined extracts from the Bible to help them to understand what God is like. The focus for the unit was contrasting the awesome, terrifying aspect of God's character – his holiness – and the intimate, personal aspect – God as loving. The children have studied Proverbs 6: 16-19 to understand the seven things God hates and recognise that God does not hate any person, but the actions that hurt or harm the community. Through the story of Jesus' crucifixion, the children have learned that for Christians, God loves people so much that Jesus was born, lived, was crucified and rose again to show God's love. Year 6's class book 'Millions' focusses, in part, on patron saints and why some people believe in them. This led to a discussion about what it means to be a saint according to Christianity, and how this helped to comfort the character in the book who was experiencing some difficult emotions due to a family bereavement. As one of the areas of study in Year 6 is Judaism, Year 6 have discussed some Jewish traditions. Through a reading comprehension exercise, they learnt about the Jewish celebration of Yom Kippur, exploring why this event is so important to Jewish people. They also learnt what a kosher diet is and why it is an important part of Judaism.

*Mrs Patterson*  
Religious Education  
Leader

## Early Years Foundation Stage

First and foremost, Mr Masters and the entire YR team would like to give a huge 'marshmallow clap' to the children for their continued enthusiasm and hard work this term. Each and every child in Class R has made fantastic progress in relation to both the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum and their individual learning goals. As class teacher, supporting the children on their learning journey through the Reception year continues to be an absolute pleasure. Well done, Class R!

### Prime Areas:

#### *Personal, Social and Emotional Development:*

Following the children's successful transition to school in the Autumn term, our primary aim this term has been to support the children as they continue to develop their personal, social and emotional skills across a range of contexts. Through this, the Reception children have flourished both as independent learners and as members of our wider school community.

Through their sustained daily engagement with collaborative learning activities, reflective circle time discussions and positive modelling during teacher-led inputs, the children are now able to recognise, and discuss with confidence, the value of their own individuality. In addition to this, the children are able to identify and communicate their own personal strengths and abilities in relation to their learning, as well as celebrate the strengths and abilities of their peers.

This term the children in Class R have also been afforded fantastic opportunities to work alongside both our Year 4 and Year 6 children. Our Key Stage 2 pupils serve as outstanding role models within our school and, as the youngest members of our school community, the Reception children have substantially benefited from their engagement with their older peers.





### **Physical Development:**

This term, the Reception children have continued to improve their fine motor and gross motor skills in a wide variety of ways. During our 'playful learning' time, the children have enjoyed leading their own learning and developing their fine motor skills in the process. For example, the children regularly choose to utilise tweezers to select resources and create transient art at the 'loose parts' table. During Chinese New Year, the children also enjoyed manipulating playdoh, using skills such as kneading, squeezing and rolling, to create thematic models of the Zodiac animals and cultural architecture.

In addition to this, through teacher-led input, the children have continued to develop their understanding of pencil control. They now aim to use an effective tripod grasp when handling writing utensils at all times. This has enabled the children to form cursive letters with precision and skill. As a result, children in Class R regularly produce writing which is of an outstanding quality and that is presented beautifully.

In our P.E. lessons, the children have continued to develop the skills introduced to them in the Autumn term. They have practised showing control and co-ordination in large and small movements. They have also enjoyed moving in a range of ways, safely negotiating space and P.E. equipment. In addition to this, through methodical practice, the children have become confident when changing for P.E. and can now do so independently.

### **Communication and Language:**

Building upon the communication and language skills they acquired in the Autumn term, the Reception children are now able to confidently and effectively discuss the activities that they have chosen for themselves during their 'playful learning' time. New vocabulary is introduced and modelled on a daily basis; the children thoroughly enjoy learning the meanings of new words and phrases as they engage with daily phonics teaching, story times and collaborative class discussions.

This term, oral storytelling has been of particular interest to the Reception children; the children have enjoyed inventing

