

# THE HILL WEST HERALD

  
HILL WEST  
*Primary*  
FOUR OAKS



AUTUMN TERM 2020  
ISSUE 30  
[theherald@hillwest.bham.sch.uk](mailto:theherald@hillwest.bham.sch.uk)

*welcome back* ♥



## Message from the Head Teacher

By Dr Beth Clarke

---

I am not sure any of us could have imagined, as we welcomed in the New Year 2020, that just a few months after we would be living through a worldwide pandemic that saw most of us isolated from those whom we loved and cared about most. I certainly never anticipated a time when our school would close to the majority of pupils and staff. During the closure, my priority was, of course, the health and well-being of all of my colleagues as well as the health and well-being of all of our children. Knowing that the vast majority of our children were safe with their families at home was certainly a relief, which meant that I could turn my attention to ensuring school was as safe as it possible could be for those staff and children in attendance. Supporting the mental and physical well-being of all was a key priority as the often-hidden impacts of the pandemic were heightened levels of anxiety and stress for all.

*“You should all be commended for your hard work and your dedication to your profession and to the children throughout this difficult few months. The resilience and commitment that you have demonstrated is fantastic. As a parent I am very grateful for all the support and advice you have provided”*

We know that anxiety can manifest itself in a number of ways in adults and in children alike. Anxiety can lead to physical and behavioural changes. Someone who has heightened anxiety can become controlling, they can become confrontational, and there may be times when they have explosive outbursts. Similarly anxiety may present itself in someone becoming actively avoidant, refusing to conform, showing signs of agitation and having difficulty separating. Alternatively, anxiety can also manifest itself as somatization, over-compliance, withdrawal, ineffective self-regulation, disturbed sleep and disturbed eating. We can, of course, help a person or a child who may be struggling with anxiety at this time by;

- Noticing, describing and wondering aloud. Being warm, empathetic and non-judgemental.
- Offering supportive care, showing a genuine interest.
- Accepting and validating the perspective of the individual, even if this is different from our own understanding of events.
- Avoiding distracting, minimising or problem-solving for the individual.
- Offering opportunities to move, to connect (with nature maybe), for sensory experiences (including dietary, if appropriate to support regulation).
- Offering a lower stimulus environment – a quieter space with fewer people.
- Being more conscious of our own breathing and body language.
- Talking about the neuroscience of how the body and brain responds to fear
- Holding limits and boundaries whilst maintaining connection – gentle on the individual, firm on the behaviour.

It was with this backdrop of heightened levels of anxiety within and across communities that we entered the full lockdown in March 2020. Some of our staff and families were unwell as a result of the virus (suspected and confirmed) and our children were fearful, especially in relation to much loved elderly relatives. Despite these very real challenges, the staff at Hill West were truly incredible and we accomplished much in the eight weeks of full lockdown and the subsequent five weeks of partial lockdown. I would like to thank, publically, the staff for their dedication and sheer determination and you, our wider community, for your unwavering support and encouragement.

During this very difficult time (23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 and the 17<sup>th</sup> July 2020):

- School remained open throughout including during school holidays (Easter and Whitsun);
- School stayed in touch with every family on a weekly basis;
- Between 23<sup>rd</sup> March and 12<sup>th</sup> June, 1816 in-school sessions were attended by children;
- During the same period 38 families received free school meal vouchers every week;
- 206 families took part in on-line zoom lessons which commenced in June 2020;
- Staff completed 330 on-line accredited training programmes;
- 42 videos were made for parents to explain pedagogical methods and procedures used in school e.g. column addition;
- 75% of our children returned to one of our Reception classes in June 2020 compared to 23% nationally;
- 30% of children returned to school in June 2020 compared to 16.9% nationally;
- 96% of our staff said that they felt well supported by the school and the wider trust during this difficult time and recognised that their health and mental and physical well-being always remained a priority.

