

Edinburgh Steiner School pupil off to Switzerland

✖ Ben Wilson's numerous friends are always there to catch him when he falls. That's not a cliché; Ben can have as many as five epileptic seizures a day and Class Ten at the [Edinburgh Steiner School](#) are experienced Ben-catchers. Ben suffers from congenital **Cortical Dysplasia**. The condition has proved resistant to medication; it has a devastating effect on Ben's life, and at each stage of his development it's becoming worse. This year Ben's friends and family have gone a step further than catching; they've raised the funds to send him to Switzerland for potentially life-changing treatment. Last Saturday, Ben's family held a celebration to thank everyone who's helped them along the way.

There are lots of other important things about Ben. He is an amazing artist, fills numerous sketch books with his drawings, and at the age of only 16 is already selling his art online.

He's particularly interested in film effects, animation and modelling – some of his favourite artists are [Tim Burton](#), [Ray Harryhausen](#) and [Guillermo del Toro](#). For a recent class project, he made a model guillotine complete with a blade capable of chopping the heads off his models of the French aristocracy.



Ben's parents Susie and Ian have naturally spent a lot of time researching possible help for Ben; the treatment he is now to have has been pioneered by [Professor Dr Jeanmonod](#) of the [Centre for Functional Ultrasound Neurosurgery](#) in Solothurn, an expert with 25 years experience in this field. Professor Jeanmonod's team assessed Ben and found that he could benefit greatly from their technique. The only catch was the cost – £30,000+ (it is not available from the NHS.)



The Edinburgh Steiner School is a small community, but it is a very supportive one. Ben's classmates like a challenge, and within days of the fund being launched they were arranging everything from sponsored silences, fasts and bike rides to stalls at their weekly market. Meanwhile, people in the wider community started to pitch in; artists (including [Quentin Blake](#) and [Nick Sharratt](#) – Susie, a professional artist herself, has Friends in High Places...) sent work to be auctioned, anonymous financial donations arrived, and in the unbelievably short space of a few months, the target had not only been reached but beaten. Ben will receive his treatment in Solothurn on 8th September 2014, and will also be able to have some extra help over the summer.



Saturday 24th May was party night at Steiner; Ian and his chef colleagues laid on one of the most impressive buffets ever to grace the tables. Music was provided by the excellent [Bluebell Cajun Dance Band](#) and **Andy Reid** and **Corey** from [Big Face Tiny Features](#). This was the night of the auction too, and the art on display was a testament not only to Ben and Susie's own wonderful work but also to the high esteem in which the family is held by so many people. The much-coveted pieces by Quentin Blake and Nick Sharratt may have taken centre stage, but they had competition from outstanding work donated by [Damian Callan](#), **Jenny Findlay**, [Calum Colvin](#) and many others. After a raffle compered by Ian in his own inimitable style, the most popular art works were auctioned live, and the results of the silent auctioning of the rest announced. I'll not reveal who got Blake's 'Cat from a series made for the Nightingale Project' or Sharratt's 'Nine Doves Wearing Gardening Gloves' because *I didn't*...but suffice to say that people happily dug very deeply to get what they wanted.

The evening was, incidentally, funded by an anonymous donation

specifically for this purpose, and made possible by help of Ian's colleagues and many other willing helpers: no part of the fund was used for this event.

Saturday's celebration was a huge success and great fun was had by all. We now wish Ben and his family a successful time in Solothurn; everyone at school can't wait to have Ben back (and not *just* so that they can filch his art ideas...)

Lots of information about Ben's fund, and several galleries of his art work, can be found at www.helpben.org

The [Edinburgh Steiner School](#) accepts children from kindergarten to 18 years.

The Epilepsy Scotland charity has an informative website [here](#).



The Bluebell Cajun Dance Band can be contacted at: gigs@bluebellcajun.com or via their [Facebook page](#). They are available for bookings.