



End of Term

NEWSLETTER



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Lower School Round Up

Learning in Lower School this half-term has been an example of learning and progress in the context of celebrations, so that life skills and creativity are across all aspects of learning.

We started November secure in our routines and transitions as Swimming and PE became a fixed part of the curriculum. Physical development remained important, as did their skills at navigating the community. Pupils continued to learn how to manage their confidence with water, while also learning how to explore new textures and tastes through meal times and other sensory learning.

Learning walks and classroom snapshots reflected the excellent learning using communication tools and systems. There was fantastic evidence of communication books, classroom PECS symbols and switches.

The Informal Pathway was central at organising and leading our school's Winter Festival in the second week of December, with classes preparing to participate through learning activities planned beforehand to build up engagement. The school environment was beautifully enhanced to meet pupils' sensory needs with lights, sounds and textures. Pupils worked on their self-regulation and body awareness through Physiotherapy routines, TacPac, Sensology, Emotion Dance sessions and Yoga; and continued to build on their social skills through the use of alternative and augmentative technology.

The Early Years Foundation Stage classes also took a very sensory approach to learning in this half-term, exploring and learning through sensory stories and to recognise new words and sounds. There was a focus on exploration – with teams organising resources for pupils to observe how they learnt how to play.

The Semi-formal and Formal classes continued to work on life skills, and a fantastic example was the following of simple instructions through cooking and baking. Pupils explored a wider variety of foods and textures through this learning, while continuing to work on their literacy, phonics and numeracy. Trips into the community to use money, go to shops or walk safely in the neighbourhood rounded up this life skills focus. The classrooms and learning spaces were all beautifully decorated for seasons and celebrations, and songs and dances created a festive atmosphere that gave us much to celebrate this half term.

Upper School Round Up

It's been another fantastic half term across the Upper School with learners in all pathways showing progress in their learning through engagement with challenging learning opportunities. Learners continue to amaze us with their positivity and fantastic approach to their learning.

With the first half term behind us and all of the routines and systems of learning embedded, this term has seen our learners flourish and show their potential. Hopefully you at home have enjoyed and benefited from seeing how they have been progressing through the Evidence for Learning online learning journal system.

This term has also involved a transition into community-based learning which has been fantastic to see back as part of our rich curriculum. Our regular community trips play such a big part in ensuring our learners are visible and valued members of our wider community, and are crucial for supporting the continuing development of their life skills and independence.

A highlight from the Informal Pathway, learners led the plans for the winter celebrations. The sensory technology within the class added incredible creativity. The progress of the pupils across the pathway is a reflection of the personalised learning.

A highlight from the Semi-Formal Pathway is the workshops at school and in the community to promote learning that links to specialists musicians and artists. The pupils have demonstrated their musical and artistic skills alongside excellent peer learning.

A highlight In the Formal Pathway this term is the role of the learners getting their teeth stuck into local community issues. Classes in this pathway started a piece of work exploring the issues linked to climate change and what this means for our local community.

A highlight for the Post 16 is their role in the leading our Magic Breakfast service which restarted. Classes from across the school visited the Breakfast Café to enjoy a breakfast prepared and served by our wonderful Post 16 learners. The EmployMENT Pathway also had a record breaking term. Please visit their shop at <https://employme-card-design.myshopify.com/>

Music Workshops at the School

The second half of the Autumn term gave us a chance to return to our enhanced offer, using partnerships with external providers as a way to give our pupils more! We and safely invited the following companies in to give our pupils a chance to immerse themselves in more music and performances.

Musicians Company

We have worked with the Worshipful Company of Musicians for a number of years through joint funding with our school charity and their fundraisers. The project in this half term involved two young musicians: Bradley is a trumpet player from the US, and Elena is a viola player from Italy. They have led a series of workshops with groups of classes. The project spans the entire academic year. In the workshop, learners heard Bradley and Elena play some pieces on their instruments, and then took part in a number of activities.

As the workshops developed, they initially made up their own rhythms on the djembe (West African drum), while in the second and final workshops, they learned how to conduct the young musicians, using hand movements to signify 'faster, slower, louder, quieter, and stop'. The pupils also experienced being conducted too, adapting their own playing to Elena and Bradley's conducting.



Cecil Sharp House

This term our continuing partnership with the English Folk Dance and Song Society brought 2 classes into a 4 week long music programme. The classes took part in a series of workshops lead by some brilliant folk music tutors, learning to attune themselves to a new form of music and tune. The last workshop of this series took place at Cecil Sharp House and this gave us an exciting opportunity to go out into the community and be on a school trip again!

In the new year the English Folk Society will run a series of SEN music workshops, open to the general public and we hope to signpost the school community to these when we return.



Theatre for Upper School

'It's My Move' – Interactive Theatre Show for Upper School

We were delighted to welcome Face Front Theatre back to the school in December. Face Front are a fabulous group of young actors with learning disabilities who perform across the country.

Their show "It's My Move" is a forum theatre-style show about young people leaving school and making decisions about moving on to college and later life.

The students engaged really well and got involved with the question and answer sessions and participatory elements of the show.

In the afternoon the group held a workshop with a group of students from Malala and Rosa Parks classes who are interested in exploring acting and drama as a career, giving us the platform to expose our pupils to ever-growing possibilities for future engagement and work!

The whole day was a huge success and really helped our students to think about their next steps after Swiss Cottage School.