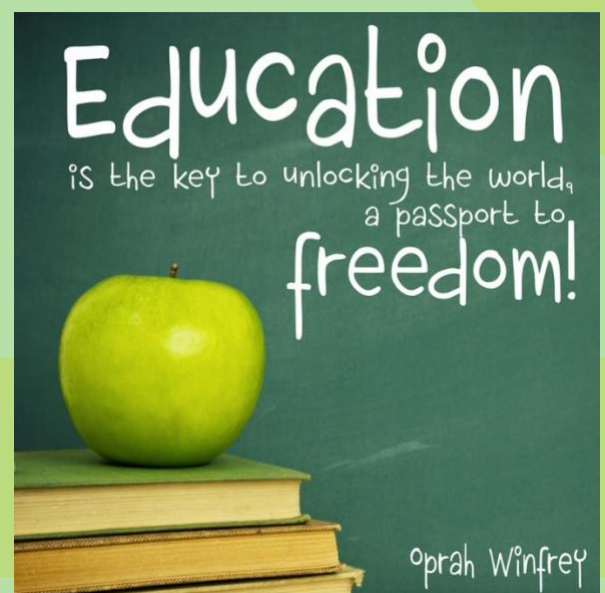
Of course, there is always much we can learn; from hindsight and from others too. I continue to reflect on what we were able to achieve and translate those lessons into our on-going processes and procedures this term. We know that the pandemic has not gone away and my priority remains the safety and wellbeing of staff and of the pupils. Now we have well-developed contingency plans in place for a part-closure or indeed full closure although we hope that this will not become a lived reality.

We know how important education is. We know that a good education ensures our children have the best possible chance at a happy and successful future. What we also know is that disruption to education has far-reaching effects for all, the impact is particularly detrimental to the most disadvantaged children and their families, especially in poorer countries. The educational consequences of Coronavirus will last beyond the period of school closures, disproportionately affecting marginalised girls. Following the 2014-15 Ebola outbreak and school closures in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia, enrolment rates for girls dropped. Increased rates of poverty, household responsibilities, child labour, early marriage and teenage pregnancy prevented many girls from returning to school. Malala Fund estimates that approximately 20 million secondary school-aged girls may never return to the classroom after the pandemic, if dropouts increase at the same rate.

*“As a child, circumstances beyond my control plunged my education – and my dreams for the future – into uncertainty. Right now, a generation of girls is in the same situation. As world leaders gather this week – albeit in a more virtual manner than previous occasions – to discuss our way forward, I hope they will work together and give all of our children the best chance to build a better world” (Malala Yousafzai is a Nobel laureate and co-founder of Malala Fund).*

Our goal should not be a return to the way things were but instead a renewed commitment to the way the world should be, a place where every girl can learn and lead; indeed where every child can learn and lead. To achieve this, we must ensure our economies, societies and education systems work for all children and not against individuals or groups.

I would like to encourage you to keep doing all that you can to keep yourselves, your children and our community safe and to champion the drive for equality. Together by following the Department of Health and Social Care public messaging campaign @DHSCgovuk we can get through this.



## Arthur Terry Learning Partnership News; ATLP schools leader, Richard Gill, awarded CBE

By Dr Beth Clarke

Lots of you may have already seen via our Twitter feed that Richard Gill, CEO of the respected Arthur Terry Learning Partnership (ATLP) and chair of the Teaching Schools Council (TSC) has been awarded a CBE (Commander of the British Empire) in the Queen's Birthday Honours list for his outstanding services to education.



The National Leader of Education (NLE) who runs our multi-academy trust which consists of 14 schools and one teaching school in Sutton Coldfield, Staffordshire, and North Warwickshire, was notified of his royal seal of approval earlier this year. The list has been extended to include medical professionals, volunteers and fundraisers honoured for their response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Richard said: *"I'm humbled to receive this award. It is an honour and a privilege to be recognised in this way and I am grateful to so many. In these difficult times, my colleagues in schools have continued to show their commitment and dedication to our children and young people. This honour is as much for them as it is for me. It recognises the brilliant work that goes on across the sector every day. It is for those who have walked alongside me, directly and indirectly, throughout my 25 plus years in education. To every one of them, a sincere thank you."*

The CBE is awarded to people who have had a role that has made an impact at a national level or have played a leading role in their region, which means that these awards are also given to those who have made a distinguished and innovative contribution.

Richard's eminent career spans more than a quarter of a century. Born in Bangor, North Wales, 47 years ago, Richard moved to Lichfield at the age of three. After studying Tuba at Huddersfield University, Richard has enjoyed a variety of teaching and leadership roles at Staffordshire Music Service, Sir Blessed William Howard School, Stafford, The Friary School, Lichfield, and Chase Terrace Technology College.



