

THE HILL WEST HERALD


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Primary
FOUR OAKS



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Message from the Head Teacher

By Dr Beth Clarke



Christmas is a time of year that focuses our attention very firmly on family. We take time together to decorate the house and put up the Christmas tree. We think about the gifts our loved ones would really appreciate and write cards with seasonal messages of love, good health and prosperity. Perhaps more than any other time of the year, we actually get to stop our busy lives, just for a couple of days, and revel in 'family life'. We plan fun-filled activities with our children and wider family members and let our imaginations and creativity embody the fun of Christmas. We think of those less fortunate than ourselves and are genuinely grateful for each and every blessing. We know that this Christmas will be a challenging time for some members of our local community whether this be due to homelessness, loneliness or struggles with mental ill-health. Our love, thoughts and best wishes are with everyone.

Christmas, although a joyous time of year, can also be a particularly challenging time of year for many children, including those children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder, or an insecure attachment style. Irrespective of whether a child has an additional or identified need parents will know that any change to a child's routine can be disruptive and anxiety provoking. As such, there are some helpful hints below to make the festive season full of love and laughter.

Christmas Dinner: If your child has strong likes and dislikes don't stress about them sitting down to the same Christmas Dinner as everyone else. Keep to what they are used to and don't try to get them to eat what they wouldn't tolerate during the year. It's only another meal. And it doesn't have to be perfect. Use familiar cutlery, dishes and cups for your child.

Family Visits: If you are visiting family and friends or they are visiting you, try to be definite about times of arrival and departure and schedule this for your child. Have a dedicated room or space where your child can retreat to when things get too much. Have favourite games or toys available in this space and make sure other children or adults do not intrude. Put a sign on the door to highlight it's your child's chill out space.

Christmas Presents: When Christmas presents are exchanged we all expect our children to be polite and show appreciation. If your child is likely to say 'I don't like that, take it back' warn family and friends not to expect too much, how to respond and not to take it personal. Draw up a list of possible presents that family and friends can pick from that relate to your child's special interest.

Santa: We expect a lot from any child to be glad to see a stranger in a red suit, sit on his knee to get their photo taken or know that he will be creeping down the chimney when everyone's asleep. Any other time of the year if a strange person broke into your house in that way you'd be calling the police! Children may worry about this happening. What is important, is that you don't expect your child to make sense of Christmas by themselves. They will need help to remain feeling safe and secure with all the changes that Christmas brings.

Coping with the pressure of Christmas: Be realistic. Preparing for and celebrating Christmas can be stressful. Try to find some time for yourself. Even if it is for a long soak in the bath, or a trip to the hairdressers or watching a DVD. Ask family or friends to help out and give you a break. If you are cooking Christmas dinner and are panicking about how you will manage if your child is not coping, cook the turkey and ham on Christmas Eve and carve it. Pack it in foil with a bit of juice and re-heat thoroughly on the day itself. Prep your vegetables on Christmas Eve. Do anything you can to cut down on the workload. Buy ready prepped vegetables. It's only one day out of the year and the extra expense is worth it if it helps you feel less stressed. Talk to other parents about how they manage Christmas. And remember, keep your sense of humour in close proximity throughout Christmas as it is a time of celebration.

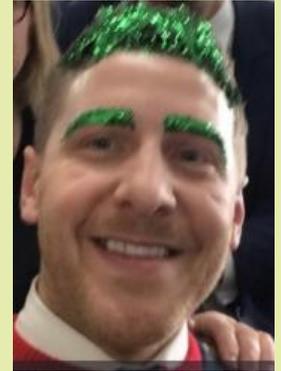
I sincerely hope that you all have an amazing holiday this year and send messages of love and peace on behalf of everyone at Hill West.



ATLP News

By Dr Beth Clarke

As you know Mr Day has now been the Headteacher at Brookvale Primary since September 2019. Of course we miss him at Hill West, his sparkle, his drive and his energy but are delighted that we still get to work with him as part of the extended ATLP family. He has, no doubt, achieved a great deal at Brookvale this term, working alongside new colleagues and forging strong relationships with the families of Brookvale and the



community at large. Just by looking at the amazing Brookvale twitter feed you can see that the children are being provided with a rich and varied curriculum underpinned by a drive for the highest standards and the belief that every child can succeed. Mr Day's role as Inclusion Lead here at Hill West will have inevitably supported his work in this regard, ensuring a genuine belief by all that every single child can accomplish greatness. Not only does the twitter feed give us an insight into the great curriculum work that has taken place but also shows that Mr Day has taken his sense of fun to Brookvale too. Whether this be through the arrival of the biggest Christmas tree I have ever seen into their school hall or the inaugural carol concert where all the staff sang together for the children.

As part of his work, developing with the staff, a broad and relevant curriculum, Mr Day has also been focusing on curriculum enrichment initiatives, ensuring all the children at Brookvale have the cultural capital necessary to succeed in life. This has been not only through peripatetic music tuition but also through increased opportunities for children to learn outside of the classroom. His focus has been on ensuring not only that the children succeed academically and socially but that they love their learning and have a real thirst for new knowledge and skills.

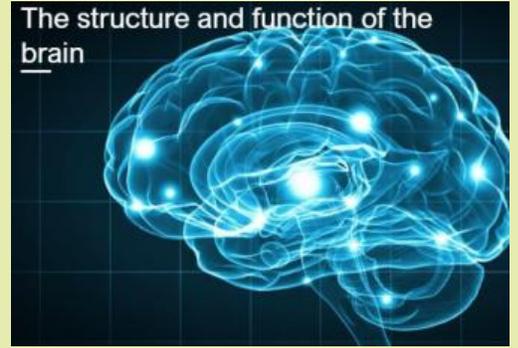
As ever, Mr Day remains focused on the social and emotional development of children and has introduced emotion coaching across Brookvale school with the support of Dr Anita Soni, Educational Psychologist. Emotion coaching is a communication strategy which supports young people to self-regulate and manage their stress responses. This is a strategy we have been using at Hill West for a number of years. Not only has Mr Day accomplished a great deal in his first term as Headteacher but he has also passed his driving test and is now the proud owner of a grey Peugeot 3008. Give him a wave if you see him driving along Clarence Road!



THRIVE

By Mrs Hannah Cook

The structure and function of the brain



At the beginning of the term, Dr Clarke and I began our 'Thrive' training. As I explained in last half term's edition of the Hill West Herald, 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. For this edition, I thought it would be interesting to look at some of the neuroscience that underpins the approach.

What does the brain do?

Of all the organs in the human body, the brain remains the least well understood. How this 3lb mass of greyish, spongy tissue produces the miracle of consciousness is a question that continues to mystify scientists to this day. However, recent developments in brain scanning technology have at last enabled scientists to observe the brain in action, resulting in huge advances in our understanding of how the organ works. Indeed, the field of neuroscience (study of the nervous system) is now so fast moving that new insights are emerging almost daily.

The exact role of the brain in the wider system of the body has long been debated. What seems clear is that the brain plays a central role in processing and integrating information that it receives from both the external environment and the internal environment. The brain uses this information to 'decide' what to do next, and then coordinates the body systems necessary to produce a coherent response. Much of this processing takes place outside of our conscious awareness.

