



Welcome to the Summerhill News

In this edition you can read about the schools recent inspections by ISI, as well as discover how Summerhill pupils have visited other schools in the UK and abroad to talk about Summerhill. You can meet Martha Neighbors our newest trustee and you can read an update about 'A Place to Grow'. Finally, check out John Walmsley's fabulous photographs of Summerhill, some of which are now featured in the National Portrait Gallery. Enjoy, *Steve Fawdry (Editor)*

School Inspection Report



Summerhill had two inspections in 2016 with the new ISI (Independent Schools Inspectorate) that we moved to last year when we felt that our relationship with OfSTED had broken down irretrievably. The first, in June, was a 'compliance' inspection where there are 240 regulations to meet. The second, in October, was a 'quality' inspection where the value of education as well as pupils' personal and emotional development is judged.

The quality inspection report gave the school a 'good' for education and an 'excellent' for personal development. Of course we were delighted with this.

The inspection process was hard work but we felt that the school was being fairly judged and that our explanations were both respected and noted.

In the 'compliance' the school failed on one regulation. Although the inspectors gave it a pass overall, for some reason the Department of Education overrode their judgement and failed it on an accommodation fault - namely that in some areas both boys and girls share the same corridor, though in single sex rooms.

National Minimum Standard 5.1.

'Suitable sleeping accommodation is provided for boarders. It is well organised and managed with risk assessments undertaken and findings acted upon to reduce risk for all boarders. Where boarders are aged 8 years or over, sleeping accommodation for boys is separate from sleeping accommodation for girls.' (DfE. Boarding schools. National minimum standards. April 2015, p.8)

Summerhill has had the same living accommodation systems since its inception almost one hundred years ago!

Gender and age equality are a huge part of the Summerhill philosophy of education. It could be argued that a pronounced or a 'complete separation' of the genders simply exacerbates the gender inequality that already exists in society at large and encourages gender discrimination. We see results throughout our school that living closely together is a positive experience for both boys and girls which they carry with them throughout life and which are often commented upon by former pupils.

After some correspondence between the school and the DfE it was decided that we would get a visit from two officials from that department to give us an opportunity to show them how our very rigorous systems of safeguarding and risk assessments actually work.

To be honest, the visit could not have gone better. We had it well planned and everything went smoothly. Three of last year's graduates who offered to come and put their retrospective point of view were wonderful, putting their case with passion and clarity. The present pupils were wonderful too - talking eloquently about living together with both sexes as equals and how it affects them. The school meeting had a mixed bag of cases and it was as if each one was there to answer their questions (this was not planned). When I drove the DfE officials back to the station they said they had enjoyed the day and learned much. This was evident in their manner and faces as the day went on.

We have subsequently heard from the DfE in which they said the following:

"In the light of the information gained at the school about safeguarding, and the arrangements available to any pupils who have concerns, it has been decided that no requirement for a statutory action plan will be imposed, and the school can continue with the current residential arrangements. However, when ISI next inspects the school, we shall ask it to look particularly at whether safeguarding, pastoral and pupil voice arrangements continue to justify this unusual position – in other words to corroborate the conclusions we reached based on our visit".

We are so very grateful that there were people in the DfE who decided to break the mould (they do not usually visit schools) and come to actually see what we do. They were very friendly, open minded and I felt they had learned something from their experience of Summerhill.

You can find both reports here:

<http://www.isi.net/school/summerhill-school-9177?results=true>

There is further information on our risk assessment and safeguarding work regarding this issue on our website – *Policies and Paperwork*

Zoe Readhead, School Principal.

Utopian thinking: why not put children in charge of their schools?

Rachel Roberts

The future is rapidly changing and uncertain, so our young people need to retain their creativity. Top-down authority is no longer the way

You can enjoy reading the article [here](#)

Images from Summerhill

The images below were taken by John Walmsley in the 1960s. The picture of A S Neill is now on show at the National Portrait Gallery. They are all for sale as a set of 8 postcards for £8 + P&P. You can buy them on Etsy [here](#), along with John's other postcards. They are also available from the Summerhill school office in person. Contact John via Etsy to discuss your requirements.

(Please note that the copyright info' line, which you see on the pictures, is not on the actual postcards).



All photos © John Walmsley 1968.
All rights reserved.

John's photo of Neill is now viewable at the National Portrait Gallery and on their website:

<http://bit.ly/SummerhillNeill-NPG>



The A. S. Neill Summerhill Trust



Meet Martha Neighbors who has recently become a Trustee.

