

ISSUE 34 • APRIL 2025

SUMMERHILL NEWSLETTER

A better way to educate!



SUMMERHILL

Welcome to the 34th Edition of the Summerhill School Newsletter!

Hello and welcome to the new Summerhill Newsletter. It is so nice to be able to share some of the activities and achievements of our pupils and staff. What a busy few terms we have had!

Although there is such a lot going on at Summerhill it is still very much the school where kids can play all day if they want to.

We are so proud of this aspect that allows children from all backgrounds and experiences to grow, to think, to experience life without the usual expectations that society demands.

I watch in awe as children unfold during those first few terms, as they unpack their bags and begin finding a new freedom that suits their individual needs. Those children who have a diagnosis are able to step away from it and take part in our society as equals with no knowledge or mention occurring in our daily school life.

What we see is astounding- real evidence that A.S.Neill hit the spot all those years ago. It is not about 'modern' methods and scientific know-how but about being a human being with all the similarities and differences that make us such a diverse and unique species. It has taken millions of years for us to develop the way we have and our basic needs remain the same as our parents, our grandparents and our ancient ancestors - whether it is with a stone axe, a bow and arrow, a rock and roll record or an iPhone.

Neill offered us these methods to retain and nurture our basic needs which are the very best preparation for a fulfilling life....

Love to all,
Zoë

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THE ART ROOM ON A WINTER TERM

An Ink-Making Adventure

The ink-making workshop held on 23rd January was a huge success and a brilliant way to kick off the new term. Our students had a fantastic time learning the art and science behind making natural ink, guided by the talented artist Nabil Ali.

The children, covered in splatters of homemade ink, were completely immersed. Nabil, a Cambridge-based artist, praised their uninhibited creativity. It's funny how a simple task like making ink can reveal so much about a child's imagination.

Nabil, whose fascinating work includes creating ink from historical trees like Isaac Newton's apple tree, spent the day sharing his skills and passion. He was full of praise for our young artists, saying they were "amazing" and that he "loved every minute of the day"!



(Read more about Nabil's work here:
<https://www.cam.ac.uk/this-cambridge-life/artist-made-ink-newtons-apple-tree>)





Lizi Wins the 'Postcards for Jonty' Competition with Stunning Penguin Picture!

A huge congratulations to Lizi, the winner of our 'Postcards for Jonty' competition, run in partnership with the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust! Lizi's wonderful penguin artwork caught the eye of the judges and earned her a signed copy of the beloved book Jonty Gentoo, written by Julia Donaldson and illustrated by Axel Scheffler.

The competition, which celebrated the publication of Jonty Gentoo, invited participants to create their own postcards inspired by the adventurous penguin at the heart of the story. Lizi's penguin illustration truly stood out, beautifully capturing the spirit of the book and its Antarctic setting.

We're so proud of Lizi for her fantastic achievement and we know she'll treasure her signed copy of Jonty Gentoo— a wonderful keepsake from this exciting competition.



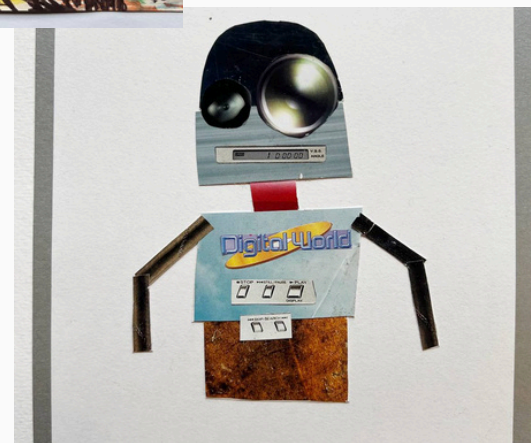
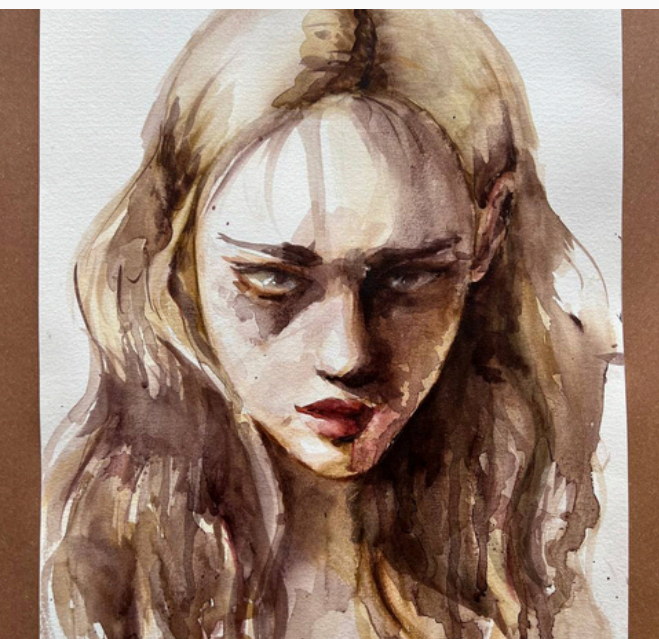