In 2010, Richard was appointed as joint headteacher at the Arthur Terry School, Sutton Coldfield. In 2011 Richard led on the successful application to become one of the first 100 teaching schools in the country followed by their designation as a provider for initial teacher training a year later. Having played a key role in school to school support across the West Midlands, Richard was designated in 2014 as a National Leader of Education (NLE) by the secretary of state for education. A year later, he was appointed as CEO of the Arthur Terry Learning Partnership and has played a major role in the continued growth and success of the multi-academy trust.

Richard's achievements were also recognised when he was elected as chair of the Teaching Schools Council, working closely with ministers and senior civil servants on the national education agenda. Richard is passionate about this part of his work and is very proud that through close collaboration with fellow professionals nationally, there is greater alliance and support to the schools system.

Richard said: *"I'd like to say a particular thank you to former colleagues who inspired me, believed in me, recognised something that perhaps I didn't see and encouraged me to keep on doing what I love most – creating opportunities to give children the very best possible life chances. Thank you to my friends and colleagues at the wonderful Arthur Terry Learning Partnership and at the Teaching Schools Council. I am fortunate to be surrounded by such brilliance; likeminded professionals, whose wise counsel and hard work has proven invaluable."*

We at Hill West are absolutely delighted for Richard and are incredibly proud to be part of the ATLP family.

## Home and Blended Learning

By Mrs Hannah Cook

When Boris Johnson announced on 18<sup>th</sup> March that schools would close "for most pupils until further notice", schools had a number of challenges to overcome. Systems and rotas were quickly put in place to ensure Key Worker and vulnerable children could continue to attend school safely and a profession in which 'working from home' seemed completely inconceivable had to adapt in almost every way possible. During school closures staff worked tirelessly, in many cases looking after young children of their own and balancing their own family lives with work. They enjoyed contacting the pupils in their class, produced home learning packs to support children, were in school regularly teaching our Key Worker and vulnerable pupils and, once school had reopened more widely to Reception and Year 1, held regular Zoom sessions to teach and keep in touch with pupils.

The phrases 'remote learning' or 'home and blended learning', which were previously not ones we would usually associate with primary schools, have now become an integral part of school's strategy for the academic year and we have been working hard to ensure we have clear plans in place to support your child's learning should you need to self-isolate, or in the event of a bubble isolating.

We are keen to ensure that our remote education is simple yet accessible for all. A blended learning approach is where our pupils learn via electronic and online media as well as traditional face-to-face teaching whether in school or working at home. Home learning will build on and complement what is done at school.

Our blended learning approach has considered how to incorporate:

- **Synchronous learning** – where pupils and teachers interact in a specific virtual space, through a specific online medium at a specific time (zoom)
- **Asynchronous learning** – where learning happens on the individual's schedule. Teachers provide the materials and assignments with pupils having the ability to access and satisfy these requirements within a flexible time frame. Materials might include directed texts, self-guided interactive learning resources, or pre-recorded lessons and podcasts.

### Synchronous learning

Our teachers will make use of remote sessions to check knowledge – using quizzes and retrieval tasks and give opportunities to embed information into the long-term memory. They will ensure that they provide clear explanations, scaffolding and feedback.

We know, supported by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) that peer interactions can provide motivation and improve learning outcomes. Through Zoom our teachers will employ a range of strategies to support this such as sharing models of good work and opportunities for live discussions and peer review. We also prioritise pupil's emotional and mental health through sharing assemblies, lessons to explore feelings, self-esteem and developing levels of motivation. We also set non-academic challenges for pupils e.g. treasure hunts, maths walks, building dens etc. We promote physical activity and regular sleep patterns too and encourage pupils to engage in a daily act of kindness.



I will teach you in a room.  
I will teach you now on Zoom.  
I will teach you in your house.  
I will teach you with a mouse.  
I will teach you here and there.  
I will teach you because I care.  
So just do your very best.  
And do not worry about the rest.

