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Message from the Head Teacher; the Power of Reading

By Dr Beth Clarke

When I reflect as a parent on the most enjoyable time of the day it has to be 30 minutes or so I spend reading a book to my daughter in bed before I settle her to sleep. This has been a routine in our family from the very first day she arrived. This has meant that over the last 5 years we have read loads of books and she has been immersed in story language in all of its fineness. Most recently we shared 'Pig Heart Boy' by Malorie Blackman and both of us were in floods of tears before the final page, sharing not only in the a love of the story line but also in texts that provoke real emotion.



We know, as parents and as teachers that studies show that reading for pleasure makes a huge difference to children's educational performance. Not only do children who read widely or who are read to widely perform better in reading tests than those who don't but also they develop a broader vocabulary, increased general knowledge and a better understanding of other cultures (I can also recommend, 'The Boy at the Back of the Class' by Onjali Q. Rauf). Parents of course, make the biggest difference. It is never too early or too late to start reading to your children.

Learning to read is about listening and understanding as well as working out what is printed on the page. Through hearing stories, children are exposed to a wide range of words. This helps them build their own vocabulary and improves their understanding when they listen, which is vital as they begin to read. It's important for them to understand how stories work too. Even if a child doesn't understand every word, they'll hear new sounds, words and phrases which they can then try out, copying what they have heard. As children learn to read at school, you can play an important role in helping to keep them interested in books too. Find out what interests them, help them to find books that will be engaging and fun, and spend time reading the books they bring home together. You can often find me and my daughter in the charity book shop in Mere Green on a Saturday morning, looking for books in a particular series or written by a particular author.

I am sure, that for many of you, reading to your child each night before bed is also a well-loved routine. I would urge you to continue to do this, even as they get older. On reading training that I attended last week, led by Birmingham Education Partnership it was suggested that a reluctant reader in Year 4 reads approximately 50,000 words a year. An average reader reads approximately 100,000 words a year but a keen reader, reads as many as 1,000,000 words a year. These are words that they then begin to use in their everyday language and of course their writing.

"Reading for pleasure is the single biggest factor in success in later life outside of an education". Bali Rai

The wonderful thing for children about being read to is not only that they can lose themselves entirely in the book being read but that the activity is completely threat free. It offers them a time to relax while reading is being modelled to them and will inevitably lead them to want to read for themselves.

ATLP NEWS; Nether Stowe support World Mental Health Day

By Dr Beth Clarke

World mental health day 2019 was on Thursday 10th October. At Hill West we teach the children that our mental health is just like our physical health: everybody has it and we need to take care of it. Mental health problems affect around one in four people in any given year. They range from common problems, such as depression and anxiety. To rarer problems such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.



Raising awareness about good mental health is a common theme across the ATLP. Students at Nether Stowe School celebrated World Mental Health day this year by wearing clothes as bright as their smiles when the school turned yellow. Staff and students each donated £1.00 to raise money for Young Minds, a leading mental health charity for young people. The colourful fundraiser was just the latest in a series of projects that has seen Nether Stowe lead the way in mental health support, including holding a regular club where pupils can talk about how they are feeling.

Mental health lead at Nether Stowe, Rachel Chilver said “we launched an action plan around a year ago to try to raise awareness of mental health issues and to develop ways of helping students learning about it. That has involved the clubs, assemblies, pledges from members of staff and now the peer mentor scheme. Headteacher Glyn Langston-Jones said, “we recognize that in the environment that pupils are in these days – the pressure of exams, the expectations that are placed on them – that we need to take wellbeing seriously and put structures in place that help our students to develop resilience, confidence and wider skills to help them cope with what life throws at them”.

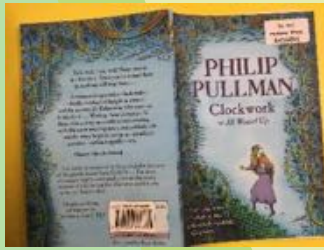
We all need to take care of our mental health and wellbeing whether we have a mental health problem or not. Mental wellbeing describes how you are feeling and how well you can cope with day to day life. It can change from moment to moment, day to day, month to month or year to year. If you have good mental wellbeing you are able to:

- Feel relatively confident in yourself and have positive self esteem
- Feel and express a range of emotions
- Build and maintain good relationships with others
- Feel engaged with the world around you
- Live and work productively
- Cope with stresses of daily life
- Adapt and manage in times of change and uncertainty



Our Class Novels

By Mrs Emily Johnston



A child's future is brighter when they have a love of reading and plenty of books to read.