Young Artists at the Royal Academy

Five talented students, have now submitted their work for this year's Royal Academy Young Artists' Summer Show! This prestigious exhibition celebrates creativity and talent from schools across the UK, and we're incredibly proud of our students who have put their work forward.

A big well done to all of them, they have each created thoughtful and inspiring pieces to enter into the competition. Their artwork reflects a wide range of ideas, imagination, and effort – and we couldn't be more proud of them!

The results will be announced at the end of May, and we're keeping everything crossed for a place in this year's exhibition. Being selected would be a huge achievement, and we're already thrilled to be part of such an inspiring national event.



(More about the competition here:
<https://youngartists.royalacademy.org.uk/>)

FABLE COMPETITION

Fantastic Fables: Summerhill Students Shine in National Writing Competition!

Advertisement Feature

Issue 864 FirstNews 8 - 12 December 2024

WINNING WRITERS REVEALED!

BACK in September, we challenged you to write your own fables focusing on online safety and creating positive digital experiences. Hundreds of you entered, with each fable judged by an expert panel, including authors, illustrators and people from Vodafone, First News, the NSPCC and the Voice of Online Youth, and Andersen Press. We're now delighted to reveal the six fantastic winners!

Age 7-8 winner
Penny Vincent - The Open Window

Age 7-8 winner
Alexa de Lloyd - The Very Lazy Vampire

Age 10-11 winner
Avery Kendall - The Lamb and the Lasso

Age 10-11 winner
Catarina Prata Cuginotti - Pig date gone wrong

Age 10-11 winner
Opren Netarath Bihal-Ngudjal - Bee Safe!

Age 10-11 winner
Hawa Amer - The Smart Fox and the Naughty Mouse

Competition Judge First News CEO Katie Tiliak - Irish said:
"I was really impressed by the use of traditional picture book structure in many of the entries. It's much harder to write a story, provide every bit of detail, create your own characters, and to have included that at such a young age shows great promise."

Competition Judge First News CEO Katie Tiliak - Irish said:
"The overall quality of entries in this competition was exceptionally high, with each story offering a unique and engaging take on the theme of online safety. It was a pleasure to read them all, as they not only showcased creative writing, but also demonstrated a clear understanding of the importance of staying safe online."

THE PRIZE
The six winners each get:
• A library card of 100 books for their school
• A Kindle Fire tablet
• A £50 book token
• The chance to feature in First News
• A book published by Andersen Press in a book (printed and eBook), illustrated by Sam Channing, from Summerhill and Andersen Press
• A book published by Andersen Press in a book (printed and eBook), illustrated by Sam Channing, from Summerhill and Andersen Press

Staying safe online
Being online is a vital part of our lives, and everyone should stay safe and happy. Summerhill has teamed up with Andersen Press to create a book of fables, each with a message about staying safe online. The book is available for free to all schools and is a great resource for teachers and parents. You can find out more by visiting www.summerhill.co.uk

www.vodafone.co.uk/digitalparenting

We're thrilled to share that three talented Summerhill students entered the recent Fable Writing Competition, run by First News in partnership with Vodafone. The challenge was to write a modern-day fable with a powerful message – and our students rose to it brilliantly!

