



Hill West Primary School

Pedagogical Newsletter – October 2019

Reading Eggs/press

Our children love the Reading Eggs / Eggspress on-line learning tool and benefit from using it at home as well as in school. More than 99% of Reading Eggs/press parents would recommend the site to their friends. In Reading Eggs (for KS1 children), there are 12 maps with 120 lessons and each lesson has between 6 to 10 parts. In Reading Eggspress (for KS2 children) there are 220 core comprehension lessons as well as a range of other resources including more than 200 spelling lessons and competitions where pupils can compete in real time against pupils from around the world, a library of levelled texts in excess of 2000 and quizzes and games galore. **We would encourage all parents to support their child to complete at least one lesson each week at home.** Our in-school reading analysis tells us that those children who complete lessons regularly are more fluent and competent readers.



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In this issue:

Reading Eggs/press

Adopting a Musical Approach

Helping Children Thrive

RSE and Health Education

Pupil Outcomes

French

Rights Respecting Schools



Reminders:

School closes for half term on Wednesday 23rd October although Nursery remains open.

Woodpeckers is open offering childcare on Thursday 24th October.

School reopens on Monday 4th November. I hope you all have a lovely half term holiday.

Adopting a Musical Approach

One of our parents recently loaned me a book, 'Adopting a Musical Approach' by Cat McGill. Once I started reading, I found it difficult to put down. The book explores how music can be used to support all children but specifically children who have experienced developmental trauma. As I read the book I stumbled across many of the songs I used to sing with my children when I was a class teacher (Hey, my name is Joe, I'm being eaten by a boa constrictor), they had all been stored in my long term memory but had been forgotten from my conscious mind. They brought so much fun and laughter to my classes but I probably didn't realise the full power of 'song' at the time. This led me to reflect on how much we sing at Hill West and how our singing progresses through school. Anthropological studies tell us that singing together in groups has been part of human behaviour for as long as humans have existed. It is hard for scientists to pinpoint exactly what evolutionary purpose singing had in human development, but we do know that it is universally present in every culture and tradition around the world.

From singing happy birthday, to the tradition in ancient Greece of expressing grief through wailing or keening at a burial, singing and vocalising together plays an important role in uniting groups of people in significant moments. Other research shows us some remarkable things too. Research from the University of Gothenburg discovered that when people sing together in a choir, their heartbeats become synchronised. Singing regulates activity in the so-called vagus nerve, linked to our emotional life and our communication with others, and which, for example, affects our vocal timbre. Songs with long phrases achieve the same effect as breathing exercises in yoga. In other words, through song we can exercise a certain control over mental states, explains Björn Vickhoff, the lead researcher in the study. There are, it seems, neurochemical reasons for this. Singing together encourages the brain to release the bonding hormone oxytocin, while inhibiting the release of stress hormone, cortisol. Songs that are specifically created for children can be a powerful way to teach too often infused with many life-lessons. At Hill West this year, we are going to sing more!



Glossary of Terms



Vagus Nerve – one of the cranial nerves that connects the brain to the body.

Thrive – a tailored intervention to support children's social and emotional development

Psychotherapeutic – to help a child change behaviour or overcome problems through a relational approach

RSE – relationships and sex education

Quartiles – each of four equal groups into which a population can be divided

Helping Children 'Thrive'

Mrs Cook and I are fortunate enough to be attending an accredited training programme with the Educational Psychology Department of Birmingham City Council enabling us, on successful completion, to be licenced Thrive Practitioners. Thrive is a school based intervention which is informed by a psychotherapeutic model as it aims to support children by addressing core relational and developmental features of their presenting behaviour. It uses insight from advances in neuroscience, attachment theory and child development to support social and emotional development. Thrive aims to provide useful information to work in a targeted way with children and young people who have struggled with difficult life events to help them re-engage with life and learning. The training is helping us to better learn about the emotional and social development relevant to a child's age and understand a child's behaviour as communication. What we know is that interrupted emotional development underpins many troubling behaviours and that these behaviours can lead to children finding school difficult.

Thrive is underpinned by six developmental stages

- ✓ Being (being safe, having needs met, being special)
- ✓ Doing (exploring and experimenting, experiencing options, initiating, engaging and doing)
- ✓ Thinking (expressing a view, learning about cause and effect, feeling, thinking and problem-solving)
- ✓ power and identity (developing an identity, distinguishing fantasy from reality, exploring power with responsibility)
- ✓ Skills and structure (motivation for developing skills, developing morals and values, understanding the need for rules)
- ✓ Interdependence (establishing independence, connecting with peers, exploring identity and gender)

As a child grows, the developmental strands come 'online' sequentially, however, once they are in place, they remain available and open to growth throughout life. This means that our developmental tasks can be addressed at any point in our lives; we are truly life-long learners when it comes to brain and emotional and social developments. Sometimes life events come along that return us to early places in our emotional development. If we have had repeated 'good enough' experiences of being attuned to, validated, contained and regulated by a responsive carer, we will recover equilibrium quite quickly when we get knocked back. We will be resilient. We will be able to bounce back. If there's been a gap in some aspect of our emotional development, resilience will not be so available to us. Hitting an interruption in your development can feel like falling down a hole. Another useful way to think about our emotional and social development is to imagine building blocks being piled on top of one another as we grow. If we were to get every need anticipated and met at every point in our development, we might show this as six 'full' blocks stacked comfortably on top of each other. We would be completely resourced emotionally. However, life is just not like that and we all experience gaps in our development, which result in these building blocks being 'different sizes' – some fuller and more developed than others. This leads to an unstable structure causing us to wobble in the face of life's challenging situations. Thrive focuses on 'interrupted development'. It identifies the gaps in learning resulting from these 'interruptions' through observing behaviour and then gives advice to staff to provide the needed relational experiences that will reshape the brain. In this way, over time and through repeated experience, we rebuild the emotional regulation circuitry in the brain.

SAFEGUARDING – RSE and Health Education

“Today’s children and young people are growing up in an increasingly complex world and living their lives seamlessly on and offline. This presents many positive and exciting opportunities, but also challenges and risks. In this environment, children and young people need to know how to be safe and healthy, and how to manage their academic, personal and social lives in a positive way. This is why Relationships Education has been made compulsory in all primary schools in England from September 2020” (Secretary of State).

In primary schools, the Government want the subjects to put in place the key building blocks of healthy, respectful relationships, focusing on family and friendships, in all contexts, including online. This will sit alongside the essential understanding of how to be healthy. Schools are required to comply with relevant requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The role of parents in the development of their children’s understanding about relationships is vital. Parents are the first teachers of their children. They have the most significant influence in enabling their children to grow and mature and to form healthy relationships. 41. All schools should work closely with parents when planning and delivering these subjects. Schools should ensure that parents know what will be taught and when, and clearly communicate the fact that parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE.



Pupil Outcomes



The attainment and achievement of our pupils is the singular most important aspect of our work. Leaders and Governors have an uncompromising focus on the attainment and progress of all groups of learners across school. Throughout each year group and across the curriculum our pupils make substantial and sustained progress. Excellent assessment for learning informs teaching and ensures lessons are challenging and move learning on quickly so that children make good progress. High levels of involvement mean that ‘learning is fun’ and children enjoy coming to school. Children tell us that they know their own strengths and weaknesses and value their child friendly learning journeys.

Personal Development has an excellent foundation in the Early Years Foundation Stage, with 98% of pupils achieving Expected or better against the Personal, Social, Emotional Development strand of the Early Learning Goals (self-confidence and self-awareness, managing feelings and behaviour and making relationships). Last year 98% of our pupils in EYFS made expected progress in reading, writing, number and shape with almost half of all pupils making better than expected progress from their starting points.

The proportions of pupils achieving the MET standard in the core subjects is significantly higher than national at all key phases. Phonics is taught highly effectively with 93% passing the check in Year 1 Summer 2018 and 97% at Summer 2019. Standardised test scores for Reading and Maths across school show a significant proportion of pupils exceeding scores of 110.

Our continued focus on improving and enhancing our teaching sees pupils excel in every key phase. Last Summer 84.7% of all pupils at KS2 achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths. This is 0.3% higher than the Top Quintile schools average and 19.9% more than the national average. Progress measures were fantastic too at 0.9 for reading (putting us in the top 40% of schools), 1.7 in Writing and 1.6 in Maths (putting us in the top 25% of schools) compared to 0 nationally.

We are extremely proud of these outcomes which are a testament to the continued hard work of pupils and the whole staff team.



French in KS2

As you know our Ofsted inspection in March 2019 challenged us to ensure that our French curriculum was to a similarly high standard as our curriculum in other subjects. As such we have been working hard to ensure that our teaching of French leads to the highest possible standards of achievement. Mrs Downes, our languages lead teacher has worked with the ATLP MFL Specialist Lead Teacher to

- Revise our French policy
- Further develop our progressive learning journey’s in French
- Deliver specialist cross curricular French lessons in Year 6
- Plan staff CPD for the 24th October
- Write and embed knowledge organisers for the children to use during their French lessons.

The aims of our French teaching at Hill West are to foster a genuine interest in language; to develop pupil’s speaking and listening in French and help children develop awareness of cultural similarities and differences.

Rights Respecting Schools (Gold)

The Gold Rights Respecting School Award is the highest stage of the Rights Respecting Award granted by Unicef UK to schools that have fully embedded children’s rights throughout the school, in it’s policies, practice and ethos. We are now committed at Hill West to achieving GOLD. Children also play an increasing role in the drive to achieve this level of accreditation. They will need to demonstrate that as a school there is sufficient teaching and learning about rights: for the whole school community through training, curriculum, assemblies, topics and focus days/weeks. There is sufficient teaching and learning through rights: by modelling rights respecting language and attitudes and making strategic decisions that involve them. The pupils will also need to be ambassadors for the rights of others: developing as rights respecting citizens. We want our pupils to see themselves as rights respecting global citizens and advocates for social justice, fairness and children’s rights at home and abroad.