Martha, a former pupil (1969-74) and long-time fundraiser for assorted arts organizations in the US says, "I am thrilled to help the Trust and Summerhill thrive and flourish. Today, the Trust is leading the charge on democratic education in the UK and beyond, working to keep Neill in print in multiple countries around the globe, and trying to sort out how, where and when we will celebrate our 100th birthday (!) in 2021. Coming up in the autumn, Summerhill staff and pupils will be in New York at the United Nations to discuss democratic education and I can't wait to welcome them to my hometown".

The A. S. Neill Summerhill Trust's 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 existing pupils. Parents should contact the school office for information on how to apply for a bursary from the A. S. Neill Summerhill Trust and from other trusts too.

In the past ten years, the Trust has awarded 43 bursaries totalling £60,250.

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. We'll be looking to you in the coming months/years for funding to expand our activities, and for ideas regarding the 100th Birthday Reunion.

Thank You!

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 info on 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.

Summerhill Children Presentations in Italy



(Picture: Michael, Nelli and Phil with students from Liceo Classico Dante Alighieri, Ravenna)

Two Summerhill students, aged 13 and 14, travelled to Italy for a week of talks and interviews on Summerhill and their lives. Nelli and Phil, accompanied by Michael Newman, were part of the ongoing relationship, in its sixth year, between Summerhill and Emilia Romagna, with links to alternative schools, co-ops, the youth participation team of the regional government, universities, theatres and state schools. They spoke at two secondary schools, one in Ravenna another in Bologna, to students hoping to become teachers, they addressed six classes, and were shown around the schools. The teenagers were very interested in Summerhill, running out of time for questions.

Other events the group addressed were a seminar on children's rights at Bologna University, alongside speakers talking about rights in Brazil and Italy. The Professor from Parma University who visited to see our presentation invited us to speak at his University next time.

They spoke at three different groups linked to democratic schools and were interviewed on local television. They met with the film Director, Lucio O Cinese Basadonne, at showings of his new film 'Figli della Liberta', which includes his visit with his family to Summerhill, as he explores the issue of sending his daughter to an Italian democratic school. We then held a joint Q and A session. The trip was funded by the University of Bologna, and donations from local organisations and visitors to the events. It was supported by Concittadini for Emilia Romagna, and managed by Renzo Laporta.

Written by Michael Newman

Summerhill Working in East London

A project based on voluntary work has been running for a year in East London, in partnership with a large inner city school, George Green's School, and the local town hall. We have run three events so far.

All the events are framed for the students and teachers by the history of New Ideals in Education, and references to relevant case studies for inspirational models of practice. Part of the project is to see how the awareness of a culture and history of children's rights in schools affects the attitudes of students and teachers, and to build a set of resources and projects that other schools can use.



(Picture: Michael Fielding talking about democratic schools to George Green's School students working for their school to be a Rights Respecting School)

The launch event at the Town Hall was on what a democratic secondary school could look like, using the model of practice of Alex Bloom's School - St Georges in the East, which was A. S. Neill's favourite state school. The day was a series of workshops using research by Prof Michael Fielding, who was there to support the students. They compared their school's activities with those of St Georges, and Prof Fielding told them that he was very impressed with the level of their thoughts and discussion. The directly elected Mayor of Tower Hamlets gave a Children's Rights Handbook to each of the students, the Handbook had been part funded by the A. S. Neill Summerhill Trust several years ago. This day fed back into the school as part of their implementation of Rights Respecting Schools project, and how they may move forward.



(Picture: Michael and George Green's School students running a Training Day with Three Primary Schools on Justice, Janus Korczak and Summerhill)

The second event was as part of Holocaust Memorial Day. The students from George Green's School ran training sessions on justice and children's courts. This was inspired by Janus Korczak's life and work in Warsaw Ghetto running a democratic orphanage. This was alongside Summerhill's community meetings and Homer Lane's Little Commonwealth.

Three primary schools attended the day, and the George Green's students, who were part of their school's planned 'conflict resolution' project went back to reflect on what their school should do as a result of what they had learnt. They had been trained for three sessions before the event on justice through democratic meetings and circle time, restorative justice, and how to deliver simple toolkit activities with younger children. The primary schools wanted to come back, and the George Green's students were very enthusiastic about the event.

The third event was part of Fairtrade Fortnight and involved the older students training twelve year olds on how to set-up and run co-operative enterprises to change their community. Previous to this, I had trained the older students (who were Charity Ambassadors in the school) on using the model of social co-operative enterprise rather than charity fund-raising. The school plans to raise money for building a school in India.

