



Hill West Primary School



Pedagogical Newsletter – May 2019

KS1 SATs

Our pupils in Year 2 are currently undertaking their KS1 SATs. During the month of May all pupils will complete two maths papers. The first maths paper is an arithmetic test which will take around 15 minutes and consists of 25 marks. The second paper involves reasoning, problem solving and mathematical fluency. This paper has 35 marks and lasts for approximately 35 minutes. All children will also sit two Reading papers. The first one consists of a variety of texts totaling 400 to 700 words with questions dotted throughout. The second paper is a reading booklet containing different passages. These total between 800 and 1100 words. Each paper for the KS1 Reading SATs is worth 50% of the available marks and should take up to 30 minutes. As the papers at KS1 are marked internally by teachers in accordance with the mark scheme provided by the Standard and Testing Agency, it is up to schools to decide when to share results. At Hill West these results are used to inform outcomes in the end of year reports.



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Reminders:

School and Nursery is closed on Thursday 23rd May for all pupils due to European Elections.

School closes for half term on Friday 24th May and reopens on Monday 3rd June. I hope you all have a lovely half term holiday.

Building Vocabulary

The size of a pupil's vocabulary in their early years of schooling (the number and variety of words that the young person knows) is a significant predictor of academic attainment in later schooling and of success in life. Most children are experienced speakers of the language when they begin school but reading the language requires more complex, abstract vocabulary than that used in everyday conversations. Young people who develop reading skills early in their lives by reading frequently add to their vocabularies exponentially over time. While good readers gain new skills very rapidly, and quickly move from learning to read to reading to learn, poor readers become increasingly frustrated with the act of reading, and try to avoid reading where possible. Department for Education research suggests that, by the age of seven, the gap in the vocabulary known by children in the top and bottom quartiles is something like 4000 words, with children in the top quartile knowing around 7,000 words. For this

reason, when seeking to build cultural capital in order to close the gap in EYFS and Key Stages 1 and 2, we need to understand the importance of vocabulary and support its development so that children who do not develop this foundational knowledge before they start school are helped to catch up. What, then, can we do to help the word poor become richer and, with it, to diminish the difference between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and their non-disadvantaged peers? We definitely need to plan group work activities in the primary classroom which provide an opportunity for the word poor to collaborate with the word rich, to hear language being used by pupils of their own age and in ways that they might not otherwise encounter. We need to ensure all children have equal access to knowledge-rich diets, providing cultural experiences in addition to the school curriculum. We need to think about additional and appropriate intervention classes in which we teach and model higher-order reading skills. But essentially we must promote the love of reading for the sake of reading as a magnificent leisure activity.



Glossary of Terms



SATs – a test taken by pupils as part of the national curriculum provision

SEND – special educational needs and disability

EYFS – Early Years Foundation Stage (birth to 5)

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

TES – Times Educational Supplement

Phonics – a method of teaching people to read by correlating sounds with symbols in an alphabetic writing system

Reframed Approach to Special Educational Needs

While the 2014 SEND code of practice was meant to bring clarity and structure to support students, Louise Connolly writing in TES January 2019, believes it has simply created new problems and suggests that perhaps lessons can be learned from Scotland. Louise writes:

Alice's SEND seemed to have disappeared. At her previous school, situated in a tiny village, she had been on the special education needs and disability register for two years, under the category of 'cognition and learning'. But at her new school – a large academy based in one of the top 10% of deprived neighbourhoods in the country, her mother was told she would not be placed on the register. Based on assessments, she was no longer deemed to have SEND. Where had Alice's SEND gone? Had it miraculously disappeared? Unfortunately not. She had simply been classified differently. In one school she met the criteria for SEND and in the other she did not. Although this sounds bizarre it is not an isolated case. In September 2014, the policy and provision for special educational needs was significantly reformed with the introduction of the SEND code of practice. According to the code, a pupil has SEND "where their learning difficulty or disability calls for special educational provision, namely provision different from, or additional to, that normally available to pupils of the same age" (page 94). This definition is very wide and ambiguous and, naturally, schools have interpreted it in different ways. This can be heavily influenced by the context of the school. Some schools interpret SEND as applying only to children with a medical diagnosis. Others interpret it as applying to children who have external professional support. Some base it on how far behind their peers children are working. Others base it on how much one-to-one support a child needs to make progress. To illustrate: a small, village school in an affluent area had a child on their SEND register because they were undergoing speech and language therapy. However, in another school in a different part of the country approximately 35% of children would be classified as SEND if all those who received speech and language therapy were included on the register. Another example: a school might have a child who has been diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), who presents with very challenging behaviour at home but in school is very settled (not requiring any extra provision). This child may therefore not be placed on the SEND register. Key to the matter is a conflict between the notion of a medical label, behaviour and the provision required to meet needs.

Another major change in the 2014 code of practice was to the SEND registers two levels. There used to be 'school action' (the lower stage, supported within school) and 'school action plus' (the higher stage, which required external professional involvement). These two levels were turned into one, named 'school support'. As a result of this merger schools increased their overall thresholds for what constituted a child having SEND. This in turn, resulted in reducing numbers of children on SEND registers in England (17.9% in 2014 to 14.6% in January 2018) and a growing number of children on school vulnerable registers.

So what can we do? In the Scottish system, they do not use the terminology 'special educational needs' and instead refer to children who require 'additional support for learning', which could be said to be more representative and less negative terminology. These pupils are then grouped according to the potential barriers in their approach to learning, support from personnel and provision of resources. The focus is based on provision meeting the child's needs, rather than what is wrong, and this is not just limited to children with SEND but can be extended to children entitled to the pupil premium or those who do not fit neatly into a criterion box.

At Hill West we already consider the 'level of need' for each of our pupils. Now perhaps we need to chart for each of our children the 'additional support of learning' required.

SAFEGUARDING – Mental Health

YoungMinds, a leading organisation committed to the mental health of children and adolescents, defines mental health in young people as “the strength and capacity of our minds to grow and develop, to be able to overcome difficulties and challenges, and to make the most of our abilities and opportunities”. With this in mind, the school community has a responsibility to look after the full spectrum of the wellbeing of pupils – the good and the bad. Again, factoring in subtle differences for individuals in the context of primary school children, mental health also means having: the capacity to enter and sustain satisfying personal relationships, a clear sense of identity and self-worth, the ability to play and learn so that attainments are appropriate for their age and intellect, and an acceptance that it is okay to make mistakes. One in eight students aged five to nineteen are now thought to have a mental health disorder (according to recent NHS statistics) – that’s approximately three or four children in every class. YoungMinds recommends being aware of the main risk factors associated with mental health. It is also worth noting that it may not be possible to remove the risks themselves, but often an awareness of the presence of risks will change the way a child’s need are understood and responded to. Overcoming these challenges and fostering an environment for positive mental health can occur at the individual and more holistic level. Our in-depth focus on our personal development and wellbeing curriculum has been designed to give children an understanding of how they can improve their own wellbeing, feelings of control, confidence and purpose and resilience. We need to help our children take good care of their minds and their bodies as they grow.



Transitions



Change can be a daunting prospect, so how do we ease the process of transition throughout a child’s primary schooling?

There are so many different types of transition – from those daily small movements from one place to another, to the huge moves between years, schools and stages of development. They can all create stress and anxiety for some children and as adults we need to be able to support our children as much as we can. Strong, respectful relationships between parents and practitioners lay the foundation for positive transition. For the practitioner, a genuine dialogue with parents provides information, affording opportunities to extend ideas and educational experiences within the setting. As importantly, parents draw comfort from relationships with those caring for their child, while easy, visible conversations between significant adults are deeply reassuring to children. Separation anxiety affects both parents and children, and warm exchanges between practitioners and family members are hugely significant in easing this process.

We should view transition as a process not an event; in schools we should plan ahead and value the concerns of children and their families. It is essential that we make transition and the wellbeing of children a priority. If the child is particularly anxious they may need a token from home – a transitional object such as a favourite cuddly toy or a photo. Some children may benefit from the identification of a key person not only to meet and greet them but also support their learning throughout the day. This ideally should be someone they have met or already have a relationship with. The most important thing to remember in any transition is that the child or young person is frightened of the unknown. Children need to be able to trust and feel safe, feel good about themselves and to regulate their emotions. Whatever we can do to help those three aspects will support the challenges of change.

In order to support successful transition we have introduced two highly successful strategies in the last year to support those children who find transitions more difficult.

- Transition Picnics (to be held in July)
- Transition child centred reviews (to be held in September).



Year 1 Phonics Check

In June every year, children in Year 1 undertake the statutory phonic screening check. The check takes place in a two week window and this year will start from Monday 10th June 2019. The check is very similar to the tasks the children already complete during phonics lessons. The purpose of the check is to provide evidence of the children’s decoding and blending skills. The check consists of 40 words and non-words that children are asked to read one-on-one with their class teacher. The 40 words and non-words are divided into two sections – one with simple word structures of 3 or 4 letters, and one with more complex word structures of 5 or 6 letters. Each of the non-words is presented with a picture of a monster / alien, as if the word was their name. Children are scored against a national standard, and the main result will be whether or not they fall below or within this standard. Since 2013, the ‘pass threshold’ has been 32, which means children have had to read at least 32 words out of the 40 correctly. If you have a child in Year 1 you will find out how your child did on their end of year report to parents.

KS2 SATs

Our Year 6 pupils will sit their KS2 SATs next week, beginning Monday 13th May. Children will sit tests in Reading, Maths and Spelling, punctuation and grammar. These tests are both set and marked externally, and the results are used to measure the school’s performance. The children’s marks will be used in conjunction with teacher assessment to give a broader picture of their attainment which is then reported to parents. The reading test is a single paper with questions based on three passages of text. Children have one hour to complete this test. The grammar, punctuation and spelling test consists of two parts: a grammar and punctuation paper requiring short answers, lasting 45 minutes and an aural spelling test of 20 words, lasting around 15 minutes. Children sit three papers in maths. Paper 1 is the arithmetic paper lasting 30 minutes. Papers 2 and 3 are reasoning papers each lasting 40 minutes. Paper one consists of fixed response questions, where children have to give the correct answer to calculations. Papers 2 and 3 involve different question types, including: multiple choice, true or false, constrained questions and questions where children have to explain their approach for solving a problem. At the end of the academic year parents are told whether their children met the expected standard of the test.

