

Chelsea Open Air Nursery School and Children's Centre.

Kathryn Solly
Former Headteacher
Consultant, trainer and author
Early Education Associate
NASS member



History of Chelsea Open Air



- ❑ Started as a private school by Dr Susan Isaacs in 1927 with an American benefactress Natalie Davies.
- ❑ Linked to the arts and crafts movement plus the realisation that "*open air*" was good for children.
- ❑ Strong ethos of using outdoors all year round and the local community.
- ❑ Based in a building dating from 1587 in a very smart street metres from the cosmopolitan Kings Road.
- ❑ In 1978 became a state maintained nursery school under ILEA.
- ❑ One of 26 maintained primary and nursery schools/children's centre in RBKC.
- ❑ One of 4 phase 1 children's centres in RBKC. Based in a 20% deprived ward.
- ❑ Last three Ofsted inspections rated outstanding in all areas.
- ❑ Very inclusive intake.



Context.

- Quite paternal-if the school did well you were celebrated and quietly left to get on with it.
- LA challenged by EY specialist Heads who understood the facts and stood up for the children and families in different and creative ways.
- Tri borough arrangement changed the rules of engagement.
- 4 MNS dealt with differently by the tri borough and likewise MNS across the 3 boroughs.

Meet the challenge



Painting by Peter Honey  Peter Honey Publications

*"If you have a dream,
make it happen.
You can achieve
almost anything
with commitment,
hard work and
perseverance"*

Sir Chris Bonnington,
World renowned Mountaineer

January 2006

Experiences of closure...

- ❑ MNS are/were seen as easy targets because of size, vulnerability of children and lack of parent experience.
- ❑ Often left to the headteachers with little governor support.
- ❑ Process of wearing people down.
- ❑ Subtle and challenging approach setting people apart.
- ❑ Opportunistic and often erroneous facts used.

Show the way



"Leaders guide people through the stormy darkness, enabling them to fulfill their vision of achievement and self respect - maximising individual potential"

Sir Digby Jones, Director General,
Confederation of British Industry

What do governors need to be aware of

- ❑ Don't be dozy and think someone else will do it!
- ❑ Grow your expertise and really get to know your school.
- ❑ Read and understand documents and reports.
- ❑ Volunteer for at least one governor committee.
- ❑ Contribute to the success of your school and its children by talking it up in your local community.
- ❑ Stand up and be counted for what matters whilst developing your political and educational understanding.
- ❑ Attend regular meetings and those that are relevant in the council/LA.

Dare to be different



Painting by Peter Honey Peter Honey Publications

"I never met the person who followed a dream....and regretted it, but I met many who looked back...and wished they had"

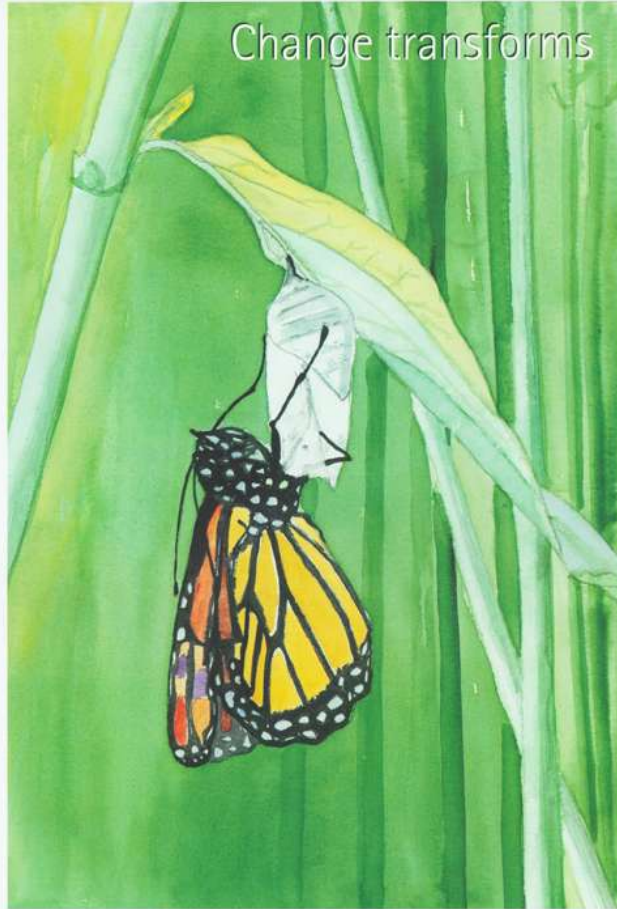
Simon Woodroffe, Founder of Yo! Sushi

August 2006

Other advice...