Social Co-operative Enterprise allows their work to empower the children about business and community through democratic working and to see parallels between this and how communities of poor and disempowered people throughout the world are improving their lives.

The children were interviewed for the web by Gregory Cohn, Director of Tower Hamlets Co-op Development Agency. Power-points and activity guides are all available on the web, www.newidealsineducation.co.uk

The fourth event was in partnership with the Whitechapel Art Gallery, exploring an exhibition of Eduardo Paolozzi, and framed by artists and critics who were part of New Ideals, including Herbert Read.

Written by Michael Newman

Half Term Parent's Camp Weekend

It was the annual parent's camp weekend at Summerhill in June.

Like many parents I really look forward to this weekend. It's a chance to unwind from work, chat around the campfire, eat together, relax together, have the pleasure and enjoyment in being part of Summerhill and of course, to see our kids at school and their Summerhill home.

My son, Zak, is a leaver this year so the weekend was also tinged with a bit of sadness that this would be my last camp over as a parent. So I set my mind to make the most of it, to soak it all up and enjoy the weekend as much as I always do but this time to really take time to appreciate the atmosphere and all of the people who make it such a wonderful experience. The weather was glorious and sunny all weekend.

When I arrived on Friday at lunchtime the field was already full of tents and people. There was the usual sharing and caring, people calling out to each other to use their mallets or air bed pumps. I watched Will and some of the boys sawing and stacking up wood for our weekend fire whilst putting up my tent as more people were arriving.

Following on from Friday dinner, most people move to the camp fire in the middle of the field, which this year had the biggest circle of chairs I've seen. There were the usual never ending bags of marshmallows for the fire and kids hunting for the best sticks and other sweets and treats being shared around and somehow you can guarantee you will find your way around numerous conversations with different people without even leaving a chair during the evening which is exactly what happened. Some of us stay up in to the early hours, mesmerised by the fire, sitting through periods of comfortable silence in between talking and laughing as softly and quietly as we can whilst others sleep close by in their tents.

Saturday morning and most people were, as usual, up early, the fire was smouldering from the night before and it was a nice relaxed slow morning after breakfast; with everyone appreciating their own Summerhill moments. It was so hot that I had taken my airbed out of the tent and lay in the shade watching some children up above me in a tree playing a game. It wasn't long though before I'd joined a conversation with others about our shared and differing experiences of being a Summerhill parent. By lunch time you could hear people asking each other 'what time is it'? The energy and excitement was building whilst we waited for the stalls, auction and music to start.



First up were the stalls, this year there was nail painting, arts, crafts, plants, books and more. Sarah, one of the parents, had previously rallied other parents, through the parents Facebook group, to bake and bring cakes to sell to raise money for the community fund. During this time we also get to look at all of the items on display ready for the auction.

As with previous years the auction was very entertaining and full of laughter. Everyone was gathered on the grass in front of the house listening to Will doing his bid calling and encouraging the competition between parents, kids and teachers for the highest bids on paintings, photographs, metal and woodwork items created and made at the school. Those who are leaving each year have the choice to put together a survival box of random surprise items called leavers boxes that they leave behind for the highest bidder.

After the auction we moved into the theatre to watch and listen to the musical talents of Oscar, Poppy, Junhee, Coco, Zak and Elodie who performed for us as part of their Rock School exam. It was a fabulous performance of solo's, duets and a trio of Beatles songs from everyone with a lot of whooping and cheering, from the audience, throughout the show.



Whilst the kids go off to get ready for their all-night party the fire in the parents camping field starts to build up for a repeat of Friday night. The sky was so clear over the weekend and Saturday was another late night of chatting, laughing and later on watching the GPS satellites moving across the sky between so many stars. I even spotted a shooting star, such a beautiful sight if you live in a city.

Sunday is lovely and lazy, Sunday brunch, as always is a great way to start the last day and people start to pack down the tents, whilst others go for walks with friends and kids, to the beach at Aldeburgh for a few hours, to Leiston Abbey or just relax around Summerhill. From behind the house there was also the splashing from the swimming pool which was busy.

Some of us spread out blankets on the field and spent the afternoon chatting and eating delicious homemade cake and ice cream brought by local parents who live in Leiston. There are families who stay over until Monday but by early evening on Sunday most people have said goodbye and packed up and left to go home, including me.

I always go away from Summerhill camp with a bit of an ache in my cheeks because I've been smiling and laughing so much and this year, even though it was my last, was no different. Thank you to everyone who makes the parents camp possible and such a treat of a weekend. I'm really going to miss it. Carry on Camping Summerhill.

Written by Tina Louise

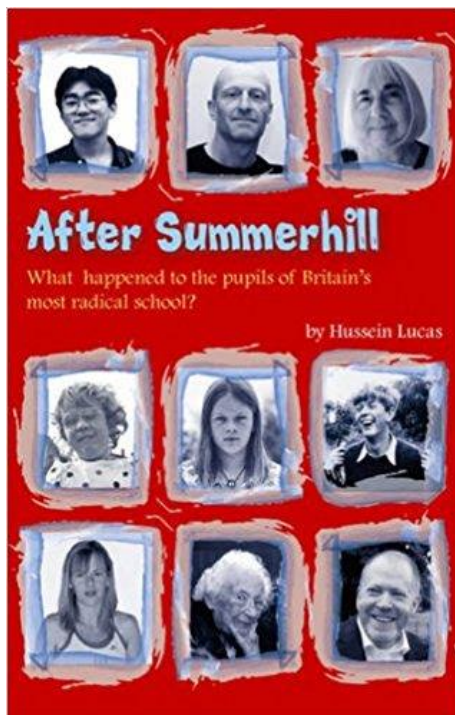
Summerhill Becomes FairAware School



In May 2017, Summerhill was awarded Fair Aware status by the Fairtrade Foundation. This has come about due to the work of students Herbie, Ozzie and Kai, doing their coursework for their Citizenship (Short Course) GCSE, with support from the Summerhill meeting and the school's kitchen purchasing manager. And with a newly elected Fairtrade Committee running a stall at the Summer Half-Term Fete with homemade bunting, selling refreshments, offering a space for playing Fairtrade games and planning a visit to the school by the Leiston Fairtrade Committee, the school should gain the next stage and become a Fair Active School before the end of term.

(Picture: School student Poppy receiving the award).

After Summerhill



What Happened to the Pupils of Britain's Most Radical School?

If you're looking for a great read then consider buying Hussein Lucas's "After Summerhill".

This book consists of fifteen articles compiled some years ago from interviews with former pupils of Summerhill. Each article is introduced by a paragraph drawing attention to its particular relevance, followed by a section about the interviewee's experiences at Summerhill itself, a section about subsequent careers and a brief postscript written in 2011. The book includes at least one contributor from each decade of the school's existence to give an idea of the history of the school. And it also includes some contributions from people who made criticisms.

Hussein donates some of the royalties to the Trust so please do buy a copy [here](#).

A Place To Grow



We first featured A Place To Grow (APTG) in our Feb 2015 edition. This small part-time community of home-schoolers was established over 5 years ago and is based in Stroud, Gloucestershire. It is partly inspired by Summerhill and runs along similar lines. The project has since grown in numbers and has been mentored by ex-Summerhillian Albert Lamb. APTG has gone on to inspire the creation of two other home-education projects run on very similar lines: [The Green House](#), near Bath, now in its fourth year, and [The Garden](#) in Bristol, in its second year.

The Open Day earlier this year at APTG was well attended - 50-plus adults and kids, including several prospective parents and one from South Wales hoping to set up her own home education annexe (as Albert calls it). Fortunately the sun shone, so everything was looking at its best. The newly built barn, with verandah and mezzanine has proved to be a welcome improvement on the yurt - especially in the winter - and the double-decker bus has been refurbished to include a sandpit, tables and cooker. Adrian, who comes in once a week is constructing a woodwork hut in the grounds and teaches woodwork to any kids who are interested. Stan, an early mentor of APTG, still comes in every week to do projects. Sometimes the kids will suggest projects, sometimes the adults. Nothing is compulsory.



(The new barn being constructed)

APTG was established in 2012, so is now in its fifth year. There are currently 14 kids between 6 and 13, with more expected in the summer - so numbers could grow to over 20. There is no upper age limit and it is hoped that some will stay on till 15 or 16. APTG is hoping to become a registered child care provider, which will help with the finances via the childcare voucher system.

There have been several changes in the organisation. Albert stood down last summer to become mentor/adviser to the staff. Petro, who has been working at PTG for over three years, is now the Project Manager. Every morning begins with sharing and Petro now uses a timer to ensure every child gets a say. Then one of the kids takes over as chair for the rest of the meeting. Albert is coming in to chair the Thursday afternoon children's meeting.

The ombudsman system is working well - i.e. older kids looking after younger ones. They can often resolve disputes on the spot, but can also represent the younger ones at the meetings if they find it difficult to express themselves. (Picture: Inside the new barn)



Two of the original core group (the vision-holders) have stood down and management is now divided into three groups: The Core Group (expanded to six); the Mentoring Group; and the Staff Group. A handbook has been created that gives the structure, and lays out the responsibilities for the different roles. The Parents continue to have responsibility for weekly clean-ups and repairs.

After a musical performance by several of the kids and Madera (the new assistant co-ordinator), there was a Q&A session. The kids themselves responded to many of the questions, confidently and coherently. No one seems fazed by adults.

In short, everything is looking very healthy, though of course there are always problems to contend with. As Petro said, there is no attempt to pretend conflicts don't arise from time to time. The aim is to make the children comfortable with conflict and to learn how to resolve it. Social education is the chief purpose of APTG.

I'll finish with a quote from Albert in a recent interview I did with him: "Adults coming in have to learn how to stand back and let the kids make mistakes and do things differently than they as adults would, and be humble about it. And it's important to believe it will work: that the kids will come out all right even if they are suddenly being mean to each other or all seeming unhappy. It's not always pretty. You get those little video moments where it looks like the kids are all absolutely adorable and lovely. But this is the opportunity for kids to work out a lot of issues... they may have some heavy things they need to deal with, and this is where they can do it."

Written by Hussein Lucas

Centenary Celebrations of New Ideals 1917 Conference

On Saturday 1st July Michael Newman gave a short opening speech in front of secondary schools taking part in the Youth Model United Nations held annually at Regent's University. He is celebrating the centenary at the building that hosted the conference of the community called 'New Ideals in Education, founded on the value of 'liberating the child in the school'. Their values are those of the Model UN, of human rights, peace, justice and equality.

A team of students from Summerhill took part in the Model UN supported by staff Tomo and James.

<http://regents.ac.uk/about/outreach/youth-model-united-nations-conference/>

Michael also celebrated the centenary with a talk to the Festival of Alternative Education, Hebden Bridge School back in June. This is part of a growing relationship between Summerhill School and the Phoenix Trust.

TED "Ideas worth Spreading"

Links to Video talks on education

[Sir Ken Robinson says schools kill creativity](#)

[Sugata Mitra: The child-driven education](#)

[Our digital lives, Eli Pariser: Beware online "filter bubbles"](#)

[Nick Thorpe, Author of 'Urban Worrier' mentions how a visit to Summerhill inspired him](#)

[Arvind Gupta, Science toy maker "Toys from Trash"](#)

Suggest some more to.... summerhillnewsletter@gmail.com



A.S. Neill talks about freedom and his Summerhill School in England. Summerhill is often said to be the first school based on freedom and democratic ideals. The documentary was called "[Here and Now](#)".

More interesting videos

[Make Your Voice Heard: Discover Democratic Education](#)

[Think Global School](#)

Suggest some more to.... summerhillnewsletter@gmail.com



Links to pages related to education

[A. S. Neill's Summerhill School](#)

[EUDEC](#)

[Alternative education resource organization \(AERO\)](#)

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All the Summerhill Newsletters can be viewed at Dropbox [here](#)

vimeo

SUMMERHILL

A four part double BAFTA award winning children's drama made by Tiger Aspect about life at Summerhill, culminating in the battle and court case with OFSTED in 2000 [here](#).

Organisations & Resources

Links to organisations and resources

[Personalised Education Now](#)

Personalised Education Now promotes education based on learner-managed learning within a framework of democratic values and practices. An educator becomes, pre-dominantly, 'the guide on the side' rather than 'the sage on the stage'.

[Education Otherwise](#)

Whether you're thinking about home educating or are already doing it, Education Otherwise provides information, guidance and resources to help you achieve this.

[EUDEC](#)

EUDEC is a non-profit organisation that promotes democratic education as a sensible educational model for all democratic states. Its [members](#) are individuals, [schools](#) and institutions throughout Europe with decades of experience in democratic education.

[Arvind Gupta Toys](#)

Arvind Gupta is a science toy maker - he shares his passion for toys and books through his [website](#). Everyday 50,000 children across the world view his films in 18 languages. Also 15,000 passionate books on Education, Peace, Science, Environment and Maths are downloaded every day.

[Other Education](#)

The Journal of Educational Alternatives

If you have something interesting you'd like to share with Summerhill readers that is related to Summerhill School, please do get in touch with me.

Steve Fawdry

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