

# SUMMERHILL NEWSLETTER

A better way to educate!

Welcome to the 35th Edition of the  
Summerhill School Newsletter!



**Hello Everybody,**  
Another newsletter from lovely old Summerhill. It is the summer term, the sun is shining and the exam season is in full flow. Looking at the articles in this letter shows so many lovely positive things that are happening here on a regular basis.

I don't want to throw cold water on anything - but feel obliged to just add the fact that on a daily basis our lives at Summerhill are very real, very grounded, in a way very basic.

Our twice weekly Meetings are always well used with a number of cases varying from - "Can I light incense sticks in my room?"  
"If I pass my online Health & Hygiene, can I open and cook in the Jazz Cafe?"  
"Angelica would not stop calling me messy pig when I told her to stop."

Through to -  
"Someone has stolen five quid from my cupboard, I know who it was but they are lying about it."  
"Edward would not get off the trampoline when it was my turn and he pushed me off and made me cry."

These are dealt with as always in our Meetings. Asking questions, sometimes getting an Ombudsman to find out more, voting on a result - Strong Warning, Reminder or a fine such as screen ban for 24 hours or a short litter pick-up.

I quote something I wrote many years ago:

"Summerhill is a real place, not a utopia. Living in a community of around 100 people is not always easy. Everybody is learning about themselves, and on a bleak January day with the east wind blowing, things are sometimes not wonderful! But Summerhill in summer time is lush, green and not unlike Never-Never Land. It is more of a family or tribe than a school - full of companionship, laughter and real feelings. For many Summerhill pupils it becomes the most meaningful experience of their lives".



Have a great  
summer!  
xxx  
Zoë

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# Gardening at Summerhill School

At Summerhill, gardening is more than just planting seeds—it's about working as a community, creativity, and care. Whether it's a staff member, a kid or a group; growing wildflowers, herbs for cooking, or a good vegetable patch - gardening is part of every day life here.

One of the many unique things about Summerhill is that anyone can propose in the meeting to have a patch of land to call their own. Some dig deep into vegetable growing, others create quiet, flower-filled spaces for bees and butterflies. There are no compulsory projects—just the freedom to grow what you love.

Around the school grounds, you'll also see flowerbeds that line our paths which are cared for by the whole community. Whether that means watering, clearing weeds, or simply making sure no one mistreats them.

Gardening at Summerhill is more than a hobby—it's a way of learning and connecting. It teaches us patience, responsibility, and the joy of watching something thrive through our care. And perhaps most importantly, it reminds us that, just like plants, we grow best when we're given the space and support to flourish in our own way.







## From Happisburgh to Italy: a Climate Detectives Journey

"Andresa, Luca has written to me about some courses for teachers at the European Space Agency, and I thought you might be interested," Zoë told me one day in late October last year. The invitation came from a former Summerhill student, currently pursuing his PhD, who had attended a workshop at ESA-ESTEC.

My passion for space and for learning in general led me to apply straight away, and in December, I embarked on a 'Teach with the Earth' workshop in Belgium. The experience was very enriching, connecting teachers from several different European countries, and opening up a new world of possibilities and initiatives I was previously unaware of.

One such initiative was the Climate Detectives, a project run by ESA and the national ESEROs, focusing on Earth Observation and planetary care. Although the project ran from September to April, I decided to give it a try immediately, in January. Five students (Vicente, Aria, Sami, Catarina, and Ruhan) embraced the idea during sign-up and joined this demanding but very rewarding challenge.

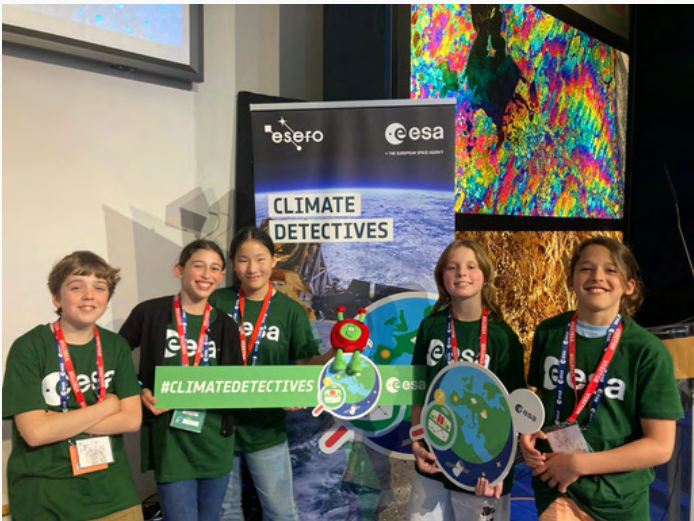




We had just over three months to identify the problem we wanted to analyse, collect data, and share our results with the Climate Detectives community. It was a race against the clock. We all knew one submission would be selected from all UK entries to attend a summit in Italy, and we were determined to do our best. We had no idea if we would be selected (and thought our chances were low), but everyone was committed to producing a quality work.

Our project focused on coastal erosion, specifically in Happisburgh, a village in North Norfolk with one of the fastest eroding cliffs in the UK. We investigated different aspects of the issue to understand the current situation and how climate change impacts erosion there.

These three months were very intense. From trips to Happisburgh in freezing weather to producing material outside of lessons (which students called homework and is not something Class 2 is used to), we experienced many ups and downs throughout the term. We used the Copernicus browser to view and analyse satellite images, collected and analysed soil samples from the Happisburgh cliffs, investigated tidal data using the Poltips software, interviewed residents, business owners, and a member of the local Coastal Management team at North Norfolk District Council, and examined data from government and environmental agencies regarding coastal erosion and climate change. Our final report was submitted one week after the end of the term, as Cat volunteered to create a website during the holidays.





I was again in Belgium for another workshop at ESA-ESTEC when I received the email inviting us to the summit. Our team had achieved the highest score in the UK! The news was celebrated with other teachers from all over Europe attending the workshop, and preparations began.

The summit took place on May 12th and 13th at ESA-ESRIN, in Frascati, Italy. The experience will be unforgettable for our students, not only for all the valuable knowledge they acquired but also for the opportunity to meet other students from different schools and countries. We were by far the youngest among the 19 teams selected to attend the summit, one from each country that is a member or associate state of ESA.

The event began with teams presenting their projects, followed by a poster session where they could answer questions and learn more about the other teams' investigations. It was fascinating to see how students explored Earth observation in diverse ways to tackle local and global environmental issues – from investigating the unusual appearance of an uncommon number of storks near Madrid to Finnish students testing possible solutions to address the microplastic problem in our oceans, and everything imaginable in between.





There were several sessions with Earth Observation experts, including a very interesting Q&A where they answered student questions and provided insights on how Space Exploration contributes to caring for our planet. The last afternoon of the summit was dedicated to hands-on activities: a debate where students played different roles, such as policymakers, scientists, etc., exchanging views on a potential Earth observation mission design; a visit to ESA's interactive  $\Phi$ -Experience exhibition, discovering how satellite data is used to track environmental changes; and an experiential workshop about radiation, sensors, magnetism, and coding.

Since life isn't only about work, we spent a day in Rome after the summit, exploring famous landmarks such as the Colosseum and the Fontana di Trevi, and enjoying plenty of gelato, pasta, and pizza!



You can watch a summary of our project at <https://bit.ly/ClimateDetectives> and see the full report at <https://www.summerhillschool.co.uk/climatedetectives/>.







# THE STORY OF AN HONORARY SUMMERHILLIAN

By Zoë

At Summerhill we get many mails from all over the world asking about the school, many from students studying education and wanting to know more. A number of these mails are just to say that they have read A.S.Neill's books. They say: "I read the books and really enjoyed them" - but more often they say: "I read Neill's books and IT CHANGED MY LIFE".

The following article was written by the son of one such person. It shows the extent of Neill's reach and the profound effect he has had throughout the world. We wanted to share his story with you....





## Hoshyar Ahmed Naqshbandy : A Legacy of Education and Freedom

*A Story for the Summerhill School Archive*

In the rugged mountains of **Kurdistan, Iraq**, where tradition and hardship shaped everyday life, a young boy named **Hoshyar Ahmed Naqshbandy** was born on **November 20, 1956**. He grew up in a remote village where his father, Mr. Ahmed, worked as a schoolteacher. Education was scarce, and opportunities were dictated by societal expectations. In the Middle East, families often pressured their children to pursue prestigious careers like medicine or engineering, but Hoshyar's heart was set on a different path—**teaching, music, and the arts**.

From a young age, he displayed **remarkable intelligence in science and mathematics**, yet his true passion lay in sharing knowledge and inspiring others. His natural ability to teach became evident when he helped his fellow students with their studies outside of school hours. He later moved to **Halabja** to continue his education until the age of 17, before relocating to **Sulaymaniyah**, where he pursued higher education in mathematics at a specialized institute. It was there that his dream of becoming a teacher began to take shape.

### The Journey Towards Education

After earning his **Diploma in Mathematics Education**, Hoshyar began exploring the world beyond Iraq. He traveled across **Europe and the Middle East**, eager to learn about different educational systems. It was during these travels that he **discovered the work of A.S. Neill and his revolutionary book, *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing***. The philosophy of **freedom in education, self-expression, and student-led learning** left a deep imprint on him.

Upon returning to Iraq, his dedication to teaching was quickly recognized. At just **21 years old**, on **November 12, 1977**, the government offered him a **special position**—to



become the **principal of a remote village school** in the mountains. This village, far removed from urban centers, had **no proper roads for vehicles**. To reach it, Hoshyar had to travel **for hours on horseback through difficult terrain**.



When he arrived, he was met with a **harsh reality**. The school consisted of just **three small rooms**, and it was the **only educational center** for **16 villages** in the surrounding area. There were **270 to 300 students**, many of whom had never set foot in a classroom. **Girls were not allowed to attend school** due to strict cultural norms, and families were reluctant to send their children to study.

## **Transforming a Village Through Education**

Hoshyar knew he had to do more than just teach—he **had to change an entire mindset**. Inspired by **Summerhill's principles of choice, trust, and creativity**, he worked tirelessly to **convince families** to send their children, including girls, to school. To overcome opposition, he **visited tribal leaders, built trust within the community, and engaged in discussions about the value of education**.



He even brought **very young girls (aged 4-5)** to school, demonstrating that **learning was safe and beneficial for all children.**



Since space was limited, he divided the school into **three shifts** from **7 AM to 5 PM**. **Beyond traditional subjects like mathematics and science**, he introduced lessons in **art, music, philosophy, human rights, and technology**, ensuring that education extended beyond rote memorization. His school became **not just a place for learning but a center for cultural change.**





During his **13 years** in the village, he **revolutionized education for hundreds of children**, ensuring that both **boys and girls** received equal opportunities to learn. He also **taught parents about human rights, hygiene, and modern education principles**, bridging the gap between traditional and progressive thought.





## A Lasting Influence and Retirement

After his success in the village, Hoshyar returned to **Sulaymaniyah**, where he continued to serve as a **teacher and principal** in various schools. His dedication to **educational reform** and his belief in **freedom of choice in learning** remained at the core of his philosophy. He **retired in 2019**, leaving behind a legacy that had touched thousands of students and transformed numerous schools.



Even in retirement, he **writes articles for magazines and newspapers**, sharing his insights on **education, philosophy, and social change**. His teachings extended beyond the classroom, shaping not only students but also the broader **Kurdish society**.