- Ofsted's Annual Report 2014 celebrates the MNS.
-
- From September there will be a separate grade for the EY in primary schools.
 - Value and insist upon an early years trained headteacher and high quality teaching staff.
 - PVI sector do not always have teachers nor do they always pay a living wage.
 - Establish good succession planning.
 - Remember that the governors of school are autonomous so do not be bullied.
 - Raise parental awareness that politicians wish to close outstanding schools so there is nothing to lose and much to gain!

Change transforms



Painting by Peter Honey  Peter Honey Publications

*"When the best
leader's work is done,
the people will say 'we
did it ourselves'"*

(Lao Tzu 604-531 BC)

Quote provided by;

Sir John Bond,
Group Chairman HSBC

May 2006

What else helps?

- Use what evidence of quality and value you have. Be proud!
- Use your historical value and connections.
- Become teaching schools.
- Advertise and celebrate your strengths to the world. Use the press.
- Nurture your parents, staff and feeder primary schools to be advocates.
- Grow confident, knowledgeable leaders who understand the local and national picture.



Painting by Peter Honey Peter Honey Publications

"Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success"

Henry Ford, The Ford Motor Company

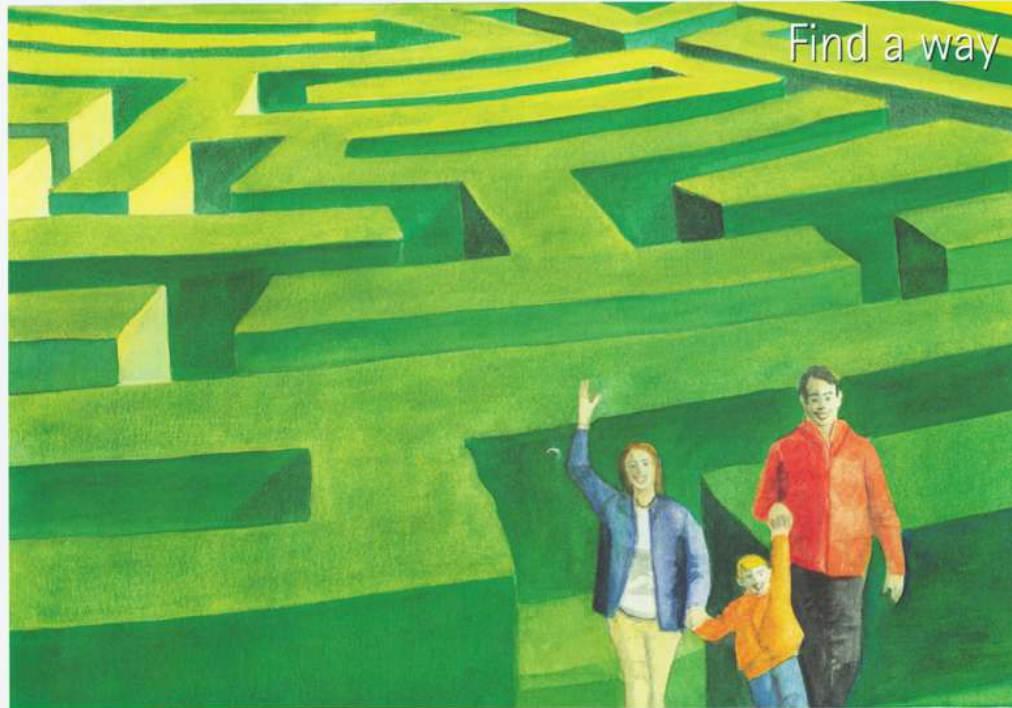
"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, "Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?" Actually, who are you not to be?"

You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightening about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you.

We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born manifest the glory of God that is within us. It is not just in some of us; it is in everyone.

And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we liberated from our own fears, our presence automatically liberated others."

Nelson Mandela.



Painting by Peter Honey  Peter Honey Publications

"In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity"

Albert Einstein, Scientist