Festival Focus: Diwali

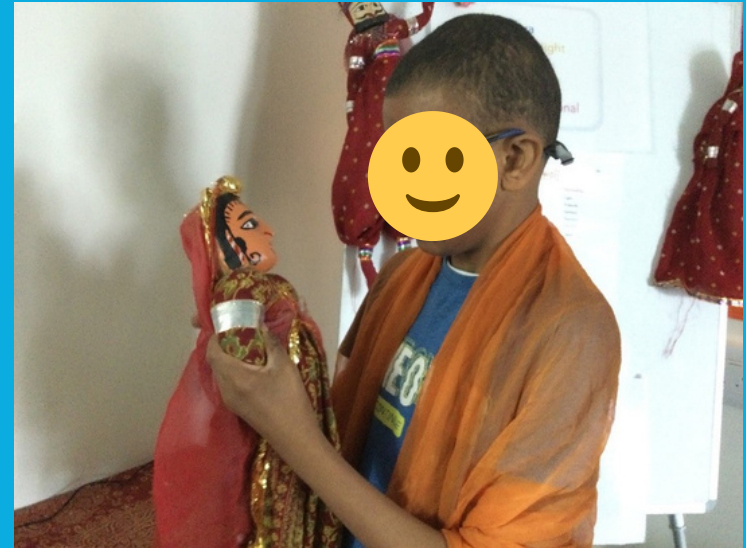
Diwali at Swiss Cottage School becomes, alongside our other celebratory events, a beautifully sensory affair.

Learners from across the school came together to celebrate this festival of lights in November, and it was wonderful to see how a community festival became an opportunity for multiple ways of learning.

Our learners from EYFS explored muted and multi-coloured lights, new smells and foods, including using rice to 'make' colourful patterns called Rangolis. Pupils on the Semi-formal and Formal pathways explored the story and mythology behind the festival, and made crafts using mixed media, that demonstrated their exploration of the use and textures of new art materials.

Upper School and Post 16 took part in a joint assembly that celebrated with dance, music and sensory activities, making the festival an immersive experience.

Our pupils' work was captured through various displays and multimedia across school, and this was the first of a few festive activities (including Halloween) that set the scene for the term.



Community Reengagement

It has been wonderful this term to safely reengage with our local community and to see how excited our learners have been to feel part of this wider environment.

Highlights from the term in Upper School include Malala Class' trip to Somerstown Youth Club where they took part in the "Reactive Forum" meeting of young people in Camden with disabilities, to discuss youth safety. We have been focusing on our Relationships and Health Education offer, and for our upper school pupils in particular, personal safety has been an overarching theme. The Reactive Forum was a good opportunity for the pupils to learn about common themes in a new context, and apply what they knew to discussions. They also got to enjoy the facilities and socialise with each other in a different setting, which always gives them a boost.



In Lower School, Primrose class started to make trips into the local community with a focus on the children's engagement with money and life skills in new contexts. Lydia, their teacher said:

'Something really exciting this term has been our return to the community! We have been working on our money skills and road safety awareness in class, as well as role playing 'shops' throughout the pandemic. It has been great to see how our learners have retained this knowledge and were so engaged with applying it in the community, especially the skills of waiting for the green man and following a shopping list! Horse riding has also been an amazing opportunity for our young people to access new experiences that stimulate aspects of physical, emotional and social interaction.'

Festival Focus: Christmas Winter Festival

The Winter Festival was scheduled in a way that allowed classes to experience the festival safely to bring a festive atmosphere to the school community.

Lower and Upper School pupils visited classrooms and staff in community spirit, sharing cards, carols and treats and working on their communication and social interaction skills.

The school's Undercroft was commandeered as a safe and sheltered outdoors festivities space, with tactile tinsel and musical equipment being a set-up for dancing, songs and shared treats. Both wings of the school had their own lovely-smelling Nordic trees that each class decorated in turn.

Classes made learning multi-skilled and school community-based. Pupils also practiced their fine and gross motor skills through decoration-making.



Student Council

And finally, It's been another busy term for the student council. They have an active voice in shaping our school community and offer, and have shown an increasing autonomy in requesting the things they want. Upper School representatives expressed a wish for School Council to be scheduled regularly and predictably, and they also gave us their opinions on all of the following:

Outdoor Learning Resources

In Autumn 1, the council had given us a wish list of resources they wanted added to their learning spaces. In Autumn 2, they reviewed their asks and added things they missed, to make sure we could get our spaces ready in Spring.

Jack Petchey Winners

At their second meeting of this half-term, council had to vote on 3 Jack Petchey Award winners from a long list of 9 pupils who have made significant personal progress across the last school year. Many choice boards and discussions later, 3 winners were selected for this term and they were Lamis in Greta Thunberg, Nasif in Malala and Sam in Gandhi, Huge congratulations to all 3!

Council members visited the pupils' classes to deliver the good news, and we hope the prizes will be meaningful for those chosen!

Christmas Decoration Competition

For their final say of the term, student council members were given the enviable task of judging the winners of our class Christmas window decoration competition. Three winners were chosen who were Lotus Class, Frida Kahlo Class and MLK Class.



Training of Medical Students and Trainee Teachers

This half term the school also hosted two groups of professionals to support their training programmes.

We hosted 24 3rd Year Medical Students from UCL. The medical students are focused on paediatric and adolescent medicine. The training focused on their understanding of our pupils profiles, types of communication, strategies to support engagement, and an understanding on how the school system includes special schools for higher tier provision.

We also hosted 45 mainstream trainee teachers for an immersive 'What's Special About Special' training day. The trainee teachers had a series of workshops on the 4th floor to support their developments with inclusive pedagogy and inclusion through quality first teaching. Our teachers and leaders facilitated the training, and they importantly heard the voice of the pupils through observations of learning with a learning walk.

It is excellent to know the school can continue to support the development of an inclusive system through these targeted visits.