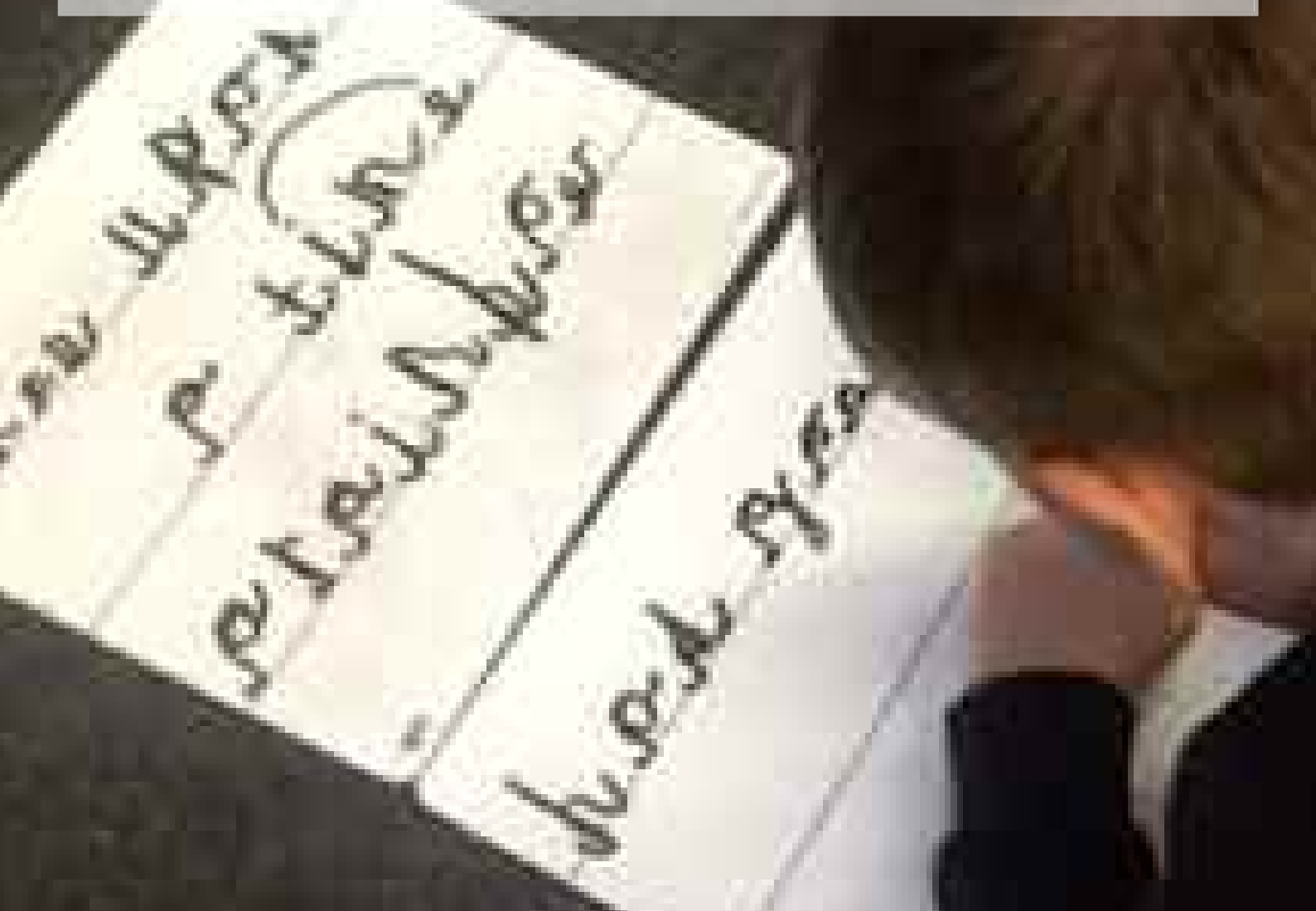


and elaborating their own narratives within their play. To facilitate this interest and enhance the children's learning, we have introduced role play props such as character masks, vocabulary cards and thematic resources linking to particular texts. These enhancements have enabled the children to lead their own learning and develop their communication and language skills simultaneously.

### **Specific Areas:**

#### **Literacy:**

Through our sustained daily phonics sessions, the Reception children have now successfully completed Phases 2 and 3 of the phonics scheme 'Letters and Sounds'. This scheme continues to be taught in conjunction with the mnemonic songs of 'Jolly Phonics' and the cursive letter formation rhymes of 'Read Write Inc.' In our phonics sessions, the children will continue to revise the sounds they have learnt thus far, before proceeding to complete Phase 4 of the scheme in the Summer term. This term, following the interests of the children, we have explored a wide range of texts, both fiction and non-fiction. For



example, following our visit to Newquay Zoo, the children enjoyed engaging with the interactive, fictional story, 'Catch It'. The story follows a family of meerkats, living in a desert, whose pride and joy is a lone fruit tree. An unkind vulture steals fruit from the tree and the meerkats embark upon an adventure to retrieve the fruit, working as a team to achieve their goal.

This story generated huge excitement amongst the children. They innovated the story within their own role play, wrote labels and captions for the characters, and also story-mapped the narrative from beginning to end, using pictures to embed their understanding. Following this, the children chose to use non-fiction texts, including children's encyclopaedias, to investigate different species of animal; the children wrote about which habitats different animals

would prefer to live in and why.

As class teacher, something that truly fills me with pride is the Reception children's genuine passion for Literacy. Our classroom's 'writing table' is arguably one of the most popular areas of our continuous provision. The children regularly enjoy playing exciting phonic games, reading and writing real, tricky and nonsense words, practising writing their own names and independently using their phonic knowledge to write sentences and stories. The Reception children frequently visit other classrooms around our school in order to share their wonderful writing with their older peers.

### **Mathematics:**

In Mathematics this term, the children have consolidated their understanding of the core mathematical skills and principles they explored in the Autumn term. They are now secure in recognising that number is an abstract idea and that numerals are one of many ways in which a number can be represented. As such, the children are now able to confidently write their numerals from 0-10. They have also begun to recognise and practise writing their numerals from 10-20, using visual aids such as number lines and number fans to independently support themselves.

The children have particularly enjoyed engaging with songs exploring counting, 2D shape and subitising during their whole-class mathematics learning. For example, the children are now able to recognise that to 'subitise' is to look at a set and identify its quantity. They have then applied this understanding and vocabulary in the context of their own 'playful learning', initiating team activities wherein they subitise sets of objects.

In addition to this, the children have begun to practise counting in 10s. They have thoroughly enjoyed using the interactive whiteboard play a '100 Square Splat' game. Using this game, the children regularly initiate challenges against one another, using sand timers to determine who is able to count in 10s the fastest. Some children have even begun to recognise the place value of two-digit numbers, recognising that teen numbers are a group of 10 and 'X' extra ones.



## Understanding the World:

Both in the context of our classroom and during their 'Muddy Monday' sessions with Mr Costello and Mrs Malyan, the Reception children have begun to consider similarities and differences in relation to places, objects, materials and living things. They talk about the features of their own immediate environment and how environments might vary from one another. They make observations of animals and plants and explain why some things occur, and talk about changes.

In the context of our classroom learning, the children have enjoyed caring for our new classroom plant, located in the 'home corner' role play area. Through teacher-led learning, the children have developed an understanding of the importance of caring for the natural world and take pride in providing the plant with water on a regular basis. The children are able to recognise that plants need both water and sunlight to thrive.

During 'science morning', the children thoroughly enjoyed working alongside their parents and carers, partaking in a range of exciting experiments. The children explored diffusion using skittles and warm water; they investigated buoyancy using sparkling water and raisins; they used the water tray to identify whether a range of objects would float or sink, using their reasoning skills to explain why.

Earlier this term, the Reception children took part in a special, fund-raising 'Welly Wednesday' walk at Tehidy Woods. The purpose of this trip was to raise money to purchase new resources for Class R. The children loved exploring the woods and observing the wonders of the natural world with their peers. As a result of this trip, Class R successfully raised over £650; this is a phenomenal achievement, both the children and our school.





### **Expressive Arts and Design:**

The value of creative processes and imaginative play, particularly in the context of the Early Years Foundation Stage, cannot be understated. In Class R, the children are afforded daily opportunities to engage with a broad range of creative and immersive learning experiences. This term, the children have particularly enjoyed developing their new, permanent 'home corner' role play area.

For example, when a new, soft-toy dog was introduced to the 'home corner' role play, the children collaboratively discussed how the toy should be cared for, as though it were a real dog. They even chose to use a tally chart method to vote and determine the toy's name. The children regularly use the 'home corner' to act out their own experiences through their play. They take 'Charlie', the soft-toy dog, for walks around the classroom; they prepare healthy meals and shop for ingredients; they throw exciting birthday parties and celebrations for one another. Through their engagement with imaginative role play such as this, the Reception children are able to develop a range of skills linking to all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum.

Following Chinese New Year, the children also chose to create collages and drawings of the various Zodiac animals. They selected their own resources and used their reasoning skills to explain why they had chosen to use, or combine, particular colours or textures. The children have begun to consider the similarities and differences between their own work and work created by their peers. They recognise that work created through creative processes is subjective and actively celebrate one another's creations.

# Physical Education and Sport

Sport, physical education and being active are an important part of school life. We aim to teach the children about the importance of being active on our physical and mental well-being. Sport keeps us healthy and also teaches us so many life skills such as teamwork, winning and losing, respect and challenging ourselves.

## EYFS & Key Stage 1

In our infant classes, key skills and movements are taught to develop coordination and motor skills in the children that can later be applied to specific games, sports and activities. This term in gymnastics the infant pupils have learnt how to move in different ways and how to balance on different body parts, both on mats and on apparatus. The children have developed skills of taking turn and how to be safe on a variety of apparatus. We have also looked at ball skills such as rolling, stopping, catching and throwing. This has been built on in Years 1 and 2 by developing more complex skills. We have looked at dribbling, finding space and passing and throwing accurately. In doing so, we analysed the skills and suggested ways to improve our performance. These were then put into practice with simple versions of football and dodgeball. We also looked at skills such as forward rolls in gymnastics. All of these have seen the children improve their understanding of techniques and also developed coordination and understanding of games. Year 2 have also been developing their water confidence and stroke style in weekly swimming sessions.