## A Father's Influence on a New Generation

Hoshyar's legacy lives on through his son, **Kavar Hoshyar**, who was recently awarded **an honorary certificate from Summerhill School**. This recognition not only honored Kavar but also **paid tribute to Hoshyar himself**, acknowledging his lifelong commitment to education, freedom, and student empowerment.



Despite working within the constraints of **a traditional school system**, Hoshyar incorporated **Summerhillian principles** into his teaching, raising his own son with a **self-directed, curiosity-driven approach** to learning. This influence led Kavar to be recognized as a true "**Summerhillian**," a testament to his father's profound impact.

## Conclusion: A True Educator and Visionary

Hoshyar Ahmed Naqshbandy's life story is one of **perseverance, innovation, and a deep belief in the transformative power of education**. From a young boy who defied cultural expectations to become a teacher, to a **pioneer who introduced progressive education in rural Kurdistan**, his contributions will be remembered for generations.

Today, as his story is added to the **Summerhill School Archive**, it stands as **a beacon of inspiration** for educators worldwide—proof that **even in the most challenging environments, education can be a force for freedom, change, and hope**.

**Prepared for:** *Summerhill School Archive Department*

**Compiled by:** *Kavar Hoshyar*

**Date:** *31-january-2025*



# HELP US BUILD THE A.S. NEILL ARCHIVE AND CENTRE FOR EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION

## Dear Parents, Alumni, and Friends of Summerhill,

I hope this message finds you well and filled with the same enduring spirit that Summerhill has inspired in so many of us. Whether you are connected to Summerhill as a parent, a past student, a friend, or a supporter of child-centred education, you are part of a remarkable legacy that continues to thrive and evolve.

As you know, for over a century, Summerhill School has stood as a beacon of freedom, democratic education, and profound respect for the innate goodness and individuality of every child. Founded in 1921 by A.S. Neill, Summerhill has changed countless lives, inspired generations, and influenced educational thinking across the globe. The idea that children flourish best when given freedom, self-governance, and trust is as powerful and relevant today as it was in Neill's time. Now, as we look to the future, we are reaching out to ask for your help in preserving, celebrating, and expanding this vital legacy.

### Introducing the A.S. Neill Archive and Research Centre

To mark our Centenary in Leiston in 2027 and meet the growing international demand to engage with Summerhill's philosophy, we are creating the A.S. Neill Archive and Research Centre – a purpose-built space that will be at the heart of sharing and sustaining Summerhill's values for years to come.

#### The Centre will house:

- An extensive and professionally preserved archive of A.S. Neill's writings and the school's unique history, made accessible for future research and education.
- A conference and training suite, enabling us to hold courses, workshops, and teacher training on democratic education and child-centred learning – both in-person and online.
- A library and study space for researchers, educators, and students from around the world to learn and be inspired by the Summerhill approach.
- State-of-the-art facilities to stream events, workshops, and courses globally, bringing Summerhill's message of freedom, democracy, and respect for children to a worldwide audience.

This Centre will not only safeguard the invaluable historical records of our school but also serve as a living, breathing resource to promote meaningful dialogue and educational innovation. It will relieve pressure on the school community from growing numbers of visitors while offering a professional and welcoming space for scholars, educators, parents, and children to explore Summerhill's legacy.

## **We've Raised £90,000 – We Need Your Help to Reach £170,000**

Thanks to the incredible generosity of our community and supporters, we are over halfway to our target. However, we still need to raise £80,000 to turn this vision into reality – and we need to do this in time to complete the building by the end of 2027. To meet this timeline, we are focusing on securing lump sum donations that will enable us to proceed without delay.

That's why today, we are reaching out to you – as a cherished part of the Summerhill family – to ask you to join us in building this vital legacy for future generations. Whether you are a current or past parent, an alumnus, or someone whose life has been touched by Summerhill's philosophy, your one-time gift – large or small – will make a critical difference in helping us meet our goal and timeline.