## Asynchronous Learning

Time outside the classroom can also be used effectively for independent practice and consolidation, building on the guided practice in the classroom. We also know that supporting pupils to work independently can also improve learning outcomes. Prompting pupils to reflect on their work or to consider the strategies they can use if they get stuck have been highlighted by the EEF as valuable. Our learning packs will support asynchronous learning although when possible we would encourage pupils at our school, to work alongside an adult at home.

**Reading** remains a key focus in our home and blended learning approach. This will support access to the rest of the curriculum. We will encourage pupils to read aloud in a range of situations, read daily for pleasure, assess daily phonic/spelling/grammar lessons and be read to by an adult (parent / teacher / TA).

Here is a reminder of our Home and Blended Learning approach to a range of scenarios.

### Guidance for Teachers/Parents/Children in response to government intervention to contain COVID-19

The child is displaying COVID 19 symptoms (or someone in their household is displaying symptoms).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The child must self-isolate. All members of their household must also self-isolate.</li> <li>✓ The child must book a test as soon as possible and remain absent from school until a negative test result has been received.</li> <li>✓ <b>The child should, if well enough to do so, continue their learning from home by accessing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Oak National Academy</li> <li>- BBC Bitesize</li> <li>- Letters and Sounds for home and school</li> <li>- Daily Reading Eggs/Eggspress; read daily for pleasure; Daily Times Tables Rockstars</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
The child (is shielding) or has been in contact with a confirmed case and will need to self-isolate for 14 days.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ School would be informed that the child is starting a 14-day isolation period</li> <li>✓ The parent would only book at test for the child if the child developed Coronavirus symptoms</li> <li>✓ <b>The child should continue their learning from home by accessing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The home learning pack issued by school (weekly)</li> <li>- Oak National Academy</li> <li>- BBC Bitesize</li> <li>- Letters and Sounds for home and school</li> <li>- Daily Reading Eggs/Eggspress, read daily for pleasure; Daily Times Tables Rockstars</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ The child will receive a weekly wellbeing phone call from school</li> </ul>	If your child doesn't have access to the right technology at home, please let school know. We don't want any child to miss out or to feel worried and anxious about work they are asked to complete.
The class bubble / year group bubble is self-isolating.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The parent would only book at test for the child if the child developed Coronavirus symptoms</li> <li>✓ <b>The child should continue their learning from home by accessing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Zoom lessons daily, provided by the class teacher (unless the class teacher is unwell)</li> <li>- The home learning pack issued by school (weekly)</li> <li>- Oak National Academy</li> <li>- BBC Bitesize</li> <li>- Letters and Sounds for home and school</li> <li>- Daily Reading Eggs/Eggspress, read daily for pleasure; Daily Times Tables Rockstars</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ Some children will receive wellbeing phone calls from school.</li> </ul>	
The school is closed to most pupils.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ School will limit attendance to vulnerable pupils and the children of critical workers.</li> <li>✓ School will continue to provide daily zoom lessons but the frequency of these may be reduced due to the need for some teaching staff to be in school</li> <li>✓ <b>The child should continue their learning from home by accessing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Zoom lessons daily, provided by the class teacher (unless the class teacher is unwell)</li> <li>- The home learning pack issued by school (weekly)</li> <li>- Oak National Academy</li> <li>- BBC Bitesize</li> <li>- Letters and Sounds for home and school</li> <li>- Daily Reading Eggs/Eggspress, read daily for pleasure; Daily Times Tables Rockstars</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ Some children will receive wellbeing phone calls from school.</li> </ul>	

All home learning packs produced by our teachers to support pupils during school closure and / or pupil self-isolation can be found on our website (<http://www.hillwest.bham.sch.uk>) under the Menu tab 'Home Learning'.

## Times Table Rockstars!

By Mr Steve George



With the issue of a parents' guide, Times Tables Rock Stars is up and running at Hill West Primary – little and often is the key – a minimum of five minutes per day is the requirement, but many children are choosing to do a whole lot more; not just visiting the 'Studio' and 'Garage' but also the multiplayer sections, challenging themselves by battling their friends and even issuing throwing down the gauntlet to the teachers!

I myself have been challenged by a number of children – mostly from my old class who are now in Year Five; I swore that no-one would beat me, but I am glad (not) to say that some of the children have bettered me! Congratulations to Jack P and Ben C, who are both faster than me – for now – I will have my revenge!