The development of the brain

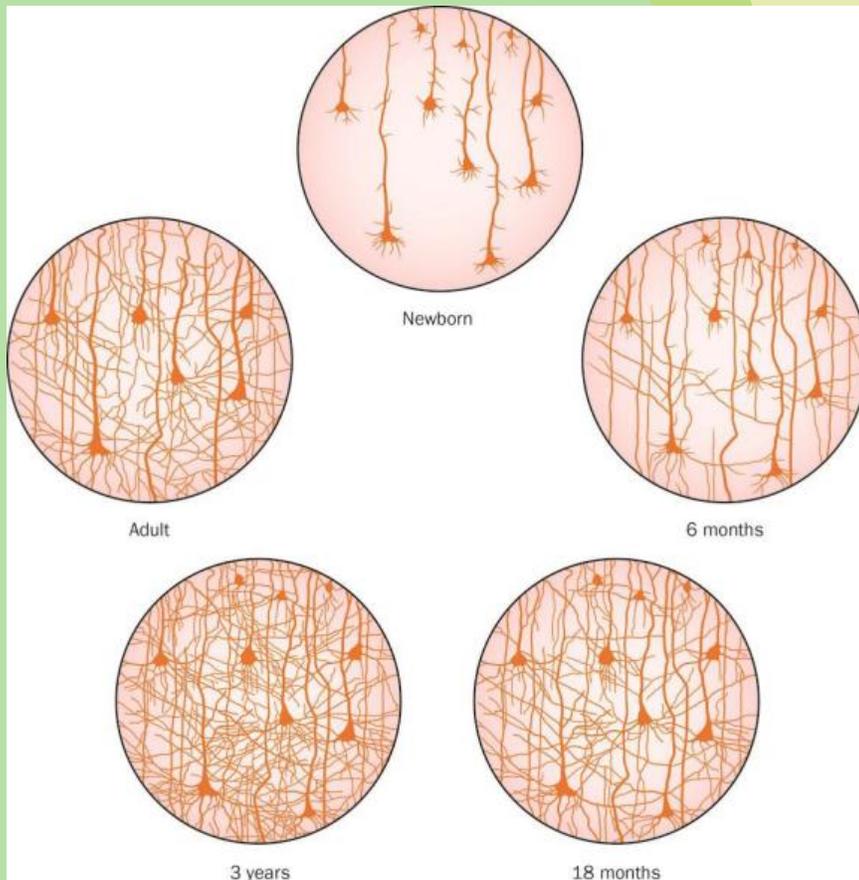
In the Thrive Approach, we are concerned with how we can support children to develop to their full potential – socially and emotionally as well as cognitively. We are also concerned with what can go wrong in children's development and what we, as professionals, parents and carers, can do about it, therefore it is important to understand about how our brains develop.

At birth, babies have around 200 billion neurons but they have very few connections between these cells. In this sense, a newborn's brain is relatively unformed. During the first three years of life, a child's brain goes through a rapid period of development in which neurons that are used are connected up to one another, and neurons that are not used are pruned away.

The formation of neuronal pathways and synaptic pruning continues to a greater or lesser extent throughout childhood and adolescence. By the age of five, 90% of the brain's neuronal connections have been established. Around the age of seven, the rate of change slows down as more neurons are myelinated, improving communication along the most frequently used neuronal pathways. Then there is a further surge of synaptic growth and pruning during early adolescence. To some degree, these processes continue throughout most of our adult lives: whenever we learn something new, our brains are forging new neural pathways.

The diagram on the following page gives a visual representation of how the neuronal connections of the brain develop from birth through to adulthood. At birth, a baby's neurons are unconnected like the dangling wires of a computer. By the age of 18 months, connections have formed between many of their neurons, while some neurons have been lost. By the age of three years, a child's connections have become more complex and synaptic pruning

has begun. By adulthood, the overall number of neurons and connections has reduced, and many pathways have become myelinated (stronger and more efficient).



It is important to understand that because neuronal pathways are formed in response to input from our internal and external environment, it is the nature of what we experience – particularly our emotional experiences with care-givers in the crucial first three years – that determines the connections that form between neurons and the eventual pattern and structure of our neural networks. From an evolutionary point of view, this ensures that our brains are adapted for the world into which we are born. It also means that our early experiences are absolutely critical in shaping the course of our social and emotional development – whether or not we develop the capacity to love, empathise, form healthy relationships, and are able to respond effectively to stress. Effectively, our early experiences set up a template in the brain and body that informs how we relate to the world for the rest of our lives. If a child is born into a home in which they are cherished and loved, their expectations of

the world will be that it is a fundamentally safe and welcoming place. Conversely, if a child is born into a home in which their basic needs are not met and / or they are rejected, abandoned or abused, they will grow up perceiving the world to be harsh and frightening.

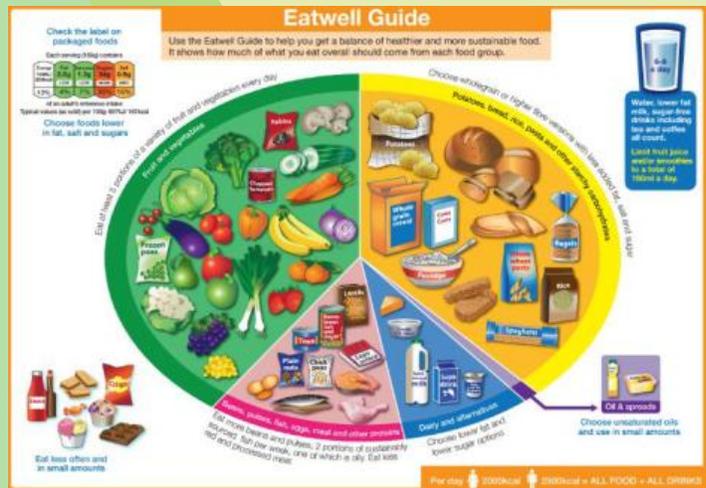
This shaping of expectations takes place at a fundamental biological level in the wiring of a child's stress-regulation system. Care that is consistent and nurturing enables a child's brain to develop an effective stress-regulation system. This gives them resilience in the face of life's challenges, enabling them to regulate their emotions in healthy ways, manage their impulses, and think rationally, even under pressure. However, care that is inconsistent, neglectful or abusive has the opposite effect on a child, producing a stress response that is over-active or under-active, leading to hypervigilance, anxiety or aggression on the one hand, or emotional shut-down and numbing on the other. In the long-term, children with poorly developed stress-regulation systems are likely to be vulnerable to a range of mental and physical health problems, including anxiety and depression, as well as chronic conditions in later life such as cancer and heart disease.

Despite the fact that inadequate care in early childhood has such a profound impact on the brain, healing and change at a later stage of development are nevertheless possible. This is due to the brain's 'neuroplasticity' – the capacity of the brain to forge new neural pathways in response to new experiences. As we have seen, the neuroplasticity of the brain is greatest in the first three years of life, but to a greater or lesser extent, it continues throughout life. This means that even if a child has experienced inadequate early care and, as a result, has a poorly developed stress-regulation system, it is still possible to intervene by giving them repeated positive experiences in relationships that support their brain to develop new, healthier neural pathways. This principle forms the basis of the Thrive Approach, which involves using precisely targeted interventions matched to the developmental needs of the child to support healthy brain development.

Ready, Steady, Cook!

By Mr Chris Ellison

This term at Hill West, the children were lucky enough to have a visit from Chartwells, who cater for the school's nourishment needs. Children had the opportunity to take part in an interactive game-show style cooking competition. Battling chef against chef, each team was tasked with preparing and cooking meals - coincidentally, the same ones offered for school lunches. The head chef, first, led the children through the different types of foods and the eat-well plate (further information can be found via the NHS website).



Children learnt about the different food groups, how much of each we should eat and what our body gets by eating them. This gave them further knowledge of how a balanced and varied diet keeps them healthy. Furthermore, this led to some great discussions about where all the nutrients we need can be found when following different diets such as vegetarianism and veganism.



During the competition, the Red Team were pitted against the Green Team in a head-to-head race against time to cook the best-voted dish. The Red Team cooked a vegan sweet potato and chickpea curry vs. Green team's vegetarian spaghetti bolognese. Battling against each other with their impressive culinary skills, with 15-minutes on the clock, who would tantalise the taste buds enough to get the winning votes from the audience?



Children from the audience were invited up to take in the sensuous smells and get a close up of the action as it unfolded. The votes swayed from side to side each minute; it was down to the last finishing touches.

As the timer hit zero, the audience sat in excited anticipation as the judges stepped forward to taste both dishes. The teams stood back, crossed their fingers, and hoped they had done enough.

The audience deliberated, then raised their votes high into the air. It was almost too close to count. After an overly long, dramatic X-Factor-esque pause, the Green Team were announced the

winner! But, all was not lost, there were two assemblies and round two was a different story. Impressively, the Red Team managed to pull back a victory. The final scores were Red 1: Green 1.



