

THE HILL WEST HERALD


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Message from the Head Teacher

By Dr Beth Clarke

Some of you may have seen that I recently tweeted a version of 'the emotional cup' graphic which can also be seen here. The principles that underpin this metaphor are very close to my heart as an adoptive parent but I think it is something that every parent can identify with. Obviously the cup in this graphic represents a child and when positive emotions are experienced a child's cup is full and they thrive. However for some children, the cup seems to have tiny cracks or small holes and when handled more roughly, or put under pressure, it tends to leak. This depletes the reserves therein much more quickly and the cup is in constant need of a re-fill.

We all have a biological and emotional need for human connection. When that need is not met, we survive but we do not thrive. We know that social connection can lower anxiety and depression, help us regulate our emotions, lead to higher self-esteem and empathy, and actually improve our immune system.

One of the most important insights we have gained from neuroscience is that brains are shaped by relationships. Human brains are not complete at birth. They are designed by evolution to develop after birth. But they do not simply unfold according to a genetic pattern they are shaped by what happens to a child. Indeed brains keep developing until adulthood and, given that they remain flexible throughout life, we could say that our brains are always changing. After enough repetition, the brain has a robust pathway that it will automatically travel when it confronts a situation again. So if, say, a door opening was often associated with a parent bringing cuddles, then doors would come to have a joyful meaning. If, on the other hand, the parent often brought sharp tones and a reprimand the doors would come to signal danger. By creating sturdy neural pathways, the brain is able to operate efficiently. It also means, though, that the brain (and the person) is less likely to consider alternative meanings for an event. This is how different styles of self-regulation emerge in the brain. Hormones have an important part to play as well of course. The child who receives lots of cuddles will get regular top ups of the hormone oxytocin, which is boosted when a person is feeling relaxed and safe and loved by someone whom they trust. When we are feeling content or close, we are dosed in oxytocin. The child who experiences lots of anxiety will get regular top ups of a different hormone: cortisol. Cortisol increases when we feel stressed and threatened, and we are dosed with it when we feel tense and anxious. Hormones therefore influence how we experience our own state of mind and how we experience other people in relation to us.

Children who are resilient are those whose emotional cups are full to the brim and who have strong enough relationships and human connections that mean they are able to regulate their emotions and consequently their behaviours. Dr Suzanne Zeedyk suggests that one of the best ways of developing resilience in our children is through sharing joy. She suggests that securely attached babies and children don't just receive comfort from adults, they also share in many moments of delight. In the midst of a worldwide pandemic when restrictions limit our daily lives remembering to laugh and share the joys of simple things may just be the thing that gets us all through, and keeps our emotional cups topped up!

THE EMOTIONAL CUP

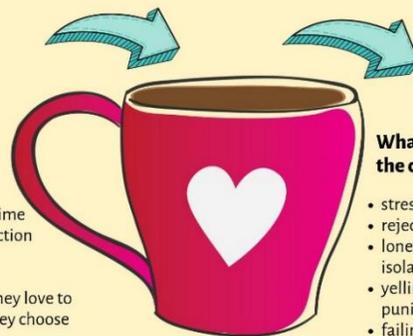
Imagine that every child has a cup that needs to be filled -- with affection, love, security, and attention. Some seem to have a full cup most of the time, or know good ways to get a refill. But most children get a little nervous when their cup gets near empty.

Some ways that children deal with having an empty cup:

- steal from other people's cups
- misbehave to get your attention and show that they need a refill
- seem to have bottomless cups, or need constant 'topping off'
- can't sit still for refills or actively refuse them
- bounce off the walls when they approach 'empty'
- think they have to fight or compete for every refill

What fills a child's cup:

- play
- friendship
- one-on-one time
- love and affection
- connection
- succeeding
- doing what they love to do or what they choose to do



What empties the cup:

- stress and strain
- rejection by peers
- loneliness and isolation
- yelling and punishment
- failing
- fatigue
- doing what they're forced to do or they hate to do

upbility

Arthur Terry Learning Partnership News – Train to Teach

By Dr Beth Clarke



The Arthur Terry Teaching School Alliance is a partnership of twenty-eight schools across a geographical area that covers Birmingham, South Staffordshire and Warwickshire. Across such a wide geographical area, there are schools of varying contexts, which all share a common goal of continuous school improvement through collaboration. Working with a range of organisations in the region, we have built our capacity to share and develop our skills and expertise, making a demonstrable impact on our learning communities. Designated as a School Centred Initial Teacher Training in 2012, we have successfully trained over 300 teachers. Our SCITT teachers are highly sought after and our latest data shows that 95% have been employed in the region with many going on to secure leadership roles. The SCITTs success has been built on building a robust collaborative partnership, enhanced by a strong delivery team of outstanding subject specialists, who are still practising teachers.

As a national Teaching School, continuous professional learning and development is at the heart of our teaching school offer. Our mission statement is to develop outstanding teachers from initial teacher training (ITT) to headship. The SCITT course provides qualified teacher status and a postgraduate certificate in education validated by Birmingham City University. The teaching school looks to recruit the very best from a range of backgrounds (career changers or straight from university) and offers diverse teaching experiences in urban and rural settings. This year we have welcomed Toria Jenson to Hill West (Year One) as an associate teacher working to obtain her teaching qualification. She has worked closely with Miss Arkinstall and enhanced the Year One team with the commitment and dedication.

The programme offered is at the forefront of initial teacher training, with a focus on subject-specific pedagogy, cognitive science and opportunities to rehearse before entering the classroom. We have designed the course to give our Associate Teachers all the basics in the first term and then a chance to build on their teaching timetable gradually as their confidence increases. There are lots of opportunity to strategically observe expert colleagues both live and online, before practising strategies in the classroom themselves. The programme is highly personalised and provides the chance to focus on specific elements of teaching term-by-term, culminating in successful achievement of the Teachers' Standards.

The primary course is a 35-week programme where Associate Teachers' time is divided between School Placements, and Professional Experience Sessions within the Teaching Alliance. School placements take place in two schools in different key stages. There is also a one-week experience at a special school, a Key Stage 3 experience and an Early Years Foundation Stage experience.

Our aim is to 'grow our own' teachers to work within our local alliance and the region as a whole. Many who have trained with us remain in our partnership, coaching others on the course and supporting new entrants to the profession. For many completing the course is often not the end, but just the beginning. Large numbers of trainees access our continuing professional development courses with the support of their leadership teams through our teaching school to support their ongoing career development. Ultimately we want to produce highly skilled graduate teachers who

- Are resilient
- Are committed to an 'open classroom' ethos where best practice is developed through observing, collaborating and a commitment to ongoing professional development
- Have a deep level of understanding of teaching and learning
- Demonstrate a passion for their subject and working with young people

Exhibit professionalism in the workplace allowing reasoned judgement to be made in varying situations.



Celebrating Life and Learning in Reception

By The Reception Team

A message from Miss Ward

Here we are again, in lockdown and adjusting to a way of life that is still new to us all. Home learning is in full swing and I am thoroughly enjoying seeing all the children's faces even if it is via the computer screen! The children have adapted to teams so well and taken on the change with such bravery and maturity, they should be very proud! When I am not in school with the children who are also working extremely hard, I have been spending some quality time with my little boy and enjoying the snow that we have been given! I hope you are all having fun making the most of this time together at home. Hopefully it won't be long until we are all reunited in the classroom but until then, keep working hard superstars! Parents you are doing an amazing job!

A message from Mrs Pardo

Firstly, a huge well done to all of you for trying so hard to adapt during this difficult time. I am so grateful to be able to see your faces during our live TEAMS sessions and it has been great to be working with the children of keyworkers, within school. The tweets really do reflect the hard work and progress happening at home and at school!



I have loved hearing about what you have been up to. I have been keeping busy with my family too. We have been exploring our local area, trying to find a different route each day- walking in the snow, rain and sunshine! We have been baking and trying a new tea time recipe each week- so far they have been delicious! We also enjoyed a football themed birthday party at home, to celebrate our son's 10th birthday.

Keep up the hard work, thank you parents too! I hope that we will all be back in the classroom, learning together really soon because we do miss seeing you all properly and we know that you are looking forward to seeing your friends too!

A message from Miss Roberts

I didn't think I'd be saying we're in lockdown again but here we are. I have been blown away with the resilience the children have demonstrated during these difficult times. I have loved catching up with all the children through our live TEAMS sessions and teaching with those in school. We're very lucky to have such amazing technology in this day and age, even if it sometimes has a mind of its own. The children have worked so hard and it is an absolute pleasure looking through the school Twitter feed to see all of their achievements.

I have been keeping busy with my little girl at home. We have been going on our daily walks around the Mill pond, building all sorts of creations with Lego and enjoying some late night movie nights. A highlight of my daughters is watching the Masked Singer on a Saturday evening and having fun in the snow.



I hope that it won't be much longer until we are all back together, filling the classroom with laughter! I am so incredibly proud of each and every one of you and miss you all. Keep Smiling!



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 tea
So just d
And do n



Celebrating Life and Learning in Year 1

By The Year One Team

Learning in Year 1

On the 5th January, we expected to welcome you back into school after the Christmas break but without warning those plans changed; instead, we welcomed a small number of you back into school and the rest of us have become learners from our very own homes (experts at using a computer). This half term we have been exploring 'fairy tales'; the Three Little Pigs, Goldilocks and the Three Bears and the Gingerbread Man. In English, we have focused on the language that traditional tales use to help us retell the stories, as well as adapting them in our own creative ways. In addition, we have seen that traditional tales contain some repeated phrases such as 'I will huff and I will puff and I will blow your house down', 'this one is too...., this one is too... and this one was just right', and 'run, run as fast as you can your can't catch me I'm the gingerbread man'.

Using events that happen in these fairy tales has helped us to explore other areas of the curriculum too; healthy and unhealthy foods; properties of materials and scientific vocabulary; maps, hygiene and safety and some much more. Look at some of the things we have been up to:

A message from Mrs Durkin



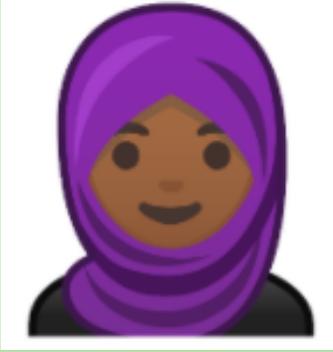
The current lockdown has meant another period of shielding for me so I have been working from home. This has given me the opportunity to enrol myself on various career development courses, better enabling me to support our pupils on my return to school. I have also had the great pleasure of speaking regularly to some of our wonderful Hill West families over the telephone. In my spare time I have been enjoying long walks in Sutton Park, cooking new recipes and I've discovered the delights of Just Dance! On Tuesday 2nd February, I was extremely grateful to receive my first dose of the Covid19 vaccine. I would like to pay tribute to the wonderful NHS staff and volunteers who made it happen. I hope you are all keeping safe and well and can't wait to be back at Hill West as soon as possible.

A message from Miss Beardmore

Although Christmas seems such a long time ago now I do want to reflect on that happy time. I spent the Christmas break relaxing, eating lots of delicious food (mainly chocolate), going on long walks and enjoying spending time with my family, whom you can see pictured here. My Christmas day was a little different from my usual arrangements, as I am sure some of yours were too! Instead of spending Christmas Day at my Grandad's, I enjoyed my Christmas dinner at home with my Mom, Dad and sister. I went on a Christmas walk to see my Grandad and Aunty (socially distanced) in the morning and got to give them their Christmas presents, and I think a Christmas walk is going to become our new tradition in our family. I was very lucky to be able to go to the National Memorial Arboretum Illuminations, before we went into lockdown. I saw some fantastic displays, which centred on British history. I have also enjoