



# Hill West Primary School

## *Pedagogical Newsletter – October 2022*

### *Reading Eggs and Reading Eggspress*

Our children from Year 1 to Year 6 are encouraged to use our Reading Eggs/Eggspress weekly at home to progress their reading and comprehension. More than 99% of Reading Eggs/Eggspress 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 in excess of 2000 levelled texts and quizzes and games galore. We ask you ensure your child is engaging with these lessons at home, with your support as necessary.



### *How Strategies for Looked After Children can help all pupils.*

Darren Martindale, virtual school head for looked after children for the City of Wolverhampton Council spoke to the Times Educational Supplement a couple of years ago advocating that approaches that support looked after children (LAC) are beneficial for all children. He said that “through the lens of working with LAC, we’ve found that an understanding of the effects of early trauma and neglect can shift the way that teachers approach behaviour management. As we know the quality of the earliest relationship – usually between mother and baby – creates connections in the brain that have a profound effect in later years. If a child has not had that deep experience of love and empathy, because the main carer was unable to give it, that child may not be able to feel those things themselves in the usual way. If they did not have their emotions regulated, or soothed, as an infant, they may not be able to control their own feelings and actions in later life. Such children can come to view themselves as undeserving, adults as untrustworthy and the world as a dangerous place. So they kick off whenever they are

challenged, to protect themselves – a survival mechanism against a perceived threat. Understandably, learning takes a distant back seat in a life that, to the primitive brain, is always a struggle for survival. Darren Martindale goes on to say that the usual supportive strategies for struggling children – modified curriculum, changes to groupings, additional adult support are of little use to dysregulated children. Rewards tend to have limited efficacy and sanctions ultimately fail because there is nothing you can do to that child that can compete with the discomfort that they’re probably already feeling. The good news is that brains are very plastic. They are constantly changing and developing, especially during childhood. So, teachers can do a lot to help children become happier, better adjusted and more resilient, and therefore ready to learn. Primarily though, Martindale suggests adjusting behaviour strategies. First he suggests teachers need to recognise and validate the children’s feelings, empathising with these. Then is the setting of appropriate boundaries before problem solving solutions with the child about what they could do the next time they felt like that.

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*We return to school on  
Monday 31<sup>st</sup> October  
after the half term break.*





# Dispelling Educational Myths

## Upholding the Highest Expectations for Success

At Hill West, the vast majority of children behave impeccably. This is because their early pre-natal and post-natal experiences have prepared them well to succeed in school. We know and understand that all behaviours are a form of communication. For those children whose early life experiences, or indeed diagnosis of additional needs, have not equipped them to manage their strong sensations or emotions, it is incumbent upon us to support them 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.

We do this through:

- Our high expectations for ALL
- Targeted social and emotional developmental intervention strategies
- Highly attuned relationships
- Allocation of a key worker where necessary

Professor John Hattie has looked at thousands of studies involving millions of students to analyse a number of myths versus reality in regards to teaching and learning outcomes. I share some of these with you below but if you wanted to read all of his findings please visit <https://npjscilearncommunity.nature.com/users/19748-professor-john-hattie/posts/20734-dispelling-educational-myths>

**Myth:** Teaching at private schools is better than teaching at public schools

**Reality:** Professor Hattie says research suggests this is not true. When it comes down to the quality of teachers, it's very, very hard to find evidence that there is any major difference between public and private schools in terms of the growth and the value that teachers add. In fact it's almost a myth to believe that they're different. You get some of the best teachers in Australia in some of our poorest school areas. What really matters is good leadership within a school, and how teachers are selected and developed, no matter whether it is private or government.

**Myth:** Reducing class size leads to better outcomes for students

**Reality:** Reducing class size can enhance student achievement but generally the effect is only marginal. What really matters is that the teacher is effective and having an impact, no matter what size the class is. Professor Hattie says the preoccupation with class size is an enigma; what's really important is that the teacher learns to be an expert in their own class, no matter what size it is.

**Myth:** We should be happy if our children are 'doing their best'

**Reality:** Not so. Professor Hattie says telling a student to 'do your best' is the worst thing a teacher or parent can do. Some of the most effective learning happens when teachers ask students what they predict their results will be before a test. Upon establishing a student's expectations of their own abilities, a successful teacher will challenge them by saying they can do better. What a student achieved yesterday should never be okay tomorrow.

**Myth:** Teachers should be experts on their subject and do most of the talking

**Reality:** Most teachers talk between 80 and 90% of the time during a lesson. The research has shown that students are more engaged and learn more when teachers talk around 50% of the time, or even less. Evidence shows that children can learn very effectively from their peers; when another student explains concepts to them. The best teachers encourage their students to be active and engaged in the classroom, exploring ideas and not just passively listening.

**Myth:** TV has a negative effect on a child's learning progress

**Reality:** Not directly. Professor Hattie says the problem with a child watching too much television is that it stops them from spending that time learning in more productive ways, such as by reading or developing their communication and relationship skills.

**Myth:** A child's birth date can have a negative impact on learning

**Reality:** Professor Hattie has found that the date which a child's birthday falls in the school year has an effect on the progress initially, as there is a big difference in the ability of a child who is 5 years 1 month and one who is 5 years and 11 months. However, no difference is found after two to three years of schooling. What has a more dramatic effect on a child's academic achievements is whether a child makes a friend in the first month at school.

**Myth:** Ability Grouping is effective

**Reality:** Professor Hattie says many educators believe grouping students by ability allows teachers to customise learning to students' learning pace. However the opposite is true – it has little impact on achievement. The greatest negative effect is that students from minorities are more likely to be in the lower ability groups and such equity issues should raise major concerns.



## SAFEGUARDING

Keeping children safe in education, statutory guidance for schools and colleges underpins our approach to safeguarding children. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play in safeguarding children. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all professionals should make sure their approach is child-centred. This means that they should consider, at all times, what is in the best interests of the child. Staff working with children are advised to maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned. If staff members have any concerns about a child (as opposed to a child being in immediate danger), they will need to decide what action to take. In the first instance, this leads them to have a conversation with one of our designated safeguarding leads to agree a course of action, although any staff member can make a referral to children's social care. The designated safeguarding lead at Hill West is Dr Clarke and all Deputy Head Teachers and Assistant Head Teachers are Deputy Safeguarding Leads.

It is important for children to receive the right help at the right time to address risks and prevent issues escalating. Research and Serious Case Reviews have repeatedly shown the dangers of failing to take effective action. Poor practice includes: failing to listen to the views of the child; failing to re-assess concerns when situations do not improve; sharing information too slowly; and a lack of challenge to those who appear not to be taking action.

## Pupil Outcomes

The attainment and achievement of our pupils is the singular most important aspect of our work. Leaders and ATLP partners have an uncompromising focus on the attainment and progress of all groups of learners across school. Excellent assessment for learning, led by Mr Chris Ellison (Year 6 class teacher), 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 purposeful 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 97% 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).

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 95% of children passing the phonics screening check in Year 1 Summer 2022. Standardised test scores for Reading across school show a significant proportion of pupils excelling and comparative data sees Hill West in the top 25% of schools nationally for their outcomes in reading.

We would like to thank our children for their hard work and diligence, especially after the global pandemic. They have demonstrated much resilience and a far reaching commitment to their studies.



### Hill West Senior Leadership Team

Dr Clarke – Head Teacher

Mrs George – Inclusion Lead and SENDCo

Mrs Thomas – Assistant Head Teacher for Years 1, 2 & 3

Mr Holmes – Assistant Head Teacher for Years 4, 5 & 6

## Lines of Communication

We understand that there will be times during the school term that you may wish to meet with a member of staff to discuss an issue related to your child.

Please feel free to email us directly, as this is the quickest way of alerting us of your concern or the issue you wish to raise.

We would encourage you to,

Via email, arrange to meet the Class Teacher



If not completely satisfied, via email, arrange to meet the Phase Leader



If not completely satisfied, via email, arrange to meet me, Dr Clarke.  
[b.clarke@hillwest.bham.sch.uk](mailto:b.clarke@hillwest.bham.sch.uk)