



## News from Whitchurch C of E Primary School

As I write this, we are fast approaching December. The mornings are beginning to get darker again and the nights have definitely drawn in! This time of year in schools is always particularly busy as we continue with 'business as usual' in the children's learning, but we also start to prepare for Christmas, with our nativities and carol concerts. While this brings its own challenges for the staff, in terms of corralling 30 4- and 5-year-olds into some sort of ordered performance (no mean feat and one I am always amazed to see!), it also brings such joy and pleasure.

Yesterday, I walked through the hall and paused to watch while one of our Year R classes were practicing dancing...not for the Nativity, but simply for movement and part of their PE session. They had the ribbons that gymnasts use and were spiralling these above their heads enthusiastically as they twirled and whirled around the hall, filling the space with wonderful colour and beaming faces. It was joyous to watch as they leapt and spun to the sounds of classical music.

In early November, we had an Open Morning and I was speaking to prospective new parents in the small hall. Next door, our weekly Song Worship was taking place, and it was delightful to hear the children singing enthusiastically and beautifully. It was uplifting and invoked a sense of serenity.

More recently, we had a Ready Steady School Session with Barnardo's, for parents whose children will be starting school next September. The lady presenting spoke about the importance of singing nursery rhymes to children and of singing generally. Scientists, so she told us, have named the feeling we get when we sing as a group – it is *kama muta* – and is defined as 'the sudden feeling of oneness, love, belonging, or union with a person, family, or team.' I looked it up and in Sanskrit it means, 'being moved by love.'

The things I've written in my article may seem a bit random, however, they are tied with the theme of music and singing. These are so important – the benefits are significant. They are a form of communication, help children to understand themselves, others and the wider world and are an integral part of our culture. Singing supports with language development (rhyme, segmentation, rhythm), listening skills, taking turns and 'tuning in' to others, especially when we sing in a group. Most importantly, singing builds that sense of togetherness – it releases oxytocin and reduces stress – in a group it creates that feeling of *kama muta*.

I know that when I watch the nativities and performances of our amazing children, I definitely have that feeling. I cannot watch a performance without that sense of being moved by love and will inevitably at some point have tears in my eyes! I know that parents feel the same when I see their faces as they watch – yes, there is that pride and emotion that goes with seeing your own little one perform, but for anyone watching there is that precious feeling of hearing a group of children sing. There really isn't a sound to beat it!