Studies show that reading for pleasure makes a big difference to children's educational performance. Evidence suggests that children who read for enjoyment every day not only perform better in reading tests than those who don't but also develop a broader vocabulary, increased general knowledge and a better understanding of other cultures. In fact, reading for pleasure is more likely to determine whether a child does well at school rather than their social or economic background.



Learning to read is about listening and understanding as well as working out how to decode a text. Through hearing stories, children are exposed to a wide range of words. This helps them to build their own vocabulary and improve understanding when they listen, which is vital as they start to read. It's also important for them to understand how stories work too.

At Hill West, we have a responsibility to ensure that all children leave school as readers. This responsibility for us is twofold:

1. We need our children to be functionally literate. They need to be able to read enough to get through life, to pass exams, to read instructions and to function in the workplace.
2. We need to encourage and develop habits in our children which allow and encourage them to read for pleasure. We need to nurture in them a love of books and a love of reading.

Renowned writer Frank Cottrell-Boyce once said "We make children pay for listening to us read, or reading a great book by making them do 'stuff' afterward. We need space for just giving, without the need for payback. A book given freely unlocks doors for children." From an early age, at Hill West, our teachers share wonderful books with their class. They often read to them on the carpet as a class more than once a day. Across the whole



school, we have developed a set of Class Novels. These novels are books that are designed to be read to children so that they can enjoy listening to books as well as be exposed to new and challenging vocabulary and different writer's styles. Here are just a few words from our children:

It's a joy to read and it always gets you engaged.

So far the best bit has been when they find the prince's dead bossy and it is running by clockwork. We don't know why this is yet!

I like how adventurous Andi (main character) is and how the writer builds suspense before she runs away."

THRIVE

By Mrs Hannah Cook

Let's help every child
thrive 



This term, Dr. Clarke and I have embarked on a fantastic training opportunity which, on completion, will enable us to be licensed 'Thrive' Practitioners. If you've read the Pedagogical Newsletter this month, you'll know a little about Thrive already. The Thrive Approach draws on insights from neuroscience, attachment theory and child development to provide a powerful way of working with children and young people that supports optimal social and emotional development. In addition, the Approach can equip us as a school to work in a targeted way with children and young people who may have struggled with difficult life events to help them re-engage with life and learning.

So far, we have attended two face-to-face training days which we have found fascinating and insightful. A large part of the training so far has been to gain an understanding of the sequential developmental stages and why children who have interrupted emotional development can find school, and other areas of life, challenging.

The first three years of a child's life are crucial to social and emotional development, and the quality of their relationships shape the development of the brain. It is during these three years that the first three developmental strands come into play. Let's have a look at these in more detail...

BEING – 0-6 months

This strand is all about the child being safe, being special and having their needs met. The adult's role is to act as co-regulator for the child, mediating their experience of the world. This includes keeping the child safe, finding joy and delight in them, meeting their needs and getting to know the child as a unique person. *This leads to children feeling lovable and beginning to trust themselves and others.*

DOING – 6-18 months

The 'Doing' strand is about exploring and experimenting, experiencing options, and initiating, engaging and doing. The adult's role is to act as co-adventurer, inviting the child into sensory exploration, exploring with the child and ensuring there are safe boundaries for physical play. *This leads to a child feeling capable and good in their bodies, enjoying physical activities.*



THINKING – 18 months to 3 years

This strand involves expressing a view, learning about cause and effect, feeling, thinking and problem-solving. The adult's role is to act as a co-constructor of meaning, naming and creating opportunities for the safe expression of feelings, and lending their adult brain to help the child develop language and make sense of what is happening. *This leads to a child feeling competent and able to make sense of their experience.*

We are looking forward to using this learning to further strengthen our practice in school and continue to meet the social and emotional needs of all our pupils.

