



Denmead Junior School

Building success, inspiring curiosity

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Dear Parents and Carers,

I am a lucky man indeed! What a joy it is, to work in school at this time of year, especially at Denmead Junior School. There's the old joke of an exchange between a mother and her son which goes something like this:

"Mum, I don't really want to go to school."
"I'm sorry son, you've got to."
"But I find the work hard."
"Son, you've really got to go – this isn't an option!"
"But I'm not sure if they all like me."
"Look son, you've got to go!"
"But why?"
"Because you're the head teacher!"

I wonder how many children felt a little like this on Monday morning? Coming back after a holiday, especially one so soon after our big return from lockdown, might have been for some, quite tricky.

However, with the glorious blue skies and all the plants and trees beginning to blossom, it really helped our budding learners to return with a spring in their step, despite how some of them may have been feeling.

It's been a really lovely week, watching the children using our grounds to its maximum. We've had to informally timetable the outdoor classroom and Forest Garden area, as everyone wants to take their learning outdoors as much as possible. It was lovely to see formal lessons take place in the outdoor classroom, despite some teething problems with having too much sunlight, which was cascading through the coloured skylights and causing glare for some.

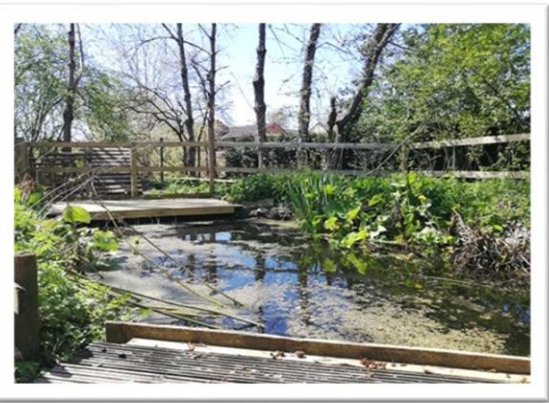
Classes have been busy potting in our new greenhouse and decanting the new plants into their class planters. There has been a whole array of seeds and plants, growing happily - thank you to those parents who have kindly donated seeds to our cause – this has greatly helped.

I was talking to one of the parents who helps Miss Halford with Forest School and I asked her what she thought of our new Forest Garden area, and she happily told me that she was amazed that every week when she turns up, there's always something new and exciting that's different. This week has been no exception, as Miss Halford and Mr Marley continue to be very industrious.

Miss Halford and Mrs Hastings-Stiles have recently planted a new Willow Den, which is a living structure that will grow over time into a leafy space, ready for the telling of magical stories and quiet time. A massive thank you to Mrs Hastings-Stiles, who has been so helpful and supportive to Miss Halford, as our Forest Garden has begun to take shape.

In anticipation of the willow den becoming this magical place, we have also purchased a beautiful, oaken story telling chair, that will be the focal point to tell stories from.





For those of you who can remember, in our original design for this Forest Garden area, we were also keen to install a small, natural staging area for children to perform outdoors and Mr Marley will be putting the finishing touches to this over the next week. It sits at the bottom of the hill, allowing the hill to become a natural amphitheatre for any audience to sit, watch and enjoy a whole range of performances from the polished to the distinctly ad-hoc.

Mr Marley, has fully completed the complete renewal of both pontoons in the pond area, allowing children to now use this area safely and productively. We are just in the process of installing some stone paths, which will lead you to the various areas of the Forest Garden and for these paths to be surrounded by raised beds, full of colourful and scented plants and flowers.

In addition, we have just received more than 400 hedgerow 'whips' ready to be planted on the perimeter of the fencing, so that over time, this will form a natural boundary, where birds and other wildlife can nest and feast in. We hope these will be planted by classes over the next week. I don't know if you can tell, but I am still very excited about the wonderful and amazing opportunities this area will bring to our learning for ALL our children. We are so lucky that we have grounds that can accommodate these opportunities and such a dedicated team that are making this happen.

But it's not just in our outdoor areas that change is continuing apace. Mr Marley has been busy inside the school building also, clearing the atrium area in anticipation of our new library being installed on Monday and Tuesday. Mrs Davis, our librarian, has been working with the School Library Service to ensure that our books are sufficiently in good condition, relevant and not too old – it is the School Library Service's guidance to schools, that books older than 10 years should not really be in a library... we found some books, considerably older than this. And because many of these were information books, the information was often both dated and now incorrect. As a consequence of this, we have removed around a 1,000 books from our library! Your children deserve the very best and this is what we are determined to give them.

Children's Laureate Cressida Cowell, author of the How to Train Your Dragon series of books, has been championing the need for better school libraries. In a recent BBC article, she wanted "something hopeful" to come out of the "darkness" of the pandemic. "If you want to level up, libraries have to be a key part of that. It's just as important as sport - it's about children's life chances," she said. "Children reading for joy is one of the two key factors in children's future economic success... they will also be healthier and happier. She added, "How can a child become a reader for pleasure if their parents or carers cannot afford books, and their primary school has no library, or that library is woefully insufficient?"

I am both delighted and proud, that we are championing this cause in a proactive and whole-hearted way. Our new library will be at the heart of our school and the heart of everything we do. The impact that this will have over time, will be phenomenal and in many cases, wholly transformative. Your continued help, support and donations are always much appreciated.

We will be publishing a list of new readers that we will want to acquire over the coming weeks and months to augment our dwindling, but high-quality library of books. Please, if you are able, adopt a book or make a donation – your help, makes a big difference!



These are exciting times, and as I've said before, I wish I was a child at Denmead Junior School ... but as Head Teacher, I have got the next best thing!

Have a great St George's Day, which is also Shakespeare's birthday and as a strange twist of fate, his death day also. Enjoy the weather and continue to stay safe.

Kind regards,



Mr Andy Clarke
Head Teacher

WINNER WINNER, CHICKEN.... EGG COLOURING COMPETITION



You may remember Wellington Vale Care Home in Waterlooville invited DJS pupils to take part in an art competition just before the Easter holidays.

Today they dropped the prizes off for the 3 winners Issy, Tommy and Willow, which Mr Clarke presented this afternoon. It was tough to reach a decision as there were many *egg-cellent* entries.

KEY COMMUNICATIONS SENT OUT THIS WEEK:

Key emails sent regarding:

- Year 5 – Bikeability confirmation emails to those who have requested a space
- School photos sent home at the end of this week

****PLEASE NOTE**** Now that we are able to enjoy lunch play times on the field, we're finding some children are leaving items out there. Please ensure all clothing/lunch boxes/bottled etc are clearly labelled to ensure we can reunite lost items with the correct owner!

WHAT'S COMING UP:

Next week will see many of our Year 5 children completing Bikeability training in school and around the local roads. Please be mindful of this at pick up times, as we may need to open the playground gates slightly later than usual.

Key dates:

Friday 30th April – Deadline for deposits for Year 6 Tregoyd residential trip

Monday 3rd May – Bank Holiday

Tuesday 4th May – Deadline for free P&P school photo ordering (online is easiest)

30th May – Deadline for deposits for Year 4 Calshot residential trip

