



Primary school learns lessons from the pandemic

By Ruth Anders

A primary school head teacher has told how her staff have met the tough challenge of protecting children's education and welfare during a year of turmoil and lockdown.

Only in post since September 2019, Ziz Chater, the school's inspirational head teacher, told *The Archer* that after partial closure in March, the school remained open for children considered vulnerable and children of key workers. The usual cohort of 700 students diminished to just 60 a day.

Ziz said: "Our staff have been amazing despite worries at home. Many were teaching at school alongside setting things up for their own kids to learn at home. Teachers got the hang of the Google Classroom remote learning program very quickly, and utilised that throughout lockdown."

theme. We also contacted all the children on a regular basis so that they still felt part of the school community."

Now the children are all back at school, though limited to their own class bubble. The school has planned a Catch-Up strategy for children who need specific interventions, and three full time teachers are devoted to it.

Martin Primary's Forest School attached to the playing field has proved immensely popular and has given children the chance to work together away from the classroom. It's an impressive area full of opportunities for classmates



Tough year: Martin School Head Teacher Ziz Chater

Contact and catch-up

At the beginning of June, the children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 were welcomed back and the school reopened for all in September.

Students' mental health and happiness have been the school's highest priorities. "Without structure and vital social interaction, some really suffered," said Ziz. "In June we ran a Hope Week with lots of online activities around that

to initiate their own projects, build camps and even work in the 'Mud Kitchen'.

Happiness pays forward

Despite another lockdown in November and uncertainty possibly going on into the New Year, the whole school is ready for any challenge. Ziz said: "It can't be measured, but happy children mean happy homes, which in turn lead to a happy community as a whole."

Nursery children celebrate Black History Month

During October children at the Monkey Puzzle Nursery in East Finchley celebrated Black History Month by learning to count in different African dialects such as Somali and Igabo.

The youngest were kept busy making carnival style headbands, as well as having a go at some African drumming. Pre-schoolers looked at stories such as *Handa's Surprise* and explored all the exotic fruits featured in the book that grow in Afro-Caribbean countries. They also learnt about icons such as Josephine Baker, a famous entertainer and civil rights activist.



A musical life: Sara Medina. Photo Mike Coles

Born under a lucky star

By Daphne Chamberlain

Sara Medina, local pianist and piano teacher, believes she was born under a lucky star. It must have been shining over Harrow, though the family moved to East Finchley when she was a child, just before the Second World War.

When her great-niece asked to know about her life, the spring lockdown seemed an ideal time to tell her. Assisted by her friend Frances George, who managed the production, she wrote a short autobiography.

It's very readable, and benefits from something started by her father. He kept a scrapbook recording her life in music, which she carried on. So we can see reproductions of photos, reviews, programmes, and even a list of studio instructions she must have picked up during an early television appearance.

Sara may have been lucky, but she was also very determined. "I knew I would never be a great pianist, but I would achieve as much as I was capable of", she says.

Aged seven, she won a challenge cup in the North London Musical Festival. This was the start of many years

involvement with the Festival, where she eventually became a prominent committee member and head of the piano section.

At the Royal College of Music, she won a competition to play in front of Princess Elizabeth, the future Queen. At 15, she also started teaching. Her first pupil came when the family's postman, who had heard her practising, rang the doorbell to ask if she would teach his daughter. They are still in touch.

At the same age, she joined her mother in the BBC Choral Society (now called the BBC Symphony Chorus). She was a member for over 50 years. She says: "I realise there were four things that dominated most of my life; playing, teaching, the North London Music Festival and the BBC Symphony Chorus."

Her musical life took in numerous concerts and recitals,

radio and television performances, the opening of the 1948 Olympic Games at Wembley, many last nights of the Proms, the Festival Hall, the Barbican, the Albert Hall, and European tours.

"Now here I am, looking back over a long life, knowing that I took the right road, that I had a career I enjoyed (and still do), am thankful for a lovely family and good friends, and the blessing of 50 years of a very happy marriage," she says.

Sara's book is dedicated to the memory of her beloved husband, Jo Joughin. Proceeds and donations will go to the Alzheimer's Society (www.alzheimers.org.uk). Please contact Sara on 020 8883 2082 or at S.Joughin@icloud.com.



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