

THE NEWBURY
& DISTRICT
AGRICULTURAL
SOCIETY



EDUCATING NADAS

JANUARY 2021 NEWSLETTER



WELCOME

Who could possibly have imagined when the previous edition of “Educating NADAS” was sent out a year ago how significantly the work of the Society and all aspects of our lives would be so disrupted?

Hence the reason why the September edition of this publication never happened!

I hope you will find this edition refreshing to read – I have not focussed on life in a pandemic as I think we are all too familiar with that experience.

Instead, you will find a light-hearted look back on some of the conversations I have been party to over the years, an insight into the role of a Headteacher, not just in these strange times, and an insider’s view on the Agricultural Challenge for Special Education.

When the next edition of “Educating NADAS” comes to you in September, our lives will hopefully be more “normal” so in the meanwhile keep safe and well and happy reading!

Jan Murray
Education Officer.



THE LIFE OF A HEAD TEACHER



Thanks to Linda Wood,
for contributing the
following article.

Linda is the
Headteacher at
Falkland Primary
School, Newbury

Being a Head teacher was always a very varied job, dealing with children, parents, staff and car parks and buildings – sometimes even sheep, dead pigeons and the occasional dog running around the playground.

One minute you'd be driving the minibus to take the children swimming, the next reading the Ofsted framework to work the difference between must, should, mainly and majority. You could go from talking to a parent about a complex personal problem to being hugged in the playground by a 4 year and told this is the best day ever and they love you.

This job is never dull or boring – it's also a job where you know you can never please all the people all the time.

During my first week as a Head I received two phone calls, one from a parent cross that their child had been asked to wear their coat at break, the second from another parent cross that their child had not been told to wear their coat!

I have now had the good fortune to be the Head of two lovely schools with amazing families and staff. I have taken both schools through two successful Ofsted inspections each and could have been mistaken for thinking that I might be getting the hang of it or at least knew how many plates I was spinning – when along came Covid-19 and all bets were off.

The government put us all into lockdown for the first time in March and changed our official status from being an educational establishment to one providing childcare for keyworkers. At first, when it seemed like we might get back to normal quickly, I think everyone enjoyed the sunshine and the smaller teaching groups.

Things changed the longer the lockdown went on. My role then included food parcels and cleaning and updating the website and dealing with changes the government told us about late at night and expected implemented the next day. My favourite was when they told us the arrangements for food parcels over half term, after half term had already started.



Now of course we are settled into bubbles and staggered starts and shorter lunch times and wiping and cleaning and social distancing – being a Head now involves gate duty and MSTeams assemblies and remote learning and like so many jobs seemingly endless Zoom meetings.

I am very proud of the fact that as school we stayed open throughout lockdown and throughout all the holidays including the long summer one. The school closed for the first time since March for the October half term. Good job teachers get all these holidays!

I have now been a teacher for 36 years and a Head for 11 and I still love my job, which is just as well because as my dad used to say: I have never left school – it's real honour to work with young people and see them grow and learn and encourage them on their journey.

Fingers crossed soon we can go back to a time when the only bubbles we know are the ones we use to toast our children's successes.



THE ANNUAL NEWBURY CHALLENGE



Thanks to Chris Jones, Horticulture Expert at Addington Sixth Form for contributing this article.

Addington Sixth Form students enjoy and benefit from the wide range of activities offered by the annual Newbury Challenge. It is a pleasure to see them engage with these tasks whilst acquiring new skills and experiences along the way.

Not all of the challenges involve growing and, perhaps most interestingly, many of them are interpreted in different ways by the students, giving them a chance to express their creativity. It's certainly true to say that there are always lots of surprises at the great unveiling!

In short, there is something to inspire everyone - growing, cooking, weaving, photography, collage, diaries, birdfeeders, dioramas, felting, scarecrows, recycling. The list goes on...

Much research takes place during the course of the year, with the students encouraged to learn about and to understand the background and rationale for what they have produced. This helps to ensure their work is based on constructive foundations and is evidenced in their subsequent work. Moreover, discussing the tasks they undertake and producing evidence as they progress enables the students to confidently explain to the judges how and why they have created their entries.