## Key Stage 2

In Key Stage 2, those key skills are developed into sports specific skills such as a hand stand in gymnastics or a long barrier in cricket. The children then apply the skills into match situations and competitive intra-school sport. This term our Year 3 pupils have been developing their stroke style and confidence in the water through swimming sessions. We have also taken part in invasion-based games such as dodgeball and benchball. The children have refined throwing, catching and spacial awareness in drills and game situations. Upper Key Stage 2 have focused on gymnastics, developing strength and balance to create routines individually and in small groups. In doing so they considering mirroring, being side by side and how to beg, sequence and end a routine, both on mats and apparatus.





## **Competitions and extra-curricular activities**

As a school we have a history of performing very well in competitive team sports.

### **Football**

Both our boys and girls football teams have played very well this term. In the County Cup, our girls have reached the semi-finals, having beaten a strong St Ives Juniors team 3-1. Taya scored a fantastic hat-trick as part of a great team performance. Several weeks later the girls competed in a tournament in Camborne. Both teams played very well finishing an amazing 2nd and 3rd overall. Not to be left out Our Year 5/6 boys team have been performing well in the league drawing 1-1 with St Johns before beating Weeth 5-0 and Troon 4-1. The boys have played some really good football all season and remain undefeated in the league.

Our year 3/4 boys have been putting in some very good team performances in both friendlies and tournaments. They have won 2 and drawn 1 of their most recent games.

### **Netball**

Our netballers went to Camborne to take on 5 other local schools in our league: St Johns, St Meriadoc, Trevithick, Troon and Weeth. This was their first set of games as a team and they played really well, dominating and winning 4 of the 5 games to finish second overall.

Individual sports are also important to the children at Connor Downs, giving them the chance to excel.

### **Cross country**

Our children competed at Hayle and Cape Cornwall secondary schools to finish the cross-country season. All of our Year 4, 5 and 6 runners have shown great determination and effort to run in some challenging conditions. We were very proud that several children made the county finals.

### **Swimming**

We firmly believe that swimming is a key life skill and we know that for some children this develops into a real passion. Our competitive swimmers have been performing fantastically this term. We took 12 Year 3/4 children to compete against the other Penwith Schools in the area swimming competition. Many of our competitors were representing the school for the first time. All the swimmers did brilliantly, with 7 of our children making finals in their stroke - a significant improvement from previous events. The Year 4s all improved on their placing from the previous year's competition. A special mention must go to Oliver in Year 3 who won the boys freestyle event, finishing with a gold medal.

At the Year 5/6 event all our swimmers again performed well, with some reaching their stroke finals.



### **Multi sports**

It's not just our older children who have been out representing Connor Downs. Children in Year 1 have been fortunate to participate in the Camborne Multi Sports event this half term. This event is always very popular with the children and is thoroughly enjoyed by all. The children experience a range of fun sporting activities organised and taught by the pupils at Camborne School. The children have the opportunity to work in teams, partners and individual events. The event is both enjoyable and inclusive to all participants, with lots of smiles all round.

*Mr Kay*  
Sports Leader

# Inclusion

## NURTURE GROUPS

As part of our support for pupils at Connor Downs, we provide additional small group provision for some pupils at playtimes and/or lunchtimes.

The nurture groups help support a wide range of children. Children who benefit can include those who are new to school and feel shy initially about making new friends, those who feel anxious at the less structured times during the school day of playtime and lunchtime, children who thrive in a small group where they can play games together and interact socially in a relaxed way with additional adult input and children who find a quiet, calm environment beneficial during this part of the day. On some days of the week children are encouraged to bring along a friend if they would like to. Some older children like to volunteer to help with one of the groups once or twice a week.

Class teachers and other staff consider which children may benefit from this additional provision each half term. We are flexible in how we run the groups. Some pupils may take part in a group only one or twice a week for half a term while others may take part daily. For most of these pupils it will be a stepping stone on the way back to the whole school playtime and lunchtime provision. The children really enjoy the sessions – and it is not unknown for a child who used to take part in a group to ask to come back!

We are fortunate to be able to provide two groups, led by two very enthusiastic and nurturing members of staff: Ms Scaife and Mr Costello. Weather permitting, sessions are based outside – in the outdoor classroom and the area around and a part of the playground with enough space to play games – and where the children can practice their basketball skills!

As far as possible, children choose the activities they do – usually from a selection of available activities. These may include gardening including planting, exploring the area around the outdoor classroom, watering plants in the summer, science experiments, junk modelling, Lego, model making, drawing and art activities - and of course, playing favourite games in a group.

We feel many children have benefited from these playtime and lunchtime sessions over the years – and are delighted that we are able to provide this additional support to help all children in school to enjoy their playtimes and lunchtimes every day!