

The Big Write

Earlier this term, the whole school took part in the Big Write project based on the adventures of Sunny in *Meerkat Mail*, by Emily Gravett. Bored with his humdrum life and desperate to get away from his claustrophobic family, Sunny travelled the globe, visiting distant relatives, in search of excitement.

Each class was assigned a different non-fiction writing task. Some penned letters home from Sunny, or wrote diary extracts; others filed newspaper reports of his daring escapades or wrote factual texts about the local wildlife he encountered. Here are a few extracts...



A report on Dwarf Mongooses, by Amelia Alcott, Class 2

Dwarf Mongooses eat small snakes, eggs, mice, lizards and small birds. Their favourite snack is scorpions! They live in groups. Six babies are born to one mother and the baby sitters look after the babies while the others hunt for food. When there is danger nearby there is a bird that squawks to tell them to hide. Dangers are big snakes, jackals and birds of prey. Dwarf mongooses live in Ethiopia, South Africa and Angola. They like places that are hot and sunny!



Sunny's diary, by Max Kite, Class 3

Today I went to visit my cousins, Scratch and Mitch, who are dwarf mongooses and live in an old termite mound. I didn't see any horrifying jackals, snakes, vipers and bearded dragons, so I felt safe, but the worst thing was that the tiny termites wouldn't stop tickling me! The food's fab, though – lots of fat, juicy scorpions. Yum! This lunchtime I went to find Scratch and Mitch, but I couldn't see them anywhere. It turned out they were hiding from a nasty meerkat-eating jackal that was lurking nearby. So I quickly squeezed into a hole in a rock. Not easy for me because I'm way bigger than all my dwarf-mongoose cousins. I had

to wait for ages before we could escape. In fact, I'm feeling a bit bored and lonely - I don't really fit in here. I think I'll move on tomorrow.



Short extract from a newspaper feature article, by James Kenny, Class 5, about Sunny's spectacular

descent down Mount Everest on a specially adapted bobsled

The crazy young meerkat was joined by the legendary bob sledder, Winston Watts, and his trainer to embark on a – some might say – deranged journey down the mountain. Sunny's equipment on the sled was adapted to help the young mongoose: a raised seat to improve his view, a stack of weights on the floor because he weighs just 35oz compared to 84kg of an average man, and a longer length to accommodate three people instead of the usual two-man team. As well as those adaptations, Sunny wore a special suit designed to maintain body heat throughout his journey.

The adrenalin-junkie's motivation was to achieve lightning speed, compared to the usual slow pace of life in the desert. Another reason was to escape the boiling desert temperatures. 'It's so boring,' said Sunny. 'Every day is the same – just walking around looking out for jackals. I want more fun, more adventure – a thrill and a chill!'



Food for thought this Easter

Reverend Ward visited our busy editorial team to find out how we put this issue together. While we discussed the challenges of writing headlines and meeting deadlines, he chatted about what Easter means to us. 'Chocolate eggs!' cried Molly. 'Family gatherings,' chipped in Lily. 'Death – and new life,' added James.

Rev Ward explained that Easter is a special time for Christians – possibly even more so than Christmas. But why?

'Three days after his death, Jesus rose again,' he told us. 'He was back in our lives and would never leave us again. All the things we associate with



Easter – rabbits, eggs – are symbols of our rejoicing in new life and how Jesus gave hope to the world.'

He then set us a challenge: what can we do to give hope to the world and make it a more loving, kinder place?

■ 'Help our parents. They're busy and by doing small things we can make life easier.' *Lilly BG, Class 5*

■ 'Stand up for your friends if they are being picked on.' *Owen, Class 3*

■ 'We should look after our neighbours.' *Claudia, Class 3*

■ 'Get involved with a charity. I'm hoping to do a sponsored walk on The Malvern Hills for Cancer Research.' *Molly, Class 5*

■ 'Make sure we don't drop litter – or pick it up when we see it – to protect animals.' *Max Kite, Class 3*

■ 'We should do jobs at home to help out and to be kind – not just because we want to be paid for it.' *James K, Class 5*

■ 'We should say kind things to each other and not hurt our friends' feelings.' *Amelia, Class 2*

CHATTER!