Below is the current leaderboard – mostly populated by Upper Key Stage Two children – it would be great to see a Year Two contender up there! A special mention goes out to Max in Moles and the brother and sister team – the Millingtons. Mr Ellison seems to have too much time on his hands too(!)

Name	Rockname	Current Studio Speed	Rock Status	Class
Ben C	Chuck Kramer	0.79	Rock Hero	Badgers
Max J	Red Lord	0.83	Rock Hero	Moles
Jayan M	Vanessa Kinney	1.01	Rock Legend	Badgers
Toby J	Sonny Phoenix	1.19	Rock Legend	Badgers
Mr Ellison	Honey Van Zant	1.29	Rock Legend	Foxes
Madhuri M	Taylor French	1.49	Rock Legend	Foxes
Amber P	Junior Zeppelin	1.60	Rock Legend	Foxes
Joseph W	J Cave	1.61	Rock Legend	Hares
Cailen D	K C Wilddog	1.68	Rock Legend	Otters
Jack P	S J Collins	1.75	Rock Legend	Badgers

Research shows that daily practice is the best strategy for children to learn these important facts. Short bursts of daily practice are much more effective than spending hours once a week; that is why we expect children to access Times Table Rockstars for at least 25 minutes over the course of a week, preferably divided into 5 minutes per day.

Your child's teacher will set homework on a Wednesday which will include specific times tables tailored to your child's needs which should be accessed via the 'Studio' tab of TT Rockstars. Teachers are able to monitor time spent on the site and your child's progress to ensure they are accessing regularly; should you have any issues with using TT Rockstars, please speak with your child's teacher. Below is an overview of the different play areas available on TT Rockstars:

### Garage

The Garage is best for getting quicker at a few facts; questions will only come from the times-table that the teacher has set for the week. As your child starts to answer questions, TT Rockstars works out which questions they take longer at and gives them more of that type to practise. There are 10 points per question awarded.

### Studio

The questions in Studio can be anything from 1x1 up to 12x12 and answering these will improve your rock status. TT Rockstars works out your mean time per second over the last 10 games. 1 coin per question is awarded.

### Rock Arena

Compete against other members of your band (friends in class). The others need to sign into the same game. A new Arena game starts every 15 seconds – similarly to Garage, the questions come from those Times-tables set by the teacher. 1 coin per question is awarded.

### Festival

Compete against TT Rock Stars from around the world. Like Studio, this covers all of the times-tables. 1 coin per question is awarded.

# European Day of Languages

By Mrs Alison Downes

Even the most stringent Covid-19 restrictions couldn't stop us here at Hill West heading off to Paris for the day on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> September for our annual celebration of European Languages!

In Key Stage 1, pupils were introduced to the wonders and attractions of France and Paris. They learned about some key landmarks and the products for which France is famous. Following the adventures of Peppa Pig in Paris and KeeKee's Big Adventure, they were then able to spot some of these sights which appeared in the stories.

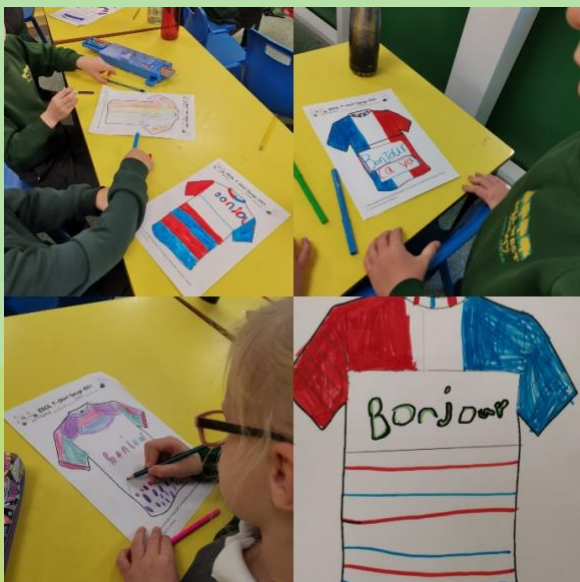
After learning about the Eiffel Tower, KS1 got creative and decorated their own versions beautifully. Some classes even made their own flags to wave. To round up their French adventure, KS1 tried their hand (or should I say voices) at singing a little French song which introduced them to simple French greetings. They will all be more than ready for their French lessons in Year 3 at this rate!