To conclude, Hill West want to set young people up for their day, and for a lifetime of good eating habits. Ensuring every pupil has the same opportunity to develop and make a positive contribution at school, by having access to fresh, healthy and great tasting meals. The school doesn't just want children to eat their food, it wants them to love and understand it. Wholeheartedly believing that lunchtime should be a fun part of the day, jam-packed with lots of different, flavoursome and healthy foods – whether that be in a lunchbox or on a plate – it develops children's knowledge and gives them a place where all communities come together to socialise and share.

Eat the rainbow!



Year 5 Trip to Aberdovey

By Dr Rhian Warrack

A crowd of extremely excited Year 5 children climbed on board the waiting coach in front of Hill West Primary School, just after 9a.m. on Monday 9th December. As seatbelts were buckled and checked, the children waved good-bye to their loved ones and we set off on our journey to Aberdovey, located on the Welsh west coast, north of Aberystwyth. On-board were 59 extremely excited children from Hares, Badgers and Otters with 5 adults: Dr Warrack, Mrs Evans, Mrs Anderson, Miss Davies and Mrs Mahmood. As school faded into the distance behind us, our attention turned towards the adventures which might await us...

Would we go jetty-jumping, rock-climbing, canoeing, walking or swimming? No-one was sure, but the excited chatter of children filled the coach as we headed onwards to our destination.

Three hours after leaving school, we were travelling through the Welsh hills. Eventually the road began to wind alongside the river. As we turned around a bend, we were able to glimpse the widening mouth of the river as it approached Cardigan Bay and joined the sea, which meant we were nearing our destination. After around four hours, the coach turned right off the main road and drove up a steep, curved drive to the Aberdovey Out-ward Bound Trust Centre. The coach driver showed great skill as he parked the coach in the small car park and we worked together to unload the coach. As we looked behind us, the view from the dining hall overlooking Aberdovey was simply spectacular.

First port of call was the hall so that we could all eat lunch. Once they had eaten, the children were introduced to their groups (Shackleton, Muir, Hilary, Scott and Fiennes) before their team leaders took them off to show them their common rooms and give them a tour of the centre. They then went to their accommodation blocks and were shown the rooms in which they would sleep for the next four nights. Once there, they were given the chance to choose their own beds, and then shown how to make them—using the sheets and bedding provided.

After settling in, the children met up again in their teams. Over the next five days the children would get to know the people in their teams exceptionally well and they were eager to start their first challenge or activity. Zoe was head of Team Muir, Roz of

Team Hilary, Tom of Fiennes, Kelsey of Scott and Ali for Team Shackleton. After settling into their rooms, the children embarked on a range of introductory activities, including team building games and orienteering activities to help them find their way around camp. They also discussed what the children would like to achieve over the week and how they could work together to achieve their goals.

By five o'clock, everyone was ready for some food, so we paid our first visit to the canteen area. Frankly, the food was fantastic and there were even second helpings.

After some time to unpack and get some warm clothes the children took part in evening activities, which included setting team rules, exploring the centre in the dark, climbing a gorge in the dark, star-gazing or playing team games. Everyone met up at 8:00 in the Activity Hall to enjoy a well-deserved cup of hot chocolate and a snack



and some social time as a whole group, before making their way to their rooms to get ready for bed. By 11:30 all was quiet and everyone was fast asleep after an exhilarating first day in Aberdovey.

The activities on the first full day included exploring the forest where they children had the opportunity to make shelters and learn about the forest environment. Other groups got to complete a mountain hike. This was a real challenge as the children had to navigate past a quarry. After a delicious tea, the children had some spare time before meeting up with their teams to take part in more activities before hot chocolate and bed. Some groups were preparing kit for the next day's adventure, some groups took part in team activities, team building and reviewing the day's events – thinking about what went well, and what they could do individually and as a team to improve their team-work, whilst Finnes went on a gorge walk in the dark up the river, using head torches. The children emerged from the gorge a little wet and muddy, to see the stars above.

As morning broke on day three, the children could be found enjoying another delicious break-fast, enthusiastically chattering about the adventures of the day ahead. Team Finnes and Team Muir caught the local train to Barmouth where they climbed almost to the top of Cader Idris before putting on their helmets and harnesses and scrambling to the very top. But their adventures didn't end there. Next the children had to abseil down the rock face. Other teams took to jumping off the jetty into the freezing cold sea. At the end of the evening, 59 extremely happy, content and tired children made their way back to their beds to get some well-earned sleep for the next day's adventures.



On the final full day, Team Shackleton headed to the trapeze where the children had to climb what looked like a telegraph pole and jump off to reach the hanging trapeze. Team Finnes and Team Muir, following their beach explore completed a long hike around Aberdovey. Team Hilary headed to Barmouth for a rock ramble where the clouds lifted at just the right moment so that children could see the vista. While Team Scott completed a 4km hike through the forest. The children were determined to take every miniscule drop of excitement, adventure and learning from the day's activities, as they had realised - with great sadness - that this would be their last full day in Aberdovey! What a blast they all had!!! And I haven't even mentioned marshmallows by the fire on the beach!

After enjoying a final delicious dinner, the children gathered together to celebrate everything they had achieved during their time at Aberdovey, sharing their successes and lessons they had learnt about themselves, their friends and about working as part of a team. What a simply amazing last evening at Aberdovey!

On the final morning the children, after breakfast, completed their final activities (jetty jump, jog and dip, canoe slide) before drying off, packing their cases and having the last lunch together. Then a coach full of 59 very tired young people along with 5 exhausted members of staff returned on the long journey back to school where their loved ones were waiting eagerly to congratulate them on an amazing accomplishment.



We are so proud of you all, children and staff, for each and every accomplishment, whether that be staying away from home for the first time, beating the harsh weather conditions or completing an activity you never thought was possible.

International Walk to School Month

By Miss Sophie Beardmore



'International Walk to School Month' is an annual event that happens every October and this year was no exception! The aim is to encourage children to put on their autumn boots and join in with thousands of children, across the world, to celebrate walking to school.

Autumn is a time when traffic around school can become a major problem, so this year we wanted to get involved in 'International Walk to School Month' to try and encourage everyone to reduce traffic and air pollution around school. As well as being good exercise, walking can help to teach children road safety skills and encourage interactions with family and friends. Each child was given an 'I spy' sheet, which set them a challenge of seeing if they could spot these things whilst walking to school. This gave the children the opportunity to explore more of their natural surroundings that maybe they might not have noticed ordinarily. Children also received assemblies on the importance of road safety; things which they should do when walking to school or anywhere on the pavement that will keep them safe. In classes, children completed surveys on how they all come to school and what would encourage them to walk to school more often.

Since 'International Walk to School Month' started, more than 50 countries around the world have joined together to celebrate the many benefits of walking. This year, Hill West want to encourage more of you to walk to school. Hill West has joined Modeshift STARS, which is a national award

scheme which offers support and rewards to schools for taking steps to promote safer, greener, healthier travel. We want Hill West to be part of this by participating in the scheme to produce a standard 'School Travel

Plan' with an achievable action plan to achieve bronze, silver and gold accreditation. Our first step towards this was encouraging a safer, greener and healthier way of travelling to school – many thanks to everyone who joined in as part of Walk to School Month!

Did you know that a generation ago, 70% of us would walk to school but today less than half of us do so!



Christingle

By Ms Clare Whelan

The Christingle services were held at All Saints Parish Church; both days had a very festive atmosphere with a fabulous Parent, Grandparent and carer presence. On Wednesday 4th December, Barnardo and Ghandi walked up Clarence Road in unison heading for the church. On Thursday it was Mandela and Pankhurst's turn. Our Christingles were paraded around All Saints church with every child over the two days walking around with Christingles in hand.