MacMillan Coffee Morning

By Mrs Kerry-Lynn Lampitt

On Friday 27th September, the pupils, parents, families and friends of Hill West took part in the World's Biggest Coffee Morning in support of Macmillan Cancer Care.

What is Macmillan Cancer Care?

Founded in 1911, by Douglas Macmillan after his father became ill, the Macmillan charity has grown to become the charity it is today, raising hundreds of millions of pounds each year to support those diagnosed with cancer and their families. The money raised through events, such as the Macmillan Coffee Morning, helps to fund advancing research into types of cancer and treatments; provide advice and counselling to parents and their families and train the wonderful nurses and home carers, who touch many peoples' lives.



The first coffee morning was held in 1990 and, since then, the event has grown and grown, becoming the world's largest, and most successful, coffee morning event. Last year alone, £25 million was raised thanks the British public who hosted a Macmillan coffee morning and since 1990, £138 million has been raised for the charity to date. This year, we really wanted to help make that total even bigger! And so, the pupils of Hill West set out to make our coffee morning the biggest the school had ever seen.

What did we do?

On the morning of the event, we had children - one by one - bringing in their home-baked and home-faked cakes all in support of such a worthy cause. Slowly, the tables in the hall were filled with delicious vanilla sponges with delicate rose motifs, gorgeous ganache filled gateaux, succulent strawberry cheesecakes and enough cupcakes to fill an Olympic size swimming pool. Within the first twenty minutes, the six dining room tables we had put out had been filled and still even more cakes were arriving; a testament to our fantastic parents and families. Knowing how generous our school community is, I knew the event was going to be a success!

With an army of fantastically enthusiastic helpers from School Council and the Rotary Award children who couldn't wait to help with the selling of cakes, we opened our doors to our awaiting crowds. Pouring in one after the other, the event surpassed what we had expected. More than one hundred of our mums, dads, grans and grandads, aunts and uncles and friends



came out in support of this wonderful charity. The morning was filled with fun and laughter; our astonishing community catching up over a cup of coffee and one of the mouth-watering, magnificent cakes baked by our generous children and their families. Before break time our children got the opportunity to buy a cake as a special break time treat, visiting the cake stalls with their class teachers. Even more money was raised!

How much did we raise for Macmillan?

After a wonderful turn out by our community, we raised a fantastic £444.35. All that is left to say is 'THANK YOU!' Thank you to our wonderful School Council and Rotary Award children, along with all the other children of Hill West and their families, who baked or bought a cake and of course, a special thank you to those in our wider school community.



PTFA Halloween Disco

By Miss Sophie Beardmore

The annual Halloween Disco never fails to creep up on us, which offers our Hill West pupils (and parents) the chance of a much loved opportunity to dress up!

The discussions on the playground during break times this week have been centered on costume choices and who would be wearing what. And I must say, the children didn't disappoint us – from pumpkins to vampires, cats to zombies, everyone embraced their Spooky Spirits!

The Halloween disco isn't just an opportunity for our pupils to get involved but also our parents too, and we would like to say a huge thank you for all of your continued support for our PTFA events. A special thank you must of course go to all of the PTFA members and volunteers who were manning the stalls and spent a long time planning this amazing event. The chair of our PTFA, Dawn Adamthwaite, had this to say about the event: "We had lots of volunteers this year, more than any disco I've ever run so it looks like the PTFA will go from strength to strength. It was really heartwarming and encouraging to see so many new faces."

The PTFA are also trying to take steps to be more eco-friendly, such as offering glow paint over glow sticks this year. With profits from the disco being over an impressive £1200, the PTFA are really excited for up and coming events. Some of the money raised will be spent on some smaller projects such as the area behind nursery, while the rest of the profit will go towards a much larger project – watch this space!



European Day of Languages

By Mrs Alison Downes



The European Day of Languages is celebrated across Europe on the 26th of September every year, after being set up by the Council of Europe in 2001. It aims to promote the rich linguistic diversity of Europe and raise awareness of the importance of lifelong language learning for everyone. This year at Hill West our theme was famous European buildings and landmarks.



In assembly, both Key Stages enjoyed hearing the building-based fairy tale 'Die drei kleinen Schweinchen' (3 little pigs) in German and were amazed at how many words they could decode using cognates, near cognates and their previous knowledge of the story. Pupils joined in with the wolf huffing and puffing and the little pigs shouting 'Nein' (no).

In Key Stage 2 pupils enjoyed further language activities with Mrs Fennell. They either had the opportunity to learn how to ask their way to different buildings in a French town or explored an alternative version of the 3 Little Pigs story 'Les trois petits cochons' in French. In this version, le grand méchant loup (the big bad wolf) was blown away by a huge gust of wind! The story was accompanied by a wonderful song, which retold the story (also in French), and the pupils proved themselves to be in fine voice, singing rapturously about the demise of the wolf.

In Key Stage 1, pupils were introduced to Europe and its landmarks through a treasure hunt on a European map. They were challenged to seek out the Eiffel Tower and the Brandenburg Gate amongst other sights. Over in Key Stage 2, posters about Europe's key attractions had appeared prior to the 26th September to pique the interest of the children. The posters offered details and fun facts about different buildings and pupils were then able to test their knowledge in a class quiz on the European Day of Languages. Do you know to which goddess the Temple of Parthenon is dedicated? Or in which year the Eiffel Tower was completed?*

The most wonderful part of the event was the homework. Pupils were tasked to create models, research landmarks or design a European Day of Languages T-Shirt. All the results were fabulous. Models of every shape and size came in, recreating imaginatively and beautifully sights from across Europe. These were showcased in the KS2 foyer for parents and pupils to admire. The T-Shirt designs will be sent off as official entries to the Europe-wide T-Shirt design competition. Though judging by the drawings and models, Hill West is the winner having so many talented pupils. A fantastic day for all involved and many thanks to Mrs Fennell, all teachers and parents for their support in making this a lovely event.



*Athena and 1889



Our First Few Weeks in School

By the Reception Team



What an exciting time we have had already! Children have begun their journeys into education and have had a happy start to their school careers. In Reception. We place emphasis on nurture, learning through play and exploration, where the well-being of our children is at the heart of everything we do, enabling our children to gain a deep level of mastery in their learning and development.



The Foundation Stage Curriculum is made up of seven areas of learning and development. These are divided into three prime areas and four specific areas. At Hill West, we ensure that the Prime Areas are incorporated into the children's learning throughout the year. The **Prime areas** are important because they lay the foundations for children's success in all other areas of learning and of life. These are:



- ✓ **Personal, Social and Emotional Development**
- ✓ **Communication and Language**
- ✓ **Physical Development**



Development in the Prime Areas enables our children to go on and master the skills within the Specific Areas, providing them with the essential skills and knowledge to participate successfully in society. Personal, Social and Emotional Development underpins all we do in Reception at Hill West. We support our children by helping them to interact effectively



and develop positive beliefs in themselves and others. Children at Hill West are given many opportunities to speak and listen in a range of situations, and to develop their confidence and skills by expressing themselves. Our wonderful school grounds provide our Reception children with the opportunity to access daily learning in all curriculum areas outdoors, but particularly encourage both gross and fine motor physical development.



These **Prime Areas** are fundamental to a child's development. They are then supported by the **Specific Areas**. The Specific Areas strengthen the Prime Areas and include:

- ✓ **Literacy**
- ✓ **Mathematics**
- ✓ **Understanding the World**
- ✓ **Expressive Arts and Design**

All of our Reception children are already making excellent progress - we are seeing their wonderful characters coming out. We are very proud of them all!



Year Six Harvest Assembly

By Mrs Sarah Terry

With the Autumn Term at school comes many exciting things – new classrooms, new year groups, new teachers and, of course, Harvest Festival. It is a festival which is thousands of years old and celebrated all over the world. The Harvest Festival tradition pre-dates Christianity and dates back to the pagan times and the name derives from the Old English word Haerfest meaning 'Autumn'. It celebrates a successful yield for farmers each year. At Hill West – like many schools across the world – Harvest Festival is celebrated with an assembly filled with acting, music, dancing and displays of produce generously donated by our school community. Over many years, in Britain, a major focus of Harvest Festival has become sharing food with others who do not have access to basic provisions. As a school with the Rights Respecting School Silver Award, Article 24, which states that all children have the right to nutritious food, is incredibly important to us, so Harvest Festival is extra special, as it gives us the chance to donate to those in need.

