

THE HILL WEST HERALD


HILL WEST
Primary
FOUR OAKS



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Message from the Head Teacher

By Dr Beth Clarke

I remember writing a similar message this time last year, but this year, Christmas will definitely be all about the joys to be found in family and friendship. It will be a time to reflect and be grateful for each and every blessing. The year to date has been so difficult. We have had to limit our contacts with those outside our immediate family and have missed the fun, laughter and companionship of our extended family and friends. Over the festive period we are permitted to form a Christmas bubble with two other households. This will mean that for many of us, some of those we hold dear, will have to celebrate without us this year. In the Clarke family, I know that we are planning a number of virtual catch ups to enjoy family time with loved ones in Bristol and further afield in Italy.

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, those who have been adopted from care, are in care or those who have experienced early childhood trauma and loss. 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, shared by Adoption UK and the Communication and Autism Team, to ensure the festive season is full of love and laughter for all children.

Christmas can bring up some Big feelings: The relentless drive to have fun and enjoy Christmas can feel out of place for children who may be worried about lack of money, more stress in the family, or the impact of increased seasonal alcohol consumption on their lives. For children who have experienced terrible Christmas times in their earlier lives, the arrival of decorations and Christmas songs can trigger powerful negative memories. Giving time and space for children to feel and express worries about Christmas means that they can feel heard, understood and supported. We know that this Christmas will be a challenging time for some members of our local community whether this be due to unemployment, homelessness, loneliness, illness or struggles with mental ill-health. Our love, thoughts and best wishes are with everyone.

Talking non-stop about Christmas: If a child is talking about Christmas, or asking the same questions about seasonal activities over and over again this could be a sign of deep anxiety rather than excitement. This signals to us that the child needs extra support and increased nurture.

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.

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 personally. Draw up a list of possible presents that family and friends can pick from that relate to your child's special interest.

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 (we can still do that, even in Tier 3) or watching a DVD. Ask family or friends in your Christmas bubble to help out and give you a break (you will probably need one following this long period of local restrictions). If you are cooking Christmas dinner and are panicking about how you will manage if your child is not coping, prep and cook on Christmas Eve. Do anything you can to cut down on the workload. Talk to other parents about how they manage Christmas. And remember, this has been a challenging year, we should not lose sight of that! We all need a special care this year.



I sincerely hope that you all have an amazing holiday and send messages of love, peace, prosperity and good health on behalf of everyone at Hill West.



Arthur Terry Learning Partnership News

By Dr Beth Clarke

How teachers from our MAT and the Arthur Terry School helped shape the UK's lockdown lessons.

Pictured right is Mrs Tracy Williams, a passionate, dedicated and enthusiastic language specialist who we simply love welcoming in to our school. Following our Ofsted Inspection in March 2019, Tracy helped us to deliver the highest quality staff professional development in French so that our teachers could thrive, confident with their subject knowledge and the content of our French Curriculum. So much so, our French teaching and learning improved and mirrored the high quality to be found in other non-core subjects. Being a primary teacher is no mean feat. Having to teach 11 subjects to the very highest standards means that one needs an extensive knowledge and of course the support from specialists within our partnership.



More recently Tracy joined colleagues from across the country to set up the pioneering national online teaching website so that pupils could continue to learn at home during the first nationwide lockdown. Now that schools have reopened hundreds of video lessons that have been created are providing an invaluable resource to teachers and pupils alike.

The Oak National Academy was born in April, the result of many teachers from across the UK giving their time to record lessons that could be accessed for free by anyone, simply by visiting a website. Tracy was actively involved in providing lessons in Modern Foreign Languages. Tracy explains ***“During the Easter holidays, I phoned three of my colleagues, all French and Spanish teachers in the ATLP schools and asked if they wanted to be part of this unique project. We spent hours carefully planning French and Spanish lessons for students in years 7 – 10, adapting our everyday practice to ensure our lessons would work in a virtual environment. Every week we made about 20 lessons, which we recorded at home – often in the middle of the night, as we got to grips with what we were doing!”*** These lessons were then published on the website each week and during the first emergency response period the lessons were accessed more than 400,000 times.

Of course the success of the pioneering project in the original lockdown attracted the attention of the Department of Education, which provided financial backing for teacher's to record a whole year's worth of content – as a back-up plan in case of another lockdown. In July, 400 teachers from all over the country spent three weeks planning and recording lessons in their kitchens and living rooms – adapting their practice to make it accessible to any student who might end up isolating and learning from home during the Autumn Term.

On the Oak National Academy website, teachers, parents and children can find carefully planned online lessons, completely free of charge. With nearly 10,000 lessons available, covering a wide range of subjects, from Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 11, children benefit from an enthusiastic teacher who's there on the screen telling the child exactly what they need to do, setting them specific tasks in line with the national curriculum. Lessons are an hour long, and include a quiz, a video explanation from the teacher and a worksheet. ***“This is a fantastic resource,”*** Tracy said, ***“and we just want as many people to know about it and to use it”.***

Richard Gill CBE, CEO of the Arthur Terry Learning Trust said, ***“I am delighted to be part of the Oak Academy. It's a fantastic resource and I'm so proud that the ATLP could play a role in its development. My thanks to our incredible team who have demonstrated such skill, creativity and commitment throughout”.***

To access the free resources, visit <https://www.thenational.academy/>

Of course, we can't wait to welcome Tracy back to Hill West to watch our French lessons in action and continue to help our teachers exude confidence in their delivery. Much of the work that the children learn in French is now underpinned by a sophisticated understanding of French phonics and this is as a direct result of Tracy work with us over the last 18 months. Tracy, if you read this, we think you are wonderful.

