

Have you heard the acorns fall?



Have you ever heard the acorns falling ? I was standing outside this evening in a wood close to our house, and the acorns kept falling sounding like a crack and then a rustle. It reminded me of work I had done with a GCSE student, discussing the sounds of autumn. The whispering of the leaves ; crunching as they dry underfoot ; the crackle of bonfires and howl of bitter winds. It made me reflect on the sounds that we almost ignore in the world around us. Each year progresses through the seasons Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, each of which brings with it a collection of different sounds. For those with autism who may also have acute sensory issues it may be that this changing of sounds could cause confusion, or may become a point of fascination. The child in class who stares out of the window at the trees blowing in the wind , may not be just watching the effect but trying to make sense of the changing sounds in their world.

I was lucky enough some time ago to spend a week observing in a very successful Steiner school. They explained to me one of the principles of Steiner was to follow the passage of time through the celebration of the seasons. As their curriculum policy states 'Many of our pupils experience inner chaos and have difficulty relating to the concept of time and dealing with change. During the course of the year and through the seasons we experience many changes in our environment. By marking these changes and celebrating the festivals we help to give the children a structure and meaning to the rhythm in time. The use of rhythm in this way is a powerful tool in bringing a sense of order and coherence to the children's lives.' Not in this school was there just a token nod to the changes through a ritual of Harvest festival, Diwali, Christmas and Easter Egg hunt. Rather every day they sang, reflected and listen to the changes that were going on around them. They celebrated the festivals but primarily the children were engaged with nature ; engaged with these seasonal changes.

I can't help feeling as I listen to the rustle of the leaves as the acorns fall that heralds the coming of autumn , that we could learn from their example ; maybe we could all do with making sure we reflect and comment on the changing seasons.