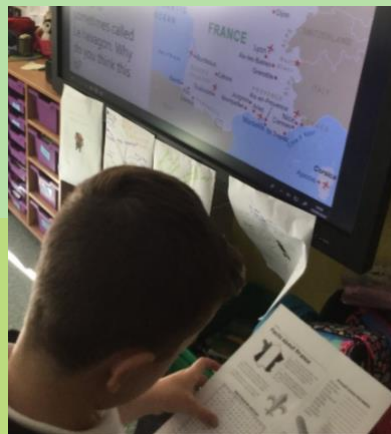
Over in KS2 they also flew, courtesy of PowerPoint Air, around France admiring the various landscapes from vineyards to ski slopes. The children learned about why France is sometimes referred to as 'Le Hexagon' and looked at some of France's overseas territories around the world. Pupils were also surprised to learn that the Eiffel Tower was not always the beloved structure it is today and that Parisians initially protested against its construction.



After their whirlwind cultural trip around France and Paris, pupils were reintroduced to the French phonics they had enjoyed learning last year. Much fun and games were had remembering the actions and sounds. Meeting and greeting conversations were also revisited with pupils displaying impressive recall of their French learning last year. Year 3 had the opportunity to sample their first French lesson and learn some words of salutation.



All pupils have been invited this year to design T-Shirts for the official Council of Europe's competition and we have some wonderful entries already. I can't wait to see if any of them make the final!





## Our First Few Weeks in School - Reception

By The Reception Team



What a wonderful start at big school the Robins and Wrens have made! All Reception staff were so excited to be back in school and welcome the new children. We started with our settling in sessions where the children enjoyed exploring the classroom areas, Pod and our brand new outdoor space.

The children loved being reunited with old friends and making new friends. Laughter and happiness have filled the classrooms and it was lovely seeing the children playing with each other again.



Our baseline assessments took place so that we could get to know every child individually and help to support them with their individual next steps for learning. Wow, we have some clever little stars this year and can't wait to see them grow in confidence and knowledge throughout the year. They'll be learning all about Dinosaurs, People who help us, Pirates, The world of animals and Space.

Despite these very unusual times, the children entered school with beaming smiles and a thirst for learning- demonstrating real resilience. We have already got to know the children and their individual characters, and we know there's more to come. We know that we are going to have lots of fun together this year and we are looking forward to working with parents to develop each child and support them to reach their full potential.



# Our First Few Weeks Back in School – Year 1

By The Year One Team

On 2<sup>nd</sup> September, we welcomed back our new Swifts and Swallows into Year 1, after almost 7 months off for some of them during these unprecedented times. Nevertheless, what a fantastic first few weeks it has been! There was a mixture of emotions throughout the first week but you should all be immensely proud of the attitude, commitment, resilience and perseverance your children have shown coming back into school. Everyone has got back into the swing of things; learning a new routine, getting to know new members of staff and being at school seeing their friends again. As the weeks have rolled on, fewer children have been coming in upset and most of the children have been coming in with smiles on their faces as they enter the classroom, and there have even been a few comments at home time to say they want to stay at school forever (WOW!) So, on that note, let's share with you a few things that we have been up to...



Swifts and Swallows have been exploring Animal books; *Blue Chameleon*, *Poo in the Zoo*, *Supermarket Zoo* and *How to Grow a Dinosaur* to name a few. Using these texts, children have been sequencing stories, writing simple sentences and instructions, and writing descriptions about different animals (including their favourite). Even in these first few weeks, we have witnessed lots of progress in children's reading and writing, including their letter formation. In Maths, we have been exploring numbers to 20 looking at the representation of numbers in numeric, words and visual value. This has led us to look into doubling and halving, and problem solving too.

In PDW, Year 1 have been looking at Friendship. We discussed the definition of a good friend and the different ways that we can be a good friend in and out of school. The children identified ways such as sharing, having kind hands and feet, asking if their friend is ok if they have hurt themselves as well as giving compliments. The children also created some amazing friendship posters for their homework, which are on display in the Year 1 middle area.



All the children in Year 1 are displaying their personalities more and more each day, and every day their self-esteem and self-confidence is growing. It has been a pleasure to get to know them all and we are looking forward to watching them flourish as the year goes on.

## Our First Few Weeks Back in School – Year 2

By The Year Two Team

Wow year 2, what an amazing few weeks we have had! From making Jam sandwiches to playing football rounders on the field, you have embraced this new academic year with gusto. We are all so proud of you. The Maths and English work you have already produced is 'Out of this world'; we cannot wait to see what you achieve during the rest of the year. Seeing your bright faces every morning is special. Here's what some of Owls and Kingfishers have said about Year 2 so far...

*"I loved making jam sandwiches, it was so much fun!"*

*"We have learnt lots and lots of new things. I enjoyed our walk in Science"*

*"We are working hard in phonics every single day"*

*"We are learning lots of hard things and my brain is growing bigger and bigger!"*

*"I love seeing all my friends and playing with them"*

*"I love playing on the new trim trail with my friends. I have learnt how to do the monkey bars"*

*"I love all of it!"*

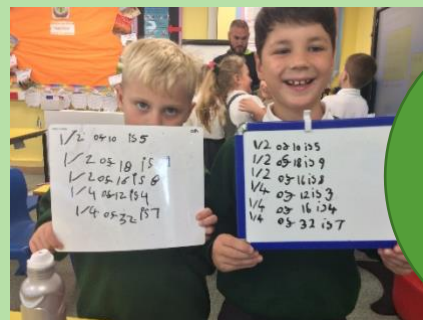
*"I love learning hard things with my friends"*



# Our First Few Weeks Back in School – Year 3

By The Year Three Team

We could not wait to get our classrooms buzzing with little people again and have ensured we have spent each and every day working as hard as we possibly can. Old friends were reunited, and we very quickly fell into new routines. We have embraced our new recovery curriculum and our books have started to fill up with super work. Our pupils have been as resilient as ever, and we are looking forward to all of the smiles and the adventures ahead!



“It has been so good to catch up with my friends” - Oliver M



“It has been good, I got to meet my new teacher” - Lexi

It has been amazing to see all my friends again” - Rayyah

# Our First Few Weeks Back in School – Year 4

By The Year Four Team

It was with great excitement and a little bit of understandable trepidation that the pupils and staff of Moles and Squirrels piled into our new classrooms in September. Saying hello to friends that we hadn't seen for almost 6 months was wonderful and a little strange! The children soon settled into their new routine and began an exciting first few weeks of learning – here is just a snapshot of what they have achieved so far!



**Maths** - In Maths, the children have worked on their place value skills and practised using these to add and subtract mentally. They impressed us by adding and subtracting larger numbers on a number line and applying their mathematical knowledge to solving place value riddles and code breaker tasks! The children have also worked tirelessly on their times tables in a fun way: learning how to chant them! Why not ask your child to 'roll their fours' and see what they can do?!

**English** - The children started of their year with a bit of adventure by studying the novel 'How to Train Your Dragon' by Cressida Cowell. They created their own wild and wonderful dragons, described them beautifully and even designed their own mysterious dragon eggs to accompany their creation! Using their artistic flair, the children drew Hiccup's journey into the terrifying dragons' nursery and used their artwork to write their own descriptive narrative.



**Science** - Wow – staff were so impressed with the children's scientific knowledge! This meant we were able to do lots of practical work and investigations through the topic of



Light and Forces. We have discovered the best material to wear on a dark night, tested out race cars for speed and created our own compasses using magnets and water! We are certain we have some of the next generation of scientists in our midst!



**PE** - During the first few weeks, we have had a fantastic time making use of our spacious school grounds and developing our athletic skills. From running and jumping to the shotput and discus, we have stretched our muscles and filled our lungs with fresh air! The children also really enjoyed playing golf and using their mathematical skills to score a tournament.



**Personal Development and Well-being** - Our daily PDW sessions have been extremely important to the children as they adjust back to the rules and routines of school and also to sharing, collaborating and getting on with 30 other children – no easy task! Activities like representing our emotions through art and craft, creating a class friendship chain and practising the method of peaceful problem solving are helping us on our way to creating a strong team of confident and kind children.

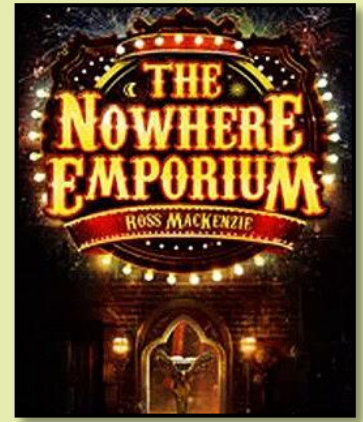
We hope you have enjoyed finding out about our first few weeks in Year 4 as much as we enjoyed experiencing it! We can't wait to see what happens next!



## Our First Few Weeks Back in School – Year 5

By The Year Five Team

We have had a unique start back to life in school, the transition from remote learning to classroom learning has been a challenge for all pupils as they reintegrate into the routine of school life. However, everyone seems to be settling back into life at Hill West and the children have impressed us with their commitment to learning. We have been exploring descriptive writing and narrative in our English work thus far in Year 5; we loved reading about the 'Nowhere Emporium' and decided to carry on writing from where the story left off. We shared some magical and mystical ideas in our writing and had to use every bit of imagination we could muster. We then turned our attention to some non-fiction writing, which took the form of fact files about animals and their habitats. Through extensive research on iPads about our favourite animals, we were able to create terrific top-trumps cards about these animals to help us with our final piece of work. Once we had completed our research and explored some of the key features and techniques we could use, we were ready to create our incredible fact-files.



In science so far we have explored different sounds and how sound is made through vibrations. We learned that sound travels in waves, and we decided to test this out by creating hand-made telephones, which were a lot of fun, we could send secret messages straight to our friends. In addition to this, we made noise-cancelling headphones to see which material was the best at blocking out sound. We checked our experiment was a fair test and found that one of the best materials for noise-cancelling was cotton-wool, this was a big shock because we predicted that cardboard might be the best. After that in science we looked at animals and their habitats, this linked in with the work we were

completing in English and we really enjoyed classifying animals in webs and thinking about what classification each animal would be. We had a great time wandering out into the woods to identify different types of trees, which are indigenous to the UK; we compared the shapes of the leaves on the trees to determine what kind it was.

Across our Maths so far this year, we have been consolidating our knowledge of place value and refreshing our understanding of the four operations. We thought about factors of number and used special 'Factor Bugs' to help us identify all of the factors for each number.



In PDW we initially thought about 'Making Mistakes', this led to detailed discussions about why we make mistakes and how we can learn from them. The classes worked together to identify strategies they could use if they made a mistake which upset them. We then created posters using all of our ideas, which would help anyone who had made a mistake. Off the back of our research in Science, we have explored the issues of deforestation; we were tasked with looking at it from different perspectives to determine our own opinions. In our English, we will be constructing a persuasive letter to our Prime Minister to encourage him to act upon what we have researched and implement change.

## Our First Few Weeks Back in School – Year 6

By The Year Six Team



It's great to be back in the classroom after such a long break. In Year 6, we've hit the ground running and are throwing ourselves into our learning and catching up with our friends.

To start our work in English this year, we reviewed work on the Beowulf text from Year 5. The children looked at how an author uses figurative language and grammatical devices to guide the reader's imagination. We then moved on to *The Boy at the Back of the Class*, by Onjali Rauf, which addresses the current issues around the refugee crisis around the world. The children

have researched, read about, and engaged with various sources to help them build a cohesive letter. By writing to the Home Secretary and using a range of persuasive devices and formal language, the children are hoping to change the way refugees are treated in the U.K. Writing the letter has involved using all the skills required in Year 6, and currently they are busy proof reading and editing their work after it being typed up in a letter format.

Our work in Maths has involved consolidating their learning from the previous years and introducing some of the skills required in Year 6 – such as long division. The children have worked hard on practising their understanding of arithmetic and basic calculations. They have been exposed to a range of reasoning and problem-solving tasks throughout the term, in which they have discussed their methodologies and understanding of more complex problems.

So far this term, in PDW, we have covered several topics linking to the children's wellbeing and resilience. We've explored why it's important to have a positive mindset, that it's okay to find things difficult and it's okay to make mistakes sometimes. The children have also learnt about how artists have used colour, shape and patterns to influence emotions.

In Year 6, we have been reading some great books and have got some exciting reads to dig into next term, too.