Ruhan's fable, *Stella's Stumbles*, tells the story of a squirrel who shares photos of her boyfriend online, only to regret it later when the relationship ends and she discovers he wasn't who he seemed. It's a thoughtful tale about online choices and staying safe.

Toyo impressed with *The Hermit Disaster*, about a hermit crab who invents exciting new devices for his village – until the community becomes hooked on screens and loses touch with the real world. A creative and clever take on the impact of technology!

And we are especially proud to announce that Catarina was one of the national winners! Her fable is now published in a book, sharing her imagination and message with readers across the country. Huge congratulations, Catarina – what an incredible achievement!



(Competition details: <https://www.firstnews.co.uk/vodafone>)

Pig date gone wrong

Fable by Catarina age 12

"We're here!", said the first pig. "Finally!", said the second. "Let's start building!", said the third pig.

The three little pigs had just moved to a neighbourhood with no wolves, after barely escaping the Big Bad Wolf and his blows. The middle pig, having learnt his lesson, built his house out of bricks like his brother. A house of sticks was more vulnerable to fall over, and he didn't want to risk it again.

But the youngest pig wanted to be an influencer, so he thought, "I won't waste my time making a silly brick house. There aren't any wolves here. If I build my house out of straw, I'll have more time to post on social media." And so he did. In ten minutes, the house was done, and the pig inside it was happily scrolling on InstaOink. He took a picture of his new house and wrote "Just moved to a wolf-free area!", then posted it.

Almost immediately, he got a friend request from the prettiest girl pig he had ever seen. Her name was Charming Piggy! He couldn't believe that was true! He texted her on InstaOink, giving his WhatsMud information to her. One word led to another and, after three days, they were very close friends.

"How about a date?", suggested the pig, feeling brave. Charming Piggy accepted at once, and the pig gave her his address, explaining in detail how to find the neighbourhood.

The next day, the pig took a shower (something pigs rarely do!) and was in his house waiting for Charming Piggy when he spotted a wolf! But not any wolf, the Big Bad Wolf! And he was coming straight towards his house.

"AAAAAHHHHHH!", screamed the pig. He knew his straw house would not hold up against the wolf's blow. He burst out of his house and ran. He ran all the way to his brother's house. Finding the house empty and unable to go inside, he ran further to the oldest pig's house. He burst inside and bolted the door, barely locking the wolf out.

"What happened?", asked one of his brothers, looking up from his cup of tea.

"THE WOLF! He's here!", answered the breathless pig.

"What? That is not possible. He would never find our secret address!", mumbled the other brother, still munching on his biscuit.

At that moment the pig realised what he had done. Charming Piggy was the wolf!

He learnt his lesson: Never share your personal data online! You can never be sure who is on the other side."

CLASS 1 TRIPS

This term has been bursting with creativity, adventure, and hands-on learning! From an inspiring writing workshop at The Red House to outdoor adventures at Foxburrow and the farm, our students have embraced every opportunity. One of the highlights was exploring nature at the farm, where they delighted in meeting the animals – holding lambs and spotting playful piglets made it a truly memorable day.



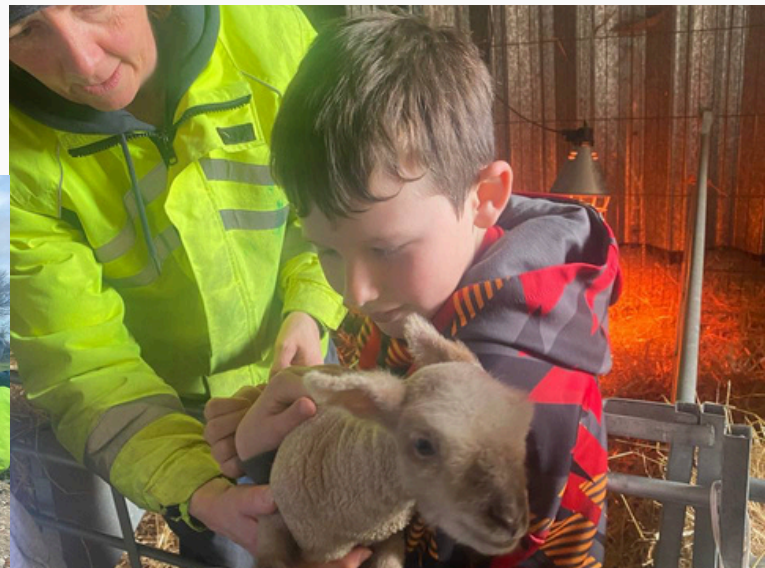
WORKSHOP AT 'THE RED HOUSE'