Hill West Behaviour Rationale

By Mrs Hannah Cook

Ensuring that our children thrive socially and emotionally, as well as academically, has been at the heart of our practice at Hill West for as long as I can remember. As a school we have continued to develop our thinking and approach through our engagement with current research and commitment to initiatives such as 'Thrive', which you may have read about in previous issues of the Herald.

Back in July, we made the decision to move away from a Behaviour 'Policy' or 'Procedure', and instead spent some time writing our new 'Behaviour Rationale', which explains what we believe here at Hill West and how this underpins our approach to supporting children with their behaviour. This can be found on the 'Policies' page of our school website (<http://www.hillwest.bham.sch.uk/index.php/our-school/school-policies>).



At Hill West, we know and understand that all behaviours are a form of communication and usually signal that a child has become dysregulated or has an unmet need. We are wholly committed to teaching appropriate behaviours in the same way as we approach other curriculum areas, for example Reading. We understand that this teaching needs to be progressive and accumulative, and revisited many times. This is especially true when a child's early experiences may not have equipped them with a stress-

regulation system that enables them to settle, to feel safe, to concentrate, to be curious or to be willing to work alongside their peers in collaborative ways.

We strongly believe that supporting pupils to manage their emotions and teaching explicit social and emotional skills is essential in order for them to achieve their potential in all aspects of school life. We want to support children systematically through excellent relationships to learn strategies to reduce their anxieties and manage their feelings and emotions. Over time, it is our intention to equip all children with the skills they will need for success in later life.

How do we do this?

1. Relationships

At Hill West, we know that there are important ways to be in a relationship with a child that contribute positively to the development of a significant relationship, and to the development for the child of a healthy sense of self. These are known as Vital Relational Functions (VRFs) and are comprised of: Attunement, Validation, Containment, Soothing/Regulating. In addition, all staff understand the principles of PACE; Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy (Dan Hughes). PACE is a way of thinking, feeling, communicating and behaving that aims to make the child feel safe. PACE is an approach of four personal qualities which allow adults to support a child to develop their own self-awareness, emotional intelligence and resilience. Over time and with practise, children can gain strong tools to better understand and regulate their emotions.

2. Motivation and Celebration

We know that it is important to develop children's intrinsic motivation, so that they are able to do something for the sake of personal satisfaction and the primary motivator is internal (i.e. they don't expect to get anything in return). This is opposed to extrinsic motivation, where pupils choose behaviours not because they enjoy them or find them satisfying, but in order to get something in return or avoid an adverse outcome. Studies have shown that "External incentives are weak reinforcers in the short run, and negative reinforcers in the long run." (Benabou & Tirole, 2003).

That said we do utilise a limited number of extrinsic rewards to celebrate and recognise positive behaviour through ensuring that children are always praised and congratulated, including:

- Star Cards
- Praise Points
- Certificates

3. Consistency

Our capacity to learn new habits and skills is possible because of the neural plasticity of the brain. Children who struggle to manage their behaviours need specific and repeated relational experiences which lead to the building of new neuronal pathways, which takes time, effort and repetition. Our staff know and appreciate that it takes about 500 or more repetitions to learn something new.

4. Communication

On occasions we recognise that everyone is susceptible to dysregulating as a consequence of their strong feelings and emotions and this manifests itself in distressed behaviour that is not in the best interests of that child or others. When behaviour is distressed, it is imperative that we help children to calm and reduce their anxiety. Where behaviour has been distressed and poses a risk of harm to the child in question or to others in school, that child should have a period of time with their Key Adult or Phase Leader in an allocated safe space. This time should be proportionate to the child's age and stage of development. When they are calm we can explore the relationship between cause and effect.

Often we are able to prevent or pre-empt distressed behaviours through our knowledge of and relationships with the children but, on the occasions when pupils do become distressed this may warrant a **behaviour notification**. This is an email which is sent out to parents to communicate in sufficient detail what led to the distressed behaviour, what the behaviour was, and how we have dealt with it in school. This is meant as a **communication tool** and enables us to quickly support any pupils who may need some additional or personalised strategies to help them develop their self-regulation.



when little people
are overwhelmed by
big emotions, it's our job
to share our calm,
not to join their chaos.
-l.r. knest

©hannahdave

If you have any questions about our approach or want to explore it or discuss it any further, please do contact your child's Phase Leader.

Relationships and Sex Education

By Dr Beth Clarke

At Hill West we know that pupils must be provided with an education that prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. A key part of this relates to relationships and health education, which must be delivered to every primary-aged pupil. Primary schools also have the option to decide whether pupils are taught sex education and as you know we have built this into our personal development and well-being curriculum.

Relationships and sex education is defined as teaching pupils about healthy, respectful relationships, focusing on family and friendships, in all contexts, including online, as well as developing an understanding of human sexuality. **Health education** is defined as teaching pupils about physical health and mental wellbeing, focusing on recognising the link between the two and being able to make healthy lifestyle choices.

By the end of primary school, pupils will know:

Families

- That families are important for them growing up because they can give love, security and stability.
- The characteristics of healthy family life, commitment to each other, including in times of difficulty, protection and care for children and other family members, the importance of spending time together and sharing each other's lives.
- The characteristics of healthy family life, commitment to each other, including in times of difficulty, protection and care for children and other family members, the importance of spending time together and sharing each other's lives.
- That others' families, either in school or in the wider world, sometimes look different from their family, but that they should respect those differences and know that other children's families are also characterised by love and care.
- That stable, caring relationships, which may be of different types, are at the heart of happy families, and are important for children's security as they grow up.
- That marriage represents a formal and legally recognised commitment of two people to each other which is intended to be lifelong.
- How to recognise if family relationships are making them feel unhappy or unsafe, and how to seek help or advice from others if needed.

Friendships

- How important friendships are in making us feel happy and secure, and how people choose and make friends.
- The characteristics of friendships, including mutual respect, truthfulness, trustworthiness, loyalty, kindness, generosity, trust, sharing interests and experiences, and support with problems and difficulties.
- That healthy friendships are positive and welcoming towards others, and do not make others feel lonely or excluded.
- That most friendships have ups and downs, but that these can often be worked through so that the friendship is repaired or even strengthened, and that resorting to violence is never right
- How to recognise who to trust and who not to trust.



- How to judge when a friendship is making them feel unhappy or uncomfortable.
- How to manage conflict.
- How to manage different situations and how to seek help from others if needed

Relationships

- The importance of respecting others, even when they are very different from them (for example, physically, in character, personality or backgrounds), make different choices, or have different preferences or beliefs.
- Which practical steps they can take in a range of different contexts to improve or support respectful relationships.
- The conventions of courtesy and manners.
- The importance of self-respect and how this links to their own happiness.
- That in school and wider society they can expect to be treated with respect by others, and that in turn they should show due respect to others, including those in positions of authority.
- About the different types of bullying (including cyberbullying), the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders to report bullying to an adult, and how to seek help.
- What a stereotype is, and how they can be unfair, negative or destructive.
- The importance of permission-seeking and giving in relationships with friends, peers and adults.

On-line Relationships

- That people sometimes behave differently online, including pretending to be someone they are not.
- That the same principles apply to online relationships as to face-to-face relationships, including the importance of respect for others online, even when we are anonymous.
- The rules and principles for keeping safe online.
- How to recognise harmful content and contact online, and how to report these.
- How to critically consider their online friendships and sources of information.
- The risks associated with people they have never met.
- How information and data is shared and used online.



Being Safe

- What sorts of boundaries are appropriate in friendships with peers and others – including in a digital context.
- About the concept of privacy and the implications of it for both children and adults.
- That it is not always right to keep secrets if they relate to being safe.
- That each person's body belongs to them, and the differences between appropriate and inappropriate or unsafe physical, and other, contact.
- How to respond safely and appropriately to adults they may encounter (in all contexts, including online) who they do not know.
- How to recognise and report feelings of being unsafe or feeling bad about any adult.
- How to ask for advice or help for themselves and others, and to keep trying until they are heard.
- How to report concerns or abuse, and the vocabulary and confidence needed to do so.
- Where to seek advice, for example, from their family, their school and other sources.

Mental Well-being

- That mental wellbeing is a normal part of daily life, in the same way as physical health.



- That there is a normal range of emotions, e.g. happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise and nervousness.
- The scale of emotions that humans experience in response to different experiences and situations.
- How to recognise and talk about their emotions, including having a varied vocabulary of words to use when talking about their own and others' feelings.
- How to judge whether what they are feeling and how they are behaving is appropriate and proportionate.
- The benefits of physical exercise, time outdoors, community participation, and voluntary and service-based activity on mental wellbeing and happiness.
- Simple self-care techniques, including the importance of rest, time spent with friends and family, and the benefits of hobbies and interests.
- How isolation and loneliness can affect children and that it is very important they discuss their feelings with an adult and seek support.
- That bullying (including cyberbullying) has a negative and often lasting impact on mental wellbeing.
- Where and how to seek support (including recognising the triggers for seeking support), extending to who in school they should speak to if they are worried about themselves or others.
- That it is common to experience mental ill health and, for the many people who do, the problems can be resolved if the right support is made available, especially if accessed early enough.

Internet safety and harms

- That for most people, the internet is an integral part of life and has many benefits.
- About the benefits of rationing time spent online.
- The risks of excessive time spent on electronic devices.
- The impact of positive and negative content online on their own and others' mental and physical wellbeing.
- How to consider the effect of their online actions on others.
- How to recognise and display respectful behaviour online.
- The importance of keeping personal information private.
- Why social media, some computer games and online gaming, for example, are age-restricted.
- That the internet can also be a negative place where online abuse, trolling, bullying and harassment can take place, which can have a negative impact on mental health.
- How to be a discerning consumer of information online, including understanding that information (inclusive of that from search engines) is ranked, selected and targeted.
- Where and how to report concerns and get support with issues online.

Physical health and fitness

- The characteristics and mental and physical benefits of an active lifestyle.
- The importance of building regular exercise into daily and weekly routines and how to achieve this, for example by walking or cycling to school, a daily active mile, or other forms of regular, vigorous exercise.
- The risks associated with an inactive lifestyle, including obesity.
- How and when to seek support, including which adults to speak to in school if they are worried about their health.

Healthy eating

- What constitutes a healthy diet, including an understanding of calories and other nutritional content.
- The principles of planning and preparing a range of healthy meals.



- The characteristics of a poor diet and risks associated with unhealthy eating, including obesity, and other behaviours, e.g. the impact of alcohol on diet or health.

Drugs, alcohol and tobacco

- The facts about legal and illegal harmful substances and associated risks, including smoking, alcohol use and drug-taking.

Health and prevention

- How to recognise early signs of physical illness, such as weight loss or unexplained changes to the body.
- About safe and unsafe exposure to the sun, and how to reduce the risk of sun damage, including skin cancer.
- The importance of sufficient good-quality sleep for good health, and that a lack of sleep can affect weight, mood and ability to learn.
- About dental health and the benefits of good oral hygiene and dental flossing, including regular check-ups at the dentist.
- About personal hygiene and germs including bacteria and viruses, how they are spread and treated, and the importance of hand washing.
- The facts and science relating to immunisation and vaccination.

Basic first aid

- How to make a clear and efficient call to emergency services if necessary.
- Concepts of basic first-aid, for example dealing with common injuries, including head injuries.



Changing adolescent body

- Key facts about puberty and the changing adolescent body, particularly from age 9 through to age 11, including physical and emotional changes.
- About menstrual wellbeing and key facts relating to the menstrual cycle.

Sex Education

Although not statutory to deliver sex education outside of the science curriculum at primary level, the DfE recommends that all primary schools should have a sex education programme in place. At our school, we do teach pupils sex education beyond what is required in the science curriculum. This is tailored to the age, and physical and emotional maturity of pupils, and ensures that boys and girls are prepared for the changes that adolescence brings, drawing on knowledge of the human life cycle. We teach about the main external parts of the human body, how it changes as it grows from birth to old age, including puberty, and the reproductive process in some plants and animals.



Harvest Celebrations

By Mrs Hannah Cook

Like many other things, our traditional Harvest Celebrations, usually featuring a celebratory class assembly as well as a visit from a local vicar, were put on hold this year. Nevertheless, we didn't want the time of year to pass without us recognising it in some way, so that's when we set out to make a difference in our local community by supporting St James Church in Mere Green's 'Hope Helpline'.

St James' launched Hope Helpline and Hope Cafe in March 2020. A loyal army of 400 volunteers have helped to produce 9,200 hot meals for 8,500 individuals. They have also produced and delivered 8,000 food packages, and they have helped families from 14 local schools. You can find out more about what they have been doing in our local community by looking at their Twitter Feed (@StJamesMereG).

To help support this fantastic project, we invited children to bring in a food donation and complete some harvest colouring. As always, our children rose to the challenge and it is fair to say that we were completely bowled over by everything we received!

Mr Carroll and some of our Year 6 pupils took the donations to St James' church in the minibus, where they were met by Hope Helpline volunteers who were "over the moon" with the generous donations.



Rev. Daniel Ramble contacted school to express his thanks for our generosity:

"We are very grateful for the generosity and kindness of the pupils, parents and staff members at Hill West Primary School. Your donations have helped and supported over 200 families in Sutton Coldfield."



Anti-Bullying Week

By Mrs Chloe Grant



On Monday 16th November, a funny thing happened – all the children came to school in odd socks! But it wasn't because they had overslept, or all their socks were in the wash...We were celebrating Anti-Bullying week!

During that week, Hill

West children came together with schools across the UK to spread this year's message: United Against Bullying. Children and staff shared the Anti-Bullying Alliance's manifesto for change (below) and discussed what it meant.



“This year, more than ever, we've witnessed the positive power that society can have when we come together to tackle a common challenge. ”

“Anti-Bullying Week is no different. Bullying has a long lasting effect on those who experience and witness it. But by channelling our collective power, through shared efforts and shared ambitions, we can reduce bullying together. From parents and carers, to teachers and politicians, to children and young people, we all have a part to play in coming together to make a difference. ”

“We're all a piece in the puzzle, and together, we're united against bullying.”

We learnt that bullying is repeated behaviour that is intended to hurt someone, physically or mentally. We also discussed how there are different roles involved in bullying, from those who support the bullying without actually doing it, those who look on without reporting it, to the brave children who defend the person being bullied and report the bullying to a trusted adult.

The children had lots of ideas about why somebody might be bullied and how we might be able to support somebody who is bullied. The children even suggested ways of showing kindness to a bully whose negative feelings might be causing them to bully others.



The children at Hill West have very strong feelings about bullying and weren't afraid to share their wonderful opinions. From posters to poems to sticky note campaigns and dramatic sketches to illustrate showing kindness, they truly showed that they are all part of the puzzle that fits together to stop bullying for good!



ANTI-BULLYING
Try to be someone's Defender
A victim's bruises are tender
Tell them to stop it hurts a lot
Don't bully be a bystander



The Teaching of Vocabulary

By Mrs Charlotte Massey

*"A large and rich vocabulary is the hallmark of an educated individual."
Beck, I. (2013) Bringing words to life.*

Rationale behind robust vocabulary instruction in schools

Evidence shows that a rich vocabulary supports pupils learning about the world, enhances opportunities, allows pupils to enjoy the humor in word play and above all gives pupils confidence in what they want to say and then in turn what they want to write.

There is a great deal of evidence, including case studies, which show that vocabulary is, in particular, tightly related to reading comprehension across all age groups. Reading is a formula of two components; word recognition and language comprehension. Vocabulary slots into both of these categories. As teachers, it is our job to be 'responsive' to the needs of the children in our class in terms of vocabulary, and begin at a point that the majority are comfortable with. By the age of 3, due to socioeconomic groups and different backgrounds, the gap in vocabulary knowledge is already apparent to see. This gap then continues to grow as the vocabulary rich tend to get richer and the vocabulary poor tend to get poorer.

Our aim, as with everything, is to close this gap.

In order to make this happen we have devised a **Three Phased Plan**. This will be introduced one phase at a time to ensure that our practices are embedded alongside the rest of the curriculum and in time become a fundamental part of our everyday practice.

Phase 1 – Identifying

This phase is entirely centered around our class novels. This year, in particular, we have a big focus on reading within the classroom. This not only includes the children reading, but also us reading to the children regularly and as such we have all carved out specific times within our timetable to read our class novels to the children. This may be in the morning, at the end of the day, or after a particularly high energy activity to bring the children back down.

Phase 2 – Using

This phase will be entirely focused on using and applying new vocabulary within the classroom during focused, direct instruction. It is during this phase that we will explore a breadth of engaging activities that will allow our children to re-discover their love of language.

Phase 3 – Maintaining

During phase 3, we will be reviewing our practice and how well embedded within our curriculum it has become as well as integrating consolidation techniques that will be passed on from teacher to teacher as the classes progress throughout our school. Each class will have a vocabulary box, filled with new vocabulary word cards, unique to that class, of rich vocabulary they have discovered on their journey so far. These word cards can be revisited as often as required in order to ensure that the children are using and applying their new vocabulary daily. Children in KS2 will also have small, individual vocabulary journals that they can add to as and when they discover specific tier words.

Nagy and Anderson (1984) found that children aged between 7 and 13 encounter an average of 1 million words per year throughout their reading experiences. This exposure to high-quality language is a key step in their journey, however if we couple this with an expert teacher guide, we can give children the tools they need to effectively broaden their language and intern their understanding - making for vocabulary rich learners!

Rugby Coaching in Year Three

By Ms Kelly Bailey

This half term Year 3 were lucky enough to get first dibs to receive coaching from Dan, who has coached the majority of our pupils at Hill West over the last few years. In my experience children always look forward to his sessions and become very excited when they see 'PE: Rugby with Dan' on the classes daily timetable.



We thought ahead and made sure the children were prepared for the weather - most of the time this was the case but we do apologise if the odd child went home in muddy uniform (sorry Mums and Dads!)

The sessions had to be altered slightly due to some COVID-safe practices but this didn't bother the children at all; they still loved playing their team building games and practiced their throwing and catching skills in all weather. Pelican Crossing, where children try to avoid being 'tagged' as they run across the pitch, is a favourite of many of the children in Rabbits and Hedgehogs!

We asked Dan some questions about Rugby Coaching and why he is so passionate about it, and this is what he told us...

Why should children play rugby?

"It makes you healthy! It's great for your mental health as well as your physical health particularly during lockdown when opportunities to go outside are few and far between. It can also help to build confidence and improve our social skills such as teamwork."

How can children get into rugby outside of school?

"They can Google search their local rugby club – my local club is Veseyans and everyone will always be welcome there!"

What has your experience been like at Hill West over the last few years?

"Wonderful! It's good to see a school that takes sport and activity seriously. Sport is such a high priority. The staff are very accommodating and the children are a delight to coach and always greet me with a smile!"



Keeping Active throughout the School Day

By Mr Joel Holmes

In these unprecedented times, one thing which has emerged is the need for everyone to be more active. Figures released after the initial lockdown period found that 46% of children and young people were physically active even under the strictest measures and activities such as walking became increasingly popular with 71% of children going for a walk each day. Now that our children have returned to school it vitally important that they are able to be active as much as possible, we at Hill West have been giving them every opportunity to do this. Whether it's introducing new play equipment for break and lunchtimes (check out those fluorescent skipping ropes!), or getting active in the classroom, we know that our children love



to move. Across the school we have been able to continue to deliver high-quality PE lessons in a range of sports whether that's Hockey in Year 4, Dodgeball in Year 5 or getting in Rugby Dan to work with the Year 3's, it has been amazing to observe just how much our children get up to. At Hill West we are continuing to

promote healthy and active lifestyles and would love to invite parents to encourage their children to participate in the Daily Mile at home, with a shorter time in school, all children would benefit greatly from being as active as possible when they get home. Please visit: <https://thedailymile.co.uk/at-home/> to get more information about how you and your family can get involved.



Make sure to check out the Hill West Twitter account @hillwestprimary for more up-to-date information of how we're staying active, you will also find our Active Advent Calendar with loads of fun challenges to complete over the festive period.



PTFA Update

By Mrs Dawn Adamthwaite

As we come to the end of this first term back at school, after such an extraordinary year last year, we thought we would take this opportunity to tell you all about the PTFA, who we are, what we do and how we are adapting and evolving to keep fundraising going during these strange times.

Who are we? Well, we're you! We're just a group of parents with a few ideas, a bit of time and a touch of enthusiasm trying make a difference. We put on fun events to hopefully raise the money needed to enrich and support our children's education. I'm sure most people will have heard that school budgets are stretched tight paying for the bare essentials, so the PTFA are here to try to add the little (or sometimes big) extras that make a difference to every child's school day. You may not realise it but each day the children are enjoying equipment paid for with money raised by the PTFA. Here are just a few examples.

The canopy that covers the 'pod' used by reception. Paid for using PTFA Funds



Interactive screens in classrooms cost over £3000 per screen. The PTFA helped by paying for half of them!



Year 4 camping tents. Bought using PTFA funds



The fantastic trim trail, enjoyed by all children.



Fun and educational! We loved the visits from The Animal Man and samba drumming workshop. And, you guessed it...funded by the PTFA!



As well as our large one off projects, we also have a number of annual commitments that we raise funds for. Each year we contribute £700 to the school fund to ensure there are trees for the children to decorate and a treat from Santa for each child. We also contribute £500 to our year 6 leavers as we thank the children and their families for their support over the years and wish them well on their new adventures at secondary school.



Can the PTFA continue during the pandemic?

Well, I for one had my doubts but amongst all the challenges and struggles that COVID has brought upon us all, the PTFA is actually thriving. And, although things may be a little different, we have had our thinking caps on and have some exciting events lined up. At the end of November we held our AGM and the current committee was voted in. We've a great mix of experienced re-elected members with some new faces and fresh ideas. We also have a new role to help with all of our social media and online fundraising that has become so vital during this time and we even have our own new web page!

CHAIR	VICE CHAIR	TREASURER	SECRETARY	IT & MEDIA
Dawn Adamthwaite	Ian Binns	Rob Cook	Clare Whelan	Natasha Nodding & Louise Smith

It is wonderful to welcome new people to the PTFA, whether in a committee role or as a general volunteer, and so far this year we have had record numbers joining us for our meetings. This is largely due to us now holding our meetings on zoom. We intend to continue to meet on zoom even after life returns to normal so if this allows you to join in too please get in touch.

Look out for updates on upcoming events on Facebook, Instagram, twitter and the school weekly bulletin.

Hill West Primary PTFA

THIS YEAR WE ALL RAISED **£11404.00** NO. EVENTS **8**

HOW WE DID IT

Halloween Disco. £1112 Quiz Night. £612
Christmas Fair. £1794 Black Tie Ball. £904
Christmas Cards. £408 Fun Run. £658
Christmas Sweet Sale. £75 Summer Fair. £3044

Waitrose Community Matters. £300
Other donations. £2500

FUNDRAISING WILL GO TOWARDS

We are delighted to confirm that we have raised enough funds to fully cover the costs of upgrading and extending the much loved music room which is used by all children in all year groups. Funds raised at our black tie ball were used to pay for Samba drumming workshops for all of the children. We also made our annual Christmas donation to school to cover the costs of Christmas treats and selection boxes for all children.

We would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who has supported us this year, in any role, no matter how big or small. You are all helping to make a difference for our children. If you would like to get involved please contact us on the details below.

hillwestptfa@hotmail.co.uk Parentkind Member Association

In 2019 following a 'normal' year we were delighted to share this poster with you. You can see how important our key events are for raising funds, so not being able to hold such events this year is having a huge impact. We are currently looking into virtual events for the new year and hoping we may even be able to see you all in person again soon. We'd love to hear your feedback on the ideas below or talk to you if you think you can help or have any suggestions....

Children's' virtual bingo with Disney, music and movie themes.

Run 10k in 10 days.

Family online quiz. Questions and categories for all ages.

Family virtual (or hopefully actual) 4k fun run and walk.

The return of the brilliant Black Tie Ball.

In the meantime I am delighted to tell you all that the PTFA is continuing to raise funds for our children. Thank you to everyone who bought an anti-bullying wristband or ordered Christmas cards. Our Christmas raffle is having a record year and we have even received a few donations from parents who simply want to help out at a difficult time. I have renewed hope for 2021 and all of the team are looking forward to trying some exciting new ways of fundraising whilst remaining COVID safe.



hillwestptfa@hotmail.com

You can find links to our social media pages and our all new PTFA webpage via the PTFA link on the school website.



Year 2 Nativity

By Mrs Clare Whelan

Christmas is so different this year at Hill West; carols and our usual Christingle, Christmas meal in school with parents and whole school festive assemblies haven't been able to happen this year; even decorating the Christmas tree has been very different. But like the amazing Christmas stars they are, all the children throughout school have ploughed through with fabulous resilience.



Our annual Christmas Nativity performance has been phenomenal. We missed having our parents and other year groups as our audience this year, but our performance of 'Behind the stable door' was truly fabulous. Both classes performed brilliantly; it's worth mentioning that the Nativity takes weeks of preparation, song practices and hard work - the Year 2 staff and pupils have all worked so hard.

Rehearsals

Ms Whelan, Mrs Massey, Mrs Kaur and Mrs Pick got the songs and script ready in advance, they thought it would be advantageous to get in lots of practice! By mid-December they had been securely embedded in to their subconscious brain and they found themselves singing it doing their shopping and housework when they were at home!

Owls and Kingfishers worked together to learn their lines, dances and stage direction. The children should be praised for learning their lines so beautifully at home, they came to school raring to go. This Nativity really lifted everyone's spirits this year and by early December, things were looking great! Each class practised in front of each other to help prepare for the real performances!

Performance Days

Owls and Kingfishers woke up on Wednesday 16th December knowing that that day they would be recorded performing the Nativity ready for their anxious, excited and probably very emotional parents to watch at home. Even though they were sad that their parents couldn't come to school to watch them, they acted like the world was watching and were worthy of a Brit award. This year we had ballerina sheep, ballerina Angels; everything was subject to Artistic license.

The children can now hold their heads up high knowing the infamous Year 2 Nativity is performed and completed. They can now concentrate on getting in to the festive spirit with Christmas crafting at home and spending time with their families.

Please can we all thank the parents for supporting this year's Nativity; whether that be watching the performance online, practising lines at home, or making or purchasing a costume.

From everyone in Year 2, we wish you all a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year!



Christmas Celebrations at Hill West

By Mrs Rebecca George



Although Christmas 2020 is likely to be somewhat different to the Christmases we have known, it is important that here at Hill West, all of our children continue to experience a 'Hill West Christmas'. Christmas truly began with the arrival of our beautifully decorated Christmas tree for our school entrance along with two very bushy but empty and lonely looking Christmas trees for our KS1 and KS2 halls. However, they didn't stay bare for long! Our children were as busy as Santa's elves making their Christmas decorations following the theme of 'everything natural', where as many biodegradable



materials were used. Every child hung their carefully crafted decoration on the trees whilst listening to traditional Christmas songs. There were certainly smiles all round and gasps of amazement once the lights were switched on. I know that you'll agree that the children did such a wonderful job of decorating our trees.

Next it was time for making our 'Christingles'. This is a long standing tradition here at Hill West and although we couldn't visit All Saints church this year for our whole school Christingle service, we wanted our children to learn about this important tradition in the Christian calendar.



What is a Christingle? 'Christingle is a joyful celebration that brings families and communities together to share the light of Jesus and spread a message of hope'. Through songs, our children learn that each element of a Christingle has a special meaning of hope and helps to tell a Christian story.

The orange represents the world

The red ribbon (or tape) symbolizes the love and blood of Christ

The sweets and dried fruit (added at home) represent all of God's creations

The lit candle represents Jesus' light in the world, bringing hope to people living in the darkness.



Each class celebrated 'Christingle' in their own way. We know that you will have enjoyed lighting the candles at home with your children.

Following this, St. James' Church in Mere Green asked our school community to support their Christmas Gift Donation



appeal to give a gift to a child whose family has recently been in need of food parcels and hot meals. We were truly humbled by your generosity in these uncertain times and very proud of the thoughtfulness and kindness of our families. Reverend Daniel of St James' Church, by way of thank you, is inviting our children and their families to participate in St James' Church Christingle Service via Zoom on Saturday 19th December at 3pm. Our children are able to attend the church centre to collect a Christingle pack on Friday 18th December between 3pm and 6pm. This pack will include details of how to make another Christingle to use on the day. The church will also be handing out Nativity packs to all of our families who attend.



Calendars and Christmas card making at this time of year is always a memory that our children hold dear. From Reindeers to candy canes to Christmas trees a special card will be on its way to you soon. Always hand made with love and I'm sure treasured for many years to come.



Our classrooms are certainly filled with festivity and decorated with love and care by our children. There are even some cheeky elves visiting our classrooms each day to spot all of the kindness, listening and hard work that our children demonstrate even when full of excitement in the lead up to Christmas.

During our fun-filled final week of this Autumn Term our children will immerse all things Christmas from donning a Christmas jumper, completing many festive activities in their classrooms to enjoying a surprise gift from the Big Man himself – Santa! We fully intend to embrace Christmas and its message of hope.

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas, filled with love and laughter.



Reflections on my First Term as Assistant Head Teacher

By Mrs Jaimey Thomas

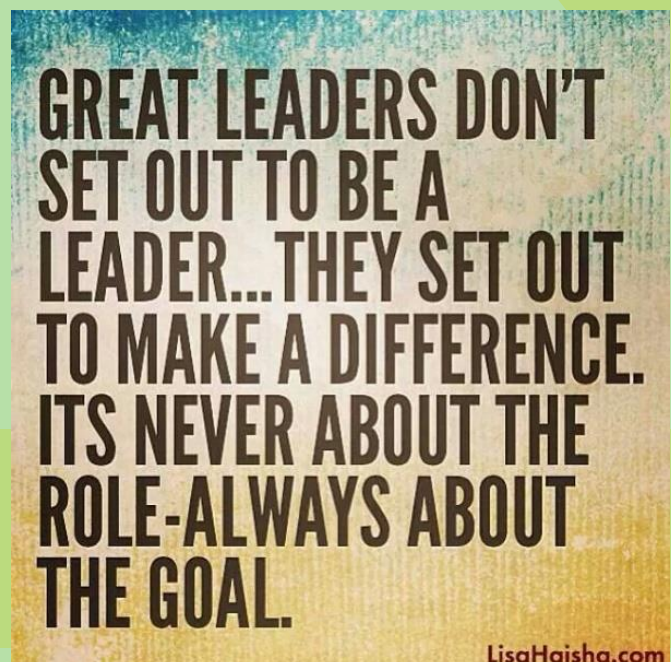
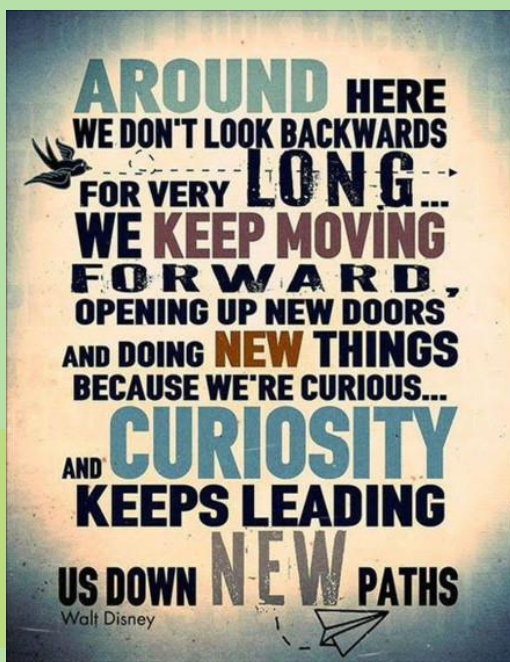
After joining the Hill West team over seven years ago, I was delighted to be given the opportunity to join the Senior Leadership Team this year for the duration of Mrs Johnston's maternity leave. The role was a real change for me and the first time during my teaching career that I have not been class-based, but a challenge that I have welcomed.

As Phase 3 Leader (Years 5 – 6) I am lucky to work closely with an exceptionally talented and passionate team; it has been a real joy to spend time celebrating the teaching and learning this term. This role has also given me the opportunity to work closely with parents, external agencies, other members of the Senior Leadership Team and of course the wonderful children within Phase 3.

I have especially enjoyed the variation within the role and how (as in the classroom) no two days are the same. A typical day could consist of meeting with external agencies such as support workers or educational psychologists, working closely with children within my phase, celebrating teaching and learning or coaching and mentoring. Supporting other colleagues with their leadership of English within school has also been a great highlight this term. The determination and expertise of our wonderful team at Hill West has ensured that our practice of English is continually evolving and that we continue to deliver exceptional standards of teaching and learning in line with recent research.

In order to develop my leadership skills further I have been supported by the ATLP to undertake a Master's Degree in School Leadership and Management, which I started in November this year. Within this course I will be studying modules including Strategic Leadership, Operations Management and Innovation and Change, as well as several practical research projects led within school. Whilst I am only a month into this course, I am already finding the content and the research invaluable and I cannot wait to learn more!

The main thing that I have learnt about leadership so far in my journey, is that you never stop learning and that you don't always have the answers. However, with authenticity and a collaborative approach, any challenge can be overcome and used as an opportunity for development.



A Temporary Goodbye

By Mrs Hannah Cook

I must admit, when my husband and I found out we were expecting the third **(and final!)** addition to our family back in May, one of my first thoughts was *at least we'll be back to normal by the time this baby arrives!* Well – how wrong I was - here I am at 37 weeks pregnant, having attended at least four scans and several midwife appointments alone and still uncertain about when my parents will be able to meet their newest grandchild.

It's not been the easiest term (I do not recommend moving house at 35 weeks pregnant!) but I feel so lucky to have been able to come into work every day to a job I absolutely love, seeing our wonderful pupils thriving in school and working with the most incredible team.

This year has been like no other - we've had to think differently about all sorts of things due to COVID restrictions, whether that be managing staggered starts, how we facilitate Parent Consultations or developing a plan for Remote Learning. School leadership is demanding at the best of times and has most definitely brought plenty of new challenges in the current climate! Nevertheless, our whole school community – whether that's teachers, parents, the PTFA and even local churches, have really pulled together to support one another in new ways and to make sure our pupils are happy, settled and successful.

School life remains fast-paced and busy, and it will feel very strange in January when my focus will change from school leadership and Teams Meetings to changing nappies for a while! I really will miss the 'normality' work brings once I start maternity leave at Christmas, but I am certainly ready to wind down and (hopefully) enjoy a couple of weeks of Christmas festivities with Jacob and Rupert before they meet their little brother and the inevitable sleepless nights begin!

I do hope I can convince Dr Clarke to endure one extra Teams Meeting so I can introduce her virtually when he does arrive!

BABIES ARE ALWAYS
A LOT MORE TROUBLE
THAN YOU THOUGHT -
AND MORE WONDERFUL.

- Charles Osgood -

