

Chess at Combe Down CEVC Primary School 2015-16

Chess has been taught weekly to both Year 3 classes on a Friday afternoon by Ferdo Dizdarevic.

At the start of the year, some of the children had had previous experience of playing Chess, others had had none. Initially, Ferdo taught the classes the classic game. He did this gradually, in very accessible chunks, so that motivation remained very high, and no child was at any stage overwhelmed by too much new information. In the sessions, he created a good balance between input, and the opportunity to put the new information delivered into practice, by actually playing games. The children also completed workbook type activities that really helped to consolidate their understanding.

In the Spring Term, once the children were confident in their game, Ferdo introduced a more competitive edge to the sessions, by setting up an in-class tournament. This allowed the children to hone their skills and develop their strategic and tactical thinking by competing against one another. In addition, it also allowed them to develop their resilience, an essential factor not only in competitive chess playing, but also in every aspect of learning.

In May, those children who qualified for the Chess Megafinals at Millfield School had the opportunity to compete in a very competitive environment, against some extremely accomplished opponents. In June, two teams from Year 3 competed very successfully in a more local competition, with even greater success. Both of these opportunities were, undoubtedly, experiences that the children will never forget.

Meanwhile, in our class sessions, Ferdo has taught the children an ever-increasing variety of interesting and challenging moves, in addition to a range of more novel games. The children continue to respond very positively to these sessions, and enjoy completing the workbook activities in their own time.

In addition to the resilience developed by playing in a competitive environment, chess has also helped the children to develop a positive 'can do' approach to things that are new to them. When presented with problem-solving scenarios, they are less phased than previous generations of children might have been. As well as accepting the discipline of the game, they also embrace the social aspect. They enjoy playing with different partners, and circulating around the classroom.

The children in Year 3 have documented their enjoyment of the Chess Initiative by stating, without prompt, that they have particularly enjoyed these sessions. In one Year 3 class, for example, 17 of 28 children mentioned their enjoyment of the Chess sessions. Of these, KS stated: 'Maths is so fun! I love Chess even more than Maths. I'm the best girl in the class!'

Children in the other Year 3 class have written: 'I have liked doing chess in Year 3 because it is fun and enjoyable,' (AL) 'I have really liked chess in Year 3. Every Friday, Ferdo comes in and teaches us new things. He can be funny at times and I like playing against CM and BSM. Because of Ferdo, I am a much better player.' (AP) And, 'I also learnt how to play chess, thanks to Ferdo. He taught us how to do checkmate, stalemate, the kiss of death and much more.' (AHJ)

Many thanks, Ferdo. It has been a great year of Chess! We look forward to another one next year!

Amanda Plummer and the Year 3 Team

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