Issue 3 - March 2015

CRADLEY PUPILS' END-OF-TERM MAGAZINE

10p

Face-to-Face With... Eryl Copp

We've all heard of school governors, but do we really know who they are and what they do? Molly Eldridge chats to our Chair of Governors to find out more

What do the Governors do?

Our Number One priority is the children: to make sure pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school, to see that they are well taught and that they have the resources they need to learn, and to make sure they are safe - and that they *feel* safe. We are also responsible for the school building.

How many are there?

There are 12 governors, plus a Chair. There are three committees: finance, curriculum and wellbeing of children.

How are they appointed?

By September, all Governors need to be in place. We might approach someone we feel can contribute to the school, or an individual might contact us and express an interest. Governors are selected for their skills. We're very fortunate in that we have so many talented people in our community - everyone on the Board has a role to play and brings unique talents.

Parent Governors are elected. This is one area where we struggle to recruit people. We're not quite sure why. It could be because they're not sure what being a governor involves, or perhaps they feel they're too busy.

What is your role?

I have been Chair for four years. I have to be elected by my fellow board members.

How often do you meet?

We meet as a group 4-5 times a year; but then each committee meets separately 4-5 times a year.

What powers do you have?

We do make some decisions on our own, but overwhelmingly, most are a result of a discussion with Mr Greaves. If we see something that we feel needs to



MEET ERYL

Career - Teacher and lecturer in Early Years Education at colleges and universities. Contributor to several books for student teachers. 'I've had an amazing career. I loved every minute of it and I know I'm very lucky to be able to say that.' Now retired.

Home life - Married to sailing-mad husband, Tony; the couple have two grown-up daughters.

Interests - Loves music, art, painting and theatre. Eryl has a passion for clothes and fashion, and has even taken a milliner's course and made her own hats.

Interview

change, or we're not quite sure why something is done in a certain way, it's our job to ask the question 'Why?' We then discuss it with the Head. We have a marvellous working partnership with Mr Greaves and we've always reached a consensus, but – hypothetically speaking – the Board of Governors has the authority to insist on a change of school policy. So it is a powerful body. Lots of people think that being on the Board is all about meeting for a chat over a cup of tea, but it's a very serious business. Being a governor is a real commitment – you have to be very interested in the school community.

How have the Governors made a difference to our school?

Probably our greatest achievement has been the opening of the Nursery. It is governor managed, which is quite unusual. We appoint staff and keep a close eye on its running. It has been hugely successful and a real feather in the cap of the school!

What makes our school special?

When visitors arrive in school, what first strikes them is that it's a welcoming place. The children are communicative, good with adults, knowledgeable, well behaved – and, most importantly, always smiling! If you put all those qualities into

the mixing bowl, what you end up with is a very happy place – and you can't really ask for more than that!

Do you think the parents know who the Governors are and what they do?

It concerns me that some parents say that they don't know what we do or who we are. We will be creating a working group to look at this issue. At the very least, we will be putting a thumbnail piece on the school website – just a photo and a short paragraph to tell people who we are and what we do. We'd also like to have regular pieces on the weekly *Newsletter*. Watch this space!

And finally...

I love coming into school. The staff are fantastic, the children are amazing and we're delighted with the results. But there is always more we can do – so we never stop striving!





Surviving SATs

After the Easter break, you'll find that all the talk in Year 6 is about dreaded SATs. But there's no need to panic, says Lily Brown-Goode – you might even enjoy them! Find out how...

SATs are the tests you take at the end of Year 6. The abbreviation stands for Statutory Assessment Tests, which means they are compulsory for every state-school pupil. Some schools also do what are called practice SATs throughout all their years.

Year 6s will prepare for the tests in the weeks leading up to the tests and they take them in mid May – all children take them at exactly the same time throughout the country. The tests happen over the period of a week and the papers are sent away to be marked by an external examiner.

Year 6 pupils sit two written maths papers, as well as a mental maths test; reading comprehension, plus a SPAG test (spelling, punctuation and grammar). Writing is assessed throughout the year and given a final 'level'.