TRIP TO FOX BURROW



ADVENTURE AT THE FARM



REMEMBERING HUSSEIN LUCAS

A Voice Who Told Summerhill's Story

It is with great warmth and gratitude that we remember Hussein Lucas—author, and passionate advocate of Summerhill's philosophy—who passed away a few years ago. Hussein's work continue to resonate deeply with our community, through his remarkable book, *After Summerhill: What Happened to the Pupils of Britain's Most Radical School?*

Hussein was a storyteller, one who came to understand the unique spirit of Summerhill through his interviews with exsummerhillians. In *After Summerhill*, he took on the big question that has long surrounded our school: what happens to children who grow up in an environment where they are free to choose, to play, to govern themselves, and—if they wish—to learn?

Through a series of thoughtful, candid interviews with former pupils spanning the decades, Hussein explored the real-world outcomes of a Summerhill education. The book paints a vivid picture of how our alumni navigated life after leaving the school's democratic and compassionate embrace, and how the lessons learned in freedom shaped their adult lives.

His work is more than a study. It is an oral history, a love letter, and a mirror held up to the school. It shows us that while Summerhill has changed in many ways over its long history, it has never lost its soul. Hussein's book reminds us that our values of trust, self-direction, and community have a lasting impact.

We are proud that Hussein Lucas chose to dedicate a part of his life to telling its story with such care and curiosity. His legacy lives on in the pages of *After Summerhill* and in the ongoing journey of every child who walks through our gates.

Thank you, Hussein, for telling the world what it means to grow up in freedom.



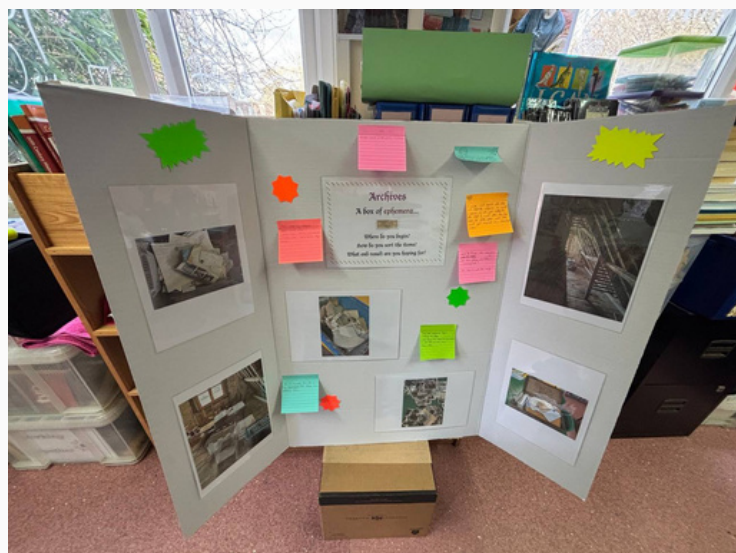


Wednesday 12 th March 2025

In line with many other schools nationally, a group of Summerhill students and staff spent the whole day focussed on the history our school community and how Summerhill grew from a seed of an idea into a school with a history spanning over 100 years.

The day was made possible, and incredibly worthwhile, by the tremendous energy and enthusiasm generated by a group of our older students, all currently in their first year studying an IGCSE History course.

As a member of the SARA the Schools Archives and Records Association I had received an email encouraging its members to participate in a day of exploration of its school's history. I tested the waters for interest and to my delight all members of one of my history groups, six in total, decided that the idea sounded exciting and were prepared to dedicate a day to the project. I was also delighted that some of my colleagues were prepared to work alongside me and the students, making it a truly community-based study.



We followed a number of varied themes across the day, using packs of photocopied materials from original source materials in the Summerhill Archive. These materials were supplemented by a slide presentation explaining the purpose of the A. S. Neill Summerhill Archive; a tremendously engaging Q&A with Zoe and lively discussions about 'How to begin sorting a box of ephemera' and 'Reflecting on Neill's talents and achievements. We also spent time in the Archive to begin to appreciate how the original source materials are stored and collated.