Dr Clarke led the services, with lots of our pupils taking a turn to speak at the altar, to express the meaning of Christingle and what it represents. It was fabulous to see children, parents and staff also singing our traditional Christingle hymns and listening to our woodwind, violin and guitar players showing us their fantastic musical skills. I think all would agree it really got us all in the festive spirit.

Hill West would like to say a massive thank you to all the children involved (especially those who took centre stage), a huge thank you to Dr Clarke and all of the staff at All Saints church, especially Reverend Adrian Leahy, for accommodating us at this busy time of year and for his festive address which left us all contemplating the true meaning of Christmas. I am blown away by the talents of all the young musicians, you really did excel and impress everyone.



Anti-Bullying Week

Mrs Hannah Cook

Anti-Bullying Week happens in schools across England each November. The 2019 theme was *Change Starts With Us* and it took place from Monday 11th November - Friday 15th November 2019. This was all about empowering pupils to reflect on the 'small' things they can do to help fight against bullying.

During Anti-bullying week, I was fortunate enough to attend a Safeguarding Seminar led by Martha Evans, Director of the Anti-bullying Alliance (ABA) in which we explored the long-term effects of bullying, who is more likely to get bullied, how we can prevent bullying in our school, and responding effectively to incidences or reports of bullying.

So, what is bullying? The ABA define it as the following:

“The repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can be physical, verbal or psychological. It can happen face-to-face or online.”



As part of this years' Anti-bullying week theme, the ABA produced a report outlining recommendations to address bullying face to face and online. This included how various groups of people can help to address the issue of bullying, which I have summarised below:

Research from our literature review shows that schools with clear expectations about behaviour and caring and respectful relationships between school staff and pupils have less bullying.

Change Starts with Us - A report outlining recommendations to address bullying face to face and online; p.20

Change starts with... Young People	Change starts with... Schools and Education Settings	Change starts with... Parents and Carers
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Being an 'upstander' (rather than a 'bystander', such as discreetly telling a teacher, reporting online, asking if the target is ok after the event) Considering the impact of our words and actions Knowing we can make a difference Saying 'hello' and being empathetic Focusing on what's on the inside instead of someone's appearance Including everyone 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Listening to and involving Young People in the solution Knowing how much bullying is going on and recording it Training for school staff about bullying and online bullying Helping pupils to understand each other when bullying does happen Seeing bullying as a barrier to learning and a risk to our mental health Ensuring all children are included in school and pupils have respectful and caring relationships with school staff Knowing about 'hotspot' areas of bullying and where it's more likely to happen 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Taking the time to talk and find out about their child's day Understanding the technology their children use Improving relationships with our siblings Teaching us about empathy Putting themselves in their child's shoes and being aware of issues they face



"The young people we spoke to were keen on schools providing a supportive framework to help them understand each other. They tended to want to move away from a 'sanction-based' approach to bullying of punishment and instead preferred a more 'restorative' approach where they looked at the root causes of bullying."

Change Starts with Us - A report outlining recommendations to address bullying face to face and online; p.20

Martha explained that, in order to prevent bullying as much as possible, we need to:

- Have a respectful culture
- Celebrate of difference in all
- Challenge discriminatory language



So what do we do at Hill West to prevent and address bullying?

- ✓ We are an inclusive school; we pride ourselves on building excellent relationships with pupils, based on mutual respect and celebrating difference
- ✓ Our Personal Development and Wellbeing curriculum explicitly addresses bullying including what it is and what to do if you are being bullied, as well as exploring protected characteristics
- ✓ We encourage pupils to talk to a trusted adult in school if they have any worries or concerns, including about friendships and bullying
- ✓ We ask our pupils if they have been or are being bullied on our pupil questionnaire, investigating and taking seriously every response
- ✓ We are a Rights Respecting School
- ✓ Our assemblies focus on children's rights and our core values, which include thoughtfulness, respect, trust and honesty
- ✓ We challenge and do not accept use of discriminatory language
- ✓ We log all incidents of bullying of which we are aware
- ✓ We take part in Anti-bullying week each year through our assemblies and lessons



If you suspect that your child is being bullied you should:

- Talk to them about their anxieties or worries
- Identify specific incidents and make a note of them
- Identify the perpetrator
- Reassure your child
- Make an appointment to see the class teacher and phase leader to discuss your concerns
- Monitor any improvements
- Continue to have open dialogue with your child
- Continue to have open dialogue with the school

"Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible." We were very proud of you Troy, when you comforted your friend.



Sporting Achievements this Term

Mrs Linsie Burton

Wow! Hill West have had a great start to the year sporting wise. We have taken part in a variety of events during this autumn term and had some great success.

We kicked off the year with the Year 6 football team, this was their first game and they all were very eager to perform at their best to represent their school. We had brand new kit which had been supplied by the Georgiou family and sponsored by their business 'Ironbridge Fish and Chips'.



Our first game was against The Shrubbery which we drew 3-3. It was a very exciting game with lots of goals. As this was a cup match we had to go to penalties; it was very tense but the Hill West team did themselves proud and scored every penalty. We are already excited about playing the next round of this cup after Christmas.



During the first part of the term Year 3 and 4 took part in a dodgeball competition, along with many other schools in the Wilson Stuart Sports Partnership. The children were very excited and on the night our team made it into the semi-finals. Well done team!

We had a very exciting opportunity for Little Aston Tennis club to come into school and spend some time with years 1-4 giving them some taster sessions. The children really enjoyed this chance to try tennis and for some it was the first time they played this sport before. Hopefully we have a budding Andy Murray or Serena Williams in school!



On the 5th December we took a team of Year 2 children to Bishop Vesey to compete in a multi sports competition as part of the Wilson Stuart Sports Partnership. We got there and our children were very excited and ready to do their best. They really enjoyed all the activities they got to part in which were a range of throwing, running and kicking activities. All their hard work paid off as at the end of the event our school were named overall winner. We were so proud of you all!

I couldn't possibly forget the amazing start to the year we have had in cross country this year. Hill West have always done well in the cross country league but this year has seen yet another great start with one member of our team, Daniel Smith, winning all of his races and coming first! Daniel has been working so hard for that first place and we couldn't be prouder of him and the rest of the team. Keep up the great work!



All of our sports teams have worked hard and done Hill West proud this term – I for one can't wait to see what the Spring Term holds!



Year Two Nativity Production

By Miss Emily Arkinstall

Christmas is such a magical time of year at Hill West; whether that be carols and candlelight at our Christingle services or quality time spent with families and loved ones at our festive lunches. But nothing quite marks the occasion of Christmas like our annual Nativity performance: a staple in the Hill West Christmas calendar. Although it seems to go smoothly on the day, the Nativity is something that takes weeks of preparation, song practices and hard work by hosts, judges, Nazareth town's people, Mary and Joseph, shepherds, three wisemen, the angels, the innkeepers, the star and even the odd camel or two. This year was even more exciting as Year 2 were performing a brand new Hill West production... *Lights, Camel, Action!*

Rehearsals

Teachers in Year 2 thought it would be an excellent idea to begin practising songs for Nativity way in advance... little did they realise they would be hearing them every day for 5 weeks thereafter! It didn't matter if they were at school, Sainsbury's or washing up, the funky camel song was on repeat in their heads! Practises began in small groups in the classroom until they were able to work up to a full run through on stage in the hall. Things were looking great! Children had learnt their lines as part of their homework and tried hard to listen for their cues to speak. Each class practised in front of each other to help prepare for the real performances!



Performance days

Owls and Kingfishers woke up on Tuesday 17th December with butterflies in their tummies. Finally, the big day had arrived! The classrooms were full of nerves and excitement moments before the show.



The children were ready to give it their all and knock the audience's socks off! The shows were a real treat including dancing camels, innkeepers and angels and not forgetting a disco star. The real meaning of Christmas shone through, and the children reminded us of the importance of the birth of the baby Jesus.



With the success of the Nativity behind them, the children can now focus on getting excited for Christmas day as well as a well-deserved rest!

Let me take this opportunity to thank all the parents for supporting this year's Nativity; whether that be coming to watch the performance, providing costumes for your children or practising lines before bedtime.

The Year 2 Team would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas!