



# REPORT

ISSUE 4I

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE EDUCATION RENAISSANCE TRUST

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## Since we last wrote...

- ❖ The 11th international teachers conference has been held at the Villa Boccella in July. The trustees have agreed to sponsor another next July – alas, the last that will be held at the glorious Villa, which is to be sold.
- ❖ St James Johannesburg continues to get a monthly subsidy to help it through difficult times.
- ❖ We have begun a second 5-year grant to Little Stars School in Varanasi, India.
- ❖ From January a gap year student from Australia arrives at St James in London. The first since Covid.
- ❖ We continue to sponsor A Conscious Education. Neda and Luciana's project for schools and teachers in South America has now reached Bolivia.
- ❖ We continue to receive generous donations and legacies to help make all these things happen. Thank you!



Little Stars School says Thank You! This school for orphan children in the slum area of Varanasi, India has received five years of financial help from the Trust.

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## Meeting the needs of the next generation

The International Teachers Conference at Villa Boccella near Lucca, Italy, is the highlight of the ERT's year. 51 teachers and governors from the family of schools around the world came together to study, reflect, and enjoy one another's company in the glorious setting of the Villa and its gardens.

For the first time Report's editor attended. But only for a day and a half, alas, when a domestic emergency called him back to London.

Conference leader Hilary Wyatt asked everyone to keep a journal. Mine includes Tom Bree's Sacred Geometry sessions which patiently guided us tracing a complex pattern with compass and ruler. It eventually revealed itself as the beautiful 'Cosmati Pavement' in Westminster Abbey, on which stood the Coronation throne.



Warwick Jessup explains 'Why Teach Sanskrit?'

My journal also includes the daily meetings of heads and governors. Through the week they teased out a statement of exactly what the St James education consists of. The leaders of three schools who could not be at the conference joined us on Zoom. So the statement reflects the views of every school in the family and will be helpful to all of us. See next page.

In Hilary's sessions on the Principles of Education we read St James's Epistle – the founding statement of these schools. It is inspiring when a group applies its combined intelligence to a great text. Another entry for the journal.

What else? It was good to meet head teachers and teachers from schools around the world, often for the first time. And the conversations arising from these meetings were brilliant and will remain in the memory.

Chef Allegra and her team of volunteers served us spectacularly good food. The rooms we met in, the gardens and the landscape which surrounded us: as Hilary said on the first evening: welcome to Paradise! And did I mention the three swimming pools?

In 2024 the conference will run from 6 – 13 July. Book your place!

The Education Renaissance Trust promotes schools and supports teachers around the world who provide a spiritually-based education. This ERT newsletter REPORT is published twice a year, to keep friends and supporters in touch with our work. If you no longer wish to receive it, please contact the editor, Hugh Venables.

## New Trustees

Penny Moss and Brendan Gorman have become ERT trustees. Penny has been an education consultant to the Trust for a number of years. She continues to be the Trust's point of contact with schools overseas.

Brendan has been associated with the ERT longer than anyone else – as the Trust's accountant. Now that he has retired professionally, he is free to become a trustee.

Our other trustees are Martin Kettle, Chair, Katharine Boddy, Therese Glover and Chris Rees.

## News from Bolivia

Neda Berardone and Luciana Garate are sponsored by ERT to refresh teachers and schools in Latin America with 'Una Educación Consciente.' They've run hundreds of workshops up and down Argentina. We've just received this message from the shores of Lake Titicaca:

"We are in Bolivia at the moment, and have been working with some nice alternative education communities here. Quite a few inspiring stories and people caring for children with different disabilities as well. And their winter is similar to British summer!"



Chef Allegra and her brilliant catering team

## Feedback from Lucca

Conference participants were asked what they most enjoyed about it. A newcomer to ERT/Lucca wrote:

*"There was nothing I didn't enjoy! The location was out of this world; the food was delicious; the teaching and discussion were stimulating; and, above all, everyone I met was kind, welcoming, and fascinating to talk to. The week really felt like a very special gift (especially because, in my case, I feel like the week sort of 'found me', given that I didn't know much about the St James schools or the ERT)."*

Special thanks to Kim Brown for the conference images – not to mention her super-efficient support behind the scenes.

## What is the Ethos of a St James School?

A group of heads and governors have been asking this question over the past year. It's important to be able to state to parents, prospective teachers and other stakeholders what it is that distinguishes our schools.

The International Teachers Conference gave us an opportunity to agree an answer. There will be refinements made by each school to fit local conditions, but the following gives the gist.

*"The education provided by the family of schools is founded on philosophy. A core theme is the belief that behind the differences apparent in each child, there is a conscious, intelligent and loving spirit which all have in common."*

*"Simple practices of self-awareness are part of the daily routine of school life. These allow both teachers and pupils to find a natural peace and stillness which is beyond the usual movement and agitation. By focusing firmly in the present, pupils can discover and utilise their individual talents and unlimited potential."*

*"This philosophic approach supports academic excellence as well as artistic, physical and emotional development."*

*"The national curriculum, where required, in each location is enhanced by a unique range of subjects and practices."*

Too long to list in full here, these subjects and practices include:

'The Pause practised regularly through the day, the practice of focussed attention, and mantra-based meditation offered from age 10'

'Practice of the human virtues such as honesty, generosity, harmlessness, compassion, forgiveness, wisdom, courage and love'

'Use of finest materials'

'Vegetarian food'

'Learning and reciting beautiful texts by heart'

'A spirit of enquiry in all subjects'

'Practical philosophy classes that inspire a love of wisdom'

'Classical languages which include Sanskrit'

'Respect for one another'

'Proper respect for authority'

'A spirit of service in daily school life'

'Supportive partnerships between school and home'

'Teachers leading by example.'



Studying the Principles of Education

## THANKS FOR READING! NOW CAN YOU HELP US?

Many readers now support our worldwide work through regular standing orders. Some sponsor bursaries for children at St James Johannesburg or help with the development of St James Durban. Others donate to the wider work of the ERT. The Chancellor kindly increases every donation from a UK taxpayer by 25%, via Gift Aid.

Contact us (see overleaf for details) and we'll send you a Gift Aid form. One-off donations, large or small, are equally welcome, cheques or cash! Or you can donate by bank transfer to our account at HSBC: The Education Renaissance Trust, sort code 40 11 58; account no. 90125105.

You can now support us via [PayPal](#). There's a button on the ERT website – go to the *How You Can Help* page and then to *Becoming a Donor* (or click <http://www.education-renaissance-trust.org.uk/help2.htm> if you're online.)