Both Otters and Foxes performed brilliant assemblies this year, on Thursday 3rd October. All of the children worked incredibly hard to learn lines, lyrics and dance routines (in fact, the dance routines performed by both classes were choreographed entirely by the children in their own time). Before each assembly, children were cool, calm and collected. They looked like professionals who'd been doing this for years! The assembly tells the story of a child who does not appreciate the food they are lucky enough to have access to, and needs their friends to remind them of the misfortune of those around the world. The greedy character was portrayed excellently by Eva in Otters and Oliver in Foxes. The supporting cast in both classes were excellent, with a number of lines to learn each, in addition to having to remember cues and props to hold up – no mean feat!



With the first song – *Everybody Come to the Harvest Fayre* - came inventive dance routines, typical of those included in barn dances, which were created by the children themselves. There was plenty of do-si-do-ing, keeping the audience of children, parents and staff clapping along merrily. Changing the tone of the assembly and delivering the important message that others around the world aren't as lucky as us was an entirely different song, sung in solos, duets and small groups. Amelia, Thea, Lola and Tamsin from Otters delivered the song beautifully, as did Erin, Luke, Bea, Ella, Esme, Ruth, Alice, Josh and Ethan from Foxes. Lightening the mood came the bread song, which was jam-packed with jokes delivered brilliantly by Finley and Josh in Otters and Alex,

Giovanni, Ethan, Harrison, Summer, Lily, Adam and Daniel in Foxes.

Soon after came a firm favourite of the children in Year 6 – *The Cheese Song*. Judging by the audience's reaction, the catchy, sing-along tune was enjoyed by them, too (I'm still singing it in my head now, as I write this). Overall, the Harvest Festival assemblies were a success. All of the children involved (those who performed and those who assisted away from the limelight by making props) put in 100% effort to their roles, and this was clear to see. If these performances are anything to go by then the leavers' assembly in July will be fantastic! On behalf of the school, I must say a massive thank you to everybody who donated food to the festival: it has been sent to a local food bank.

I can't wait for next year's Harvest Festival!

Year Five Diwali Assembly

By Miss Chloe Davies

The story of Diwali (the Festival of Lights) is the story of Ramayana, which is a sacred text dating back 5,000 years, originating from the ancient land of India. The text, consisting of 24,000 verses, relates to how the Hindu festival of Diwali began.

Following on from their learning about Diwali, Hares and Badgers were delighted to present their Diwali performances to friends, families and loved ones. Throughout the amazing performances, members of the audience learnt lots about the origins of Diwali and the significance of this celebration to the people of the Hindu, Sikh and Jain religions.



Rehearsals

Year 5 could not wait to get started on rehearsals and were really excited to find out the roles they would be playing. After lots of discussion and auditions, parts were decided and they could begin to really get their teeth into portraying their characters in rehearsals. Although there was a lot to learn, the children really enjoyed learning their lines and song lyrics – particularly the monkey and demon chants! The children worked so hard during rehearsals and supported each other tremendously, giving feedback where necessary and suggesting ideas for stage directions. It was truly wonderful to see the children come together in this way and work as a team to create a brilliant performance that was their own to treasure and be proud of.



The Big Day!

The big day had finally arrived. Children came into school with butterflies in their tummies and wonderfully made costumes and props in their hands. Demon masks were fitted, props were sorted, chairs were laid and the stage was set!

WOW! What a fantastic job they did! Each and every child delivered their lines clearly and with intonation and performed with passion. Year 5 took the audience on a journey of good, evil, death, life and love and told the story of Ramayana beautifully, enjoying every moment. The children were incredibly proud of themselves, as were staff and parents.



Thank You

Year 5 would like to offer a heartfelt thank you to all of the family members that helped to practise lines, sing songs and put together glorious costumes – it wouldn't have been possible without your help and support.