Some reflections on the day's activities by the students involved:

"...My favourite part was figuring out information from the pictures and not just having someone tell me what happened... I also enjoyed it when you, Zoe or someone else would give us extra little bits of information to add on."

"I enjoyed every aspect of it and would like to continue... I learned a lot of interesting stuff about the school."

"...I would do another day..."

"Wednesday was lots of fun and very informative... I especially enjoyed looking at The Archive and would love to do more of that..."

"...Overall, it was an amazing day. It would be hard to pick a favourite activity, but I do know that I absolutely loved the archives. Seeing history and being able to touch it was so surreal. I am honestly jealous that you [Stephen] get to see it so often. I would love to be included in the next one... thank you for making it happen."

"...It was fun exploring and a good way to learn about Summerhill."



A big 'thank you' also to Henry for filming parts of the day. Another valuable piece of Summerhill History to add to our Archive.

A.S.NEILL SUMMERHILL CIC

Role of the Adult Course

Join us on 26th April, 2025, for the Role of the Adult 10 week, online course, designed for educators, caregivers, and anyone passionate about child-centered learning.

This comprehensive course includes 30 hours of live sessions and 20+ hours of independent study, focusing on building healthy relationships and promoting emotional freedom in children.

Ideal for teachers, therapists, social workers, parents and more, the course is priced at £475 with flexible payment plans available. Also a £75 discount with this code: **summer75**

Visit asneillsummerhillcic.co.uk for more details.



‘This course has had a more profound impact on me and my practice than any other work-related course I have ever taken. I was surprised by the personal impact I felt early on, as I usually find courses to be quite superficial. I’m generally set in my ways, and most courses offer only new ideas that I may or may not implement in the future. However, this course went much deeper by posing personal questions about my beliefs, attitudes, and codes of conduct, subtly questioning them as well.’

REVIEW

THE ROLE OF THE ADULT

IN FACILITATING A HAPPY
AND FULFILLED CHILDHOOD

**A P R I L
T O
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2 0 2 5**



THE A.S. NEILL SUMMERHILL TRUST

The A.S.Neill Summerhill Trust is a registered charity whose purpose is to promote the educational philosophy, ideas, life and writings of A.S.Neill, and to provide bursaries or other forms of financial assistance to school pupils. The Trust also works to promote the re - publication and translation of existing books, new books, overseas visits by school staff to give talks, school visitor days at Summerhill as well as Summerhill pupils visiting other schools to run workshops on children's rights and democracy. Each year the trustees consider several applications for bursaries towards school fees. Because our funds are limited, we can currently award bursaries only to current pupils. Parents should contact the school office for information on how to apply for a bursary from the A.S.Neill Summerhill Trust.

A very big thank you to all our donors who have so generously supported the spirit of Summerhill. Your donations help kids remain at the School who would otherwise have to leave, and provide extracurricular activities that would be beyond the School's ability to provide.

If you'd like to make a difference to a child's life, you too can make a donation to the Trust. Whether it is a one off or regular donation, we will spend it wisely.

£25 means a child can join their friends on a school trip. £50 will pay for two extra-curricular lessons.

£100 will pay for travel costs incurred by the External Affairs Committee during their promotion of Summerhill & the ideas/philosophies of A.S.Neill.

£1,000 will provide assistance over two terms for parents who are struggling to pay their child's school fees. A regular donation made by standing order will become an important part of our 'bread and butter'.

To make a gift or regular donation, or for more information about the A.S.Neill Summerhill Trust, please contact the School office on 01728 830540 or email: office@summerhillschool.co.uk.

You can also write to The A.S.Neill Summerhill Trust, c/o Summerhill School, Westward Ho, Leiston, Suffolk, IP16 4HY.

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Summerhill School

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Love from Summerhill

As always, we send our love and best wishes to all friends of Summerhill. Stay curious, creative, and kind – we can't wait to share more stories and exciting news with you in our next issue.

Until then, take care and keep the Summerhill spirit alive!



**A.S. Neill
Summerhill School**