**Summer 2019 – Class 4**

This term’s class visit was scheduled to be during a PE lesson, but thanks to the Great British weather, we were rained off, and so instead we enjoyed a yoga class inside.

The class started as it always does when the pupils come in from their lunch break, and Mr Ferris checks up on how everyone is feeling, giving a number out of ten. Each child explains why they feel that way, which is a great way of getting them to open up about how they’re feeling, as well as checking that everyone’s happy and ready to start work again – I was very pleased when I was asked by one of the students how I was feeling out of ten too.

Before yoga could begin, the children had to change into their PE kits – even this seemingly routine act presented an opportunity to learn some invaluable life skills; getting dressed and undressed, using the mantra ‘one off, one on,’ focusing on what you’re doing (rather than chatting!), and all the while, the staff maintained the perfect balance between keeping the children on track and moving along as quickly as possible, whilst always ensuring that everything remained calm.

The children were all really looking forward to the Cosmic Kids Yoga Adventure, which is a YouTube video during which the yoga lady tells the story of Harry Potter & The Philosopher’s Stone whilst incorporating yoga moves throughout. Mr Ferris told me that several of the boys were totally unimpressed at the thought of practising yoga – until they tried it! The yoga poses are renamed to fit in with the story (I’ve done yoga for ages but never before have I done ‘wizard’s pose’!!), and there was plenty of cardio-vascular exercise too, as the children stomped like Hagrid, whilst incidentally performing repeated lunges. Many of the moves were quite challenging, and the whole video was fast-paced, but the children managed really well.

All the children maintained their attention and focus throughout the class, and Mr. Ferris explained how the whole class had become noticeably more flexible since the yoga classes began, which will help their fine and gross motor skills, their focus, concentration, balance, mindfulness, and hand-to-eye coordination. And of course, all of these skills will be massively helpful in all other areas of their lives.

The class finished with everyone sitting in a circle, breathing slowly and deeply. It was wonderful to see the children so calm – dare I say, even serene! Mr Ferris explained to the children how social situations are sometimes hard for people, especially with autism. He went on to say that people relaxed in different ways, and yoga can help us relax and find a calm, quiet place in our minds. They then discussed other ways that people like to be calm, relax and unwind.

As usual, I was very sorry to leave this haven of calm for the hustle and bustle of the busy roads – I can’t wait for my next visit!