### **How You Can Help**

**Make a Lump Sum Donation** – Every contribution, no matter the size, will bring us closer to completing the A.S. Neill Centre by the end of 2025 and help create a lasting hub for learning and inspiration.

**Spread the Word** – Share this campaign with your networks, friends, and colleagues who believe in the importance of freedom, respect, and child-centred education. You never know who might be inspired to help.

If you feel moved to contribute, please donate directly to our Building Fund via the link or bank details below.

**Donate Here:** <https://www.summerhillschool.co.uk/product/a-s-neill-archive-and-research-centre-donation/>

Or contact us directly at [office@summerhillschool.co.uk](mailto:office@summerhillschool.co.uk) to discuss your contribution, ideas, or support.





## What Your Support Will Achieve

By supporting the A.S. Neill Centre, you will be:

- Safeguarding and professionally curating Summerhill's unique archive and history, ensuring its availability for future generations of researchers, educators, and children.
- Expanding the reach of Summerhill's values, providing accessible training and inspiration to teachers, schools, parents, and children around the world.
- Creating a space where the global conversation about children's rights, freedom, and democratic education can flourish – a hub of learning, reflection, and action.
- Helping us foster research and innovation in education, supporting new democratic schools and influencing mainstream education with Summerhill's pioneering values.

## Let's Build the Future Together

A.S. Neill once wrote, "The bestowal of freedom is the bestowal of love. And only love can save the world."

Let us, together, ensure that Neill's message of love, freedom, and respect continues to inspire and guide not only today's children but also the generations to come. Imagine a future where children everywhere are trusted, heard, and free to grow into their true selves. That is the future we are building – and with your help, we can make it a reality.

Thank you for being part of our community, for believing in children, and for helping us take this essential step forward.

With love, hope, and deepest gratitude,

Zoë Readhead

Principal, Summerhill School

Henry Readhead

Deputy Principal, Summerhill School



### **Our present Role of the Adult course is well underway.**

We have 13 participants joining us from across the globe, from South Korea to the United States. Now six weeks into the course, we have just completed the “Following the Child” module. This module delves into important themes such as “regulating our interventions” and “supporting children’s ever-changing motivations.”

The fulfilment of childhood is a deeply complex matter. Children’s needs and motivations evolve continuously throughout their unique journeys. This raises important questions: To what extent should adults intervene? When does a child need our guidance and support, and when is it best to step back and allow them the freedom to navigate on their own?

This topic always brings deep reflection from the participants. As adults, we often feel compelled to help, teach, and share our wisdom and experience, assuming it will benefit the child. Yet, making these judgments is increasingly challenging today. Fortunately, our dedicated participants have two weeks to reflect on their practice, and we look forward to seeing the insights they bring back.

Many great philosophers and researchers have explored this subject in depth. From W.Reich to M.Lobrot and from J.W.Brehm to E.Deci and R.Ryan, we examine adult intervention from multiple perspectives. A.S. Neill was writing about these questions as early as 1914 and in more depth from 1926 to 1973 and his philosophy lives on through Summerhill School practice today.

We will be offering this course again in Autumn with a special discount for Summerhill Newsletter Subscribers. See below!

### **Autumn Course Promo: £75 Discount for Newsletter Readers!!**

**Our next Role of the Adult course begins in September!**

**This 10-week online experience offers an in-depth exploration of relationships, emotions and freedom in childhood.**

**Special Offer: We're offering a £75 discount to anyone who signs up using the promo code NEWSLETTER75 at checkout. Come and join us!**

Learn more and enrol at: [www.asneillsummerhillcic.co.uk/courses](http://www.asneillsummerhillcic.co.uk/courses)



# The Role of the Adult Course:



## Feedback

The course has profoundly impacted my practice by helping me connect values, philosophy, and theories into practice, action and tangible outcomes.

It helped me remember what's most important in our interactions with children: trust, acceptance, unconditional love, respect, community & relationships

This course helped me transform my thoughts into meaningful work with children and colleagues, and it has sparked loads of fruitful conversations with peers. It inspired me to constantly examine my role as an adult in any interaction with a young person.