Results are sent out at the end of the summer term before the holiday break. They are sent home in a sealed envelope addressed to parents. At the end of Year 6 a Level 4 is expected, but it is important to remember that for some children, a level below that is still a huge achievement. Some children will achieve a Level 5 – which shows that they are working above the national average - and a few will even sit separate Level 6 papers.

However, it's important to remember that SATs are not about passing or failing; they are simply a measure of your understanding. SATs don't

assess all of you. They can't measure whether you are thoughtful, kind and helpful. And there are many ways of being 'clever'. SATs can't tell that you're good at gymnastics, or football, for instance, or that you speak two languages, are good at art or can write songs. So keep things in perspective!

Dos and Don'ts

Do get some sleep leading up to and during the test week. Absolutely **NO SLEEPOVERS** the weekend before!

Do eat well – don't skip breakfast.

Do spend 5-10 minutes each day revising key points and skills.

Do enjoy them – they're a break in routine

Do try your best – that's all anyone can ask of you!

Don't panic! There's no need to lose sleep over them.



Been There, Done That!

Ellie Henry, Year 7 The Chase, took her SATs last year

'I admit I was a bit anxious about SATs – but sort of excited, too. Mrs Paton had prepared us well,

so we knew what to expect, and my Mum and Dad told me to just do my best. When the first test came around, the whole class was buzzing and it was a relief to finally get started. All my nerves vanished as soon as Mrs P told us to turn over the paper; I was so busy the time flew by.

'We were made to feel quite special in the school, too. Mrs Paton would give us biscuits as a treat and we'd have longer break times to let off steam!'

'It was great when we finished our last test. It was all over! The next day we read through the script for the Year 6 play, which was a lovely way to end the week.

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Feature

Q&A WITH MRS PATON

What advice can you give to children approaching SATs?

Anticipation is generally worse than the reality. SATs are not nearly as scary as you might think. You might even enjoy them!

What preparation goes on in school?

We are very focused in the four weeks leading up to the tests after Easter. I have been teaching for SATs for quite a few years now, so I know what you need to know!

How can parents help?

My best advice is to encourage parents to share the homework you're doing. Chat about what you're revising and practise key skills. Just 5-10 minutes every day will be a huge help.

What actually happens during the tests?

Everything is explained very clearly; you will quickly get used to the routine. I have to cover all displays in the classroom, so that no hints and tips are visible and you will work at a table on your own in silence. There are certain procedures and instructions that must be followed to ensure that everyone can do their best – and to make sure the tests are fair.

How would you reassure those who are anxious about SATs?

Try to avoid thinking that the tests will be very difficult. They're not! You will be well prepared and all we ask of you is that you do your best. Remember, SATs aren't the only measure of your achievement – my assessment of your work throughout the year counts as well.

Some people say that SATs don't really matter. How would you answer them?

High schools use the results to put new pupils into sets/ability groups. SATs are a chance to show off what you can do – they are a great motivating force. And let's not forget that you will be facing exams throughout your school career and beyond, so SATs are a good preparation for life.

Cute Easter-bunny cupcakes

Tuck into these delicious tea-time treats



You will need:
125g butter, softened
125g caster sugar
2 large eggs
125g self-raising flour
½ tsp vanilla extract
2 tbsp milk

To decorate:
Vanilla buttercream,
chocolate chips, coloured ready-to-roll icing, coloured writing gel, marshmallows

Special equipment:
12-bun muffin tin
12 muffin cases



Step 1 Heat oven to 200C/gas mark 6. Place muffin cases in muffin tray.

Step 2 Cream together softened butter and sugar.



Step 3 Add eggs one at a time and mix well between each one. After each egg, add a quarter of the flour. Mix together thoroughly. Stir in vanilla extract and milk.



Step 4 Spoon into muffin cases and bake in oven until golden brown – approximately 10 minutes. Cool straightaway on a wire rack and leave to cool completely.



Step 5 To decorate, cover with vanilla buttercream and use a fork to create a 'fur' texture. Place chocolate chips for eyes and ready-to-roll icing for a nose. Create whiskers and a mouth with the icing writing gel and place marshmallows for bunny ears.



Our very own Mary Berry and Paul Hollywood: Star baker Claudia Norbury; recipe writer and photographer, Owen Boniface