The students produce a photographic record of their activities and a written account of how each challenge has been created, which encourages them to take ownership of their work. In addition, they are expected to collaborate with their peers; it's always interesting to watch them pooling ideas and devising plans whilst working as a team, more skills that will certainly benefit them in future experiences.



THE ANNUAL NEWBURY CHALLENGE CONT'D

Notable highlights of the day include discussions in which students talk about their work and what they have enjoyed during the process. The provision of quality time with people who are genuinely interested in what they are judging really helps them to feel valued. Without doubt, this experience is important for boosting their self-esteem.

To summarise, the Newbury Challenge provides students with both variety and stimulation, offering them something different to work towards during the year. This supplements their other studies and allows them to express their creativity in a way that very few initiatives can. The Challenge encourages imagination, critical thinking and problem solving as well as initiative and adaptability – all vital skills that will no doubt benefit them in future experiences.



Addington School

"THE THINGS THEY SAY..."



We are all familiar with the expression not to work with children or animals, but in many ways that is quite unfair, as children are known for their very unique way of expressing how they see the world and this can often be highly entertaining.

During my time as Education Officer for the Society, I have had the pleasure of being on the receiving end of some real gems and I would like to share a few of them with you here.

Sometimes you get asked a question to which you do not know the answer and I will always be honest and hold up my hands and admit that, but one question I doubt I will ever be asked again, even though I now know the answer!

I had been talking to 6 year olds about where milk comes from and in the discussion, it was established that all mammals produce milk for their offspring.

Therefore. I was very reasonably asked, is a platypus is a mammal, can you milk one? I will leave you to ponder over that one.

What is it about 6 year olds? Again, I was in full flow about where milk comes from and had told the children that in order to produce milk, the cow has to have a calf.

At this point a 6 year old girl announced loudly, "I know Buttercup has to have a baby, but I don't know how she gets a baby, as cows are not like humans, they don't do things".



"THE THINGS THEY SAY..." CONT'D

I was ready to launch in with the fact that you have a mummy and daddy and cows and bulls are the equivalent, without going into details, when the teacher intercepted, "I think we will wait until Jan has gone then we will talk about that more and I might need to find some books to help me...." No, I suspect she was hoping that by the time I had gone, the question would be forgotten but I wasn't so sure!

Moving on to the top end of the Primary School, an 11 year old girl once very reasonably asked me if all cows gave the same milk or did semi skimmed milk and skimmed milk come from different types of cows? I have a vision of a very fat cow producing full fat milk and a skinny cow being the supplier of skimmed milk....makes sense to me....

Then there is the colour green – and vegetables. I was in receipt of a huge box full of fresh Spring Greens donated by one of the farms that supported Cookery School a number of years ago. I found a simple recipe which involved preparing them and quickly steaming them in a large pan along with bacon and seasoning – quite delicious and very quick.

One of the 16 year old boys I was working with studiously trimmed the leaves and put them into the pan only to announce rather desperately in a very loud voice, "I have never seen so much green!"

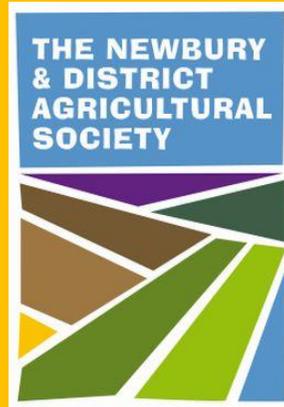
And finally, it is not just the young people.

My very first school visit for the Society was to take Buttercup to a Primary School and as the conversation I had over the phone with the Headteacher ended I realised she thought the cow was real.

This is not unusual and I have learnt that it is better to introduce that fact early when taking a booking so as not to lead to misunderstanding and later disappointment.

However, when the lady subsequently confessed to her mistake she told me she had initially just glanced at the picture and when she looked closer she could see it was not real. Bear in mind this was the original wooden cow and she very much resembled a pantomime cow. Perhaps a visit to Specsavers was overdue??

Jan.



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