## THE ROLE OF THE ADULT

IN FACILITATING A HAPPY AND FULFILLED CHILDHOOD



50+ HOUR ONLINE CPD COURSE ON A.S. NEILL'S AND SUMMERHILL SCHOOL'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY AND VALUES FOR PRACTITIONERS WORKING WITH CHILDREN.

SEPT  
TO  
NOV  
2025

**CERTIFIED TRAINING**  
SPREAD OVER 10 WEEKS

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## Expanding Horizons

While many are familiar with our Role of the Adult course, A.S.Neill Summerhill CIC's commitment to the fulfilment of childhood extends far beyond. Our CIC is a dynamic hub for educational innovation, research, and community support.

### Ongoing Research & Dissertation Projects

We continue to support and share academic research that explores democratic education, child autonomy, and reimagining the adult's role in learning environments. From completed dissertations to new research in progress, these projects deepen our understanding of what it means to truly trust children—and are inspiring change in schools and families across the globe.

### Supporting Startups & New/Existing Schools

A core part of our mission is to assist educational settings to prioritise children's happiness and wellbeing. We provide consultancy and training to both established schools and people starting their own schools who are looking to implement Summerhill values into their projects.

### Looking Ahead: Events & Experiences

We're exploring future events like The Summerhill Experience—an immersive opportunity for educators, parents, and change-makers to step into the spirit and daily life of the unique Summerhill community. Watch this space for updates in future newsletters!

That's all for now. Don't hesitate to get in touch if you are interested in our work. The A.S.Neill Summerhill CIC Team.  
Henry, Anie and James.

Learn more and enrol at: [www.asneillsummerhillcic.co.uk/courses](http://www.asneillsummerhillcic.co.uk/courses)



# THE A.S. NEILL SUMMERHILL TRUST

The A.S.Neill Summerhill Trust is a registered charity whose purpose is to promote the educational philosophy, ideas, life and writings of A.S.Neill, and to provide bursaries or other forms of financial assistance to school pupils. The Trust also works to promote the re-publication and translation of existing books, new books, overseas visits by school staff to give talks, school visitor days at Summerhill as well as Summerhill pupils visiting other schools to run workshops on children's rights and democracy. Each year the trustees consider several applications for bursaries towards school fees. Because our funds are limited, we can currently award bursaries only to current pupils. Parents should contact the school office for information on how to apply for a bursary from the A.S.Neill Summerhill Trust.

A very big thank you to all our donors who have so generously supported the spirit of Summerhill. Your donations help kids remain at the School who would otherwise have to leave, and provide extracurricular activities that would be beyond the School's ability to provide.

If you'd like to make a difference to a child's life, you too can make a donation to the Trust. Whether it is a one off or regular donation, we will spend it wisely.

£25 means a child can join their friends on a school trip. £50 will pay for two extra-curricular lessons.

£100 will pay for travel costs incurred by the External Affairs Committee during their promotion of Summerhill & the ideas/philosophies of A.S.Neill.

£1,000 will provide assistance over two terms for parents who are struggling to pay their child's school fees. A regular donation made by standing order will become an important part of our 'bread and butter'.

To make a gift or regular donation, or for more information about the A.S.Neill Summerhill Trust, please contact the School office on 01728 830540 or email: [office@summerhillschool.co.uk](mailto:office@summerhillschool.co.uk).

You can also write to The A.S.Neill Summerhill Trust, c/o Summerhill School, Westward Ho, Leiston, Suffolk, IP16 4HY.

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Summerhill School

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# **Love from Summerhill**

**As always, we send our love and best wishes to all friends of Summerhill.**

**Thank you so much for all your support. We love getting feedback and comments so if you wish to write to us please don't hesitate to do so via our website at**

**<https://www.summerhillschool.co.uk/contact/>**



**A.S. Neill  
Summerhill School**