



## Happy New Year!

A short newsletter this month to say Happy New Year and introduce you to the new name - 'Highlights from The Holly Lodge Centre' (previously Stepping Stones) which will be sent out bi-monthly. We are very excited for 2020 and our bookings diary is filling up fast. We have lots of things planned, including a special Amphibian Day, Victorian Tea Party and full program of Summer Holiday events, alongside our education program of outdoor and heritage workshops for both children and adults.

## Spotlight on a Volunteer role—Mrs Sawyer

Mary l'Anson has volunteered at The Holly Lodge Centre for 13 years, since her retirement from Teaching at a local primary school – The Vineyard. She is a volunteer on our Education Team who come to the centre weekly and teach lessons, from Invertebrates and Pond Dipping to Victorian Servants and World War 1. She is one of 6 volunteers who play the role of strict Mrs Sawyer, the Victorian teacher and delivers an immersive Victorian lesson in our school room to primary aged children.

Mary, usually a very friendly smiley person, says: *'I love playing Mrs Sawyer. I did drama at college so it's fun to do the acting. It's great to be able to help children understand history in such a hands-on way. I use my skills from my career as a teacher and my knowledge about children to help interpret Victorian systems for today's pupils. Getting them onside early on in the lesson helps them feel fully immersed in the Victorian style lesson.'* Showing the children the punishments they might have received in Victorian times is a particular highlight for Mary who says that when she was at school: *'I was always in the corner for talking and once got 'sent to Coventry' and no-one was allowed to talk to me for 24 hours'*



Mary's teaching career took her all over London and further afield to America. Her particular passion was working with disadvantaged children and those with special educational needs or disabilities. She was, and still is, an advocate for language and reading and making sure all children have opportunities to learn. Following a break to raise her own two children, Lucy and Charlie, with husband John, Mary became the first SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) at The Vineyard in Richmond at a time when support for those with additional needs was just beginning to become more established.



Mary chose to volunteer at The Holly Lodge Centre because: *'I missed the children from teaching and here I get to do all the things I love about teaching, without the not so great bits - such as admin! It would feel a waste not to continue using my experience and skills. Volunteering keeps my brain ticking over as I get older and its lovely to continue 'working'. The children who visit the Centre are so diverse and I love seeing their enjoyment when they visit. It's so wonderful to get children with special education needs or disabilities outside on our nature trail. And celebrating children as they are.'*

## Take a tour of The Holly Lodge Centre

This year we will be running *free* Open House tours of The Holly Lodge Centre offering the chance to see our facilities which are not usually open to the public. Including our award winning nature trail and evocative Victorian Pharmacy and Classroom. To book a free place please contact us on the number below.

Dates: Thursday 12th March - 3pm, Tuesday 9th June - 3pm, Thursday 10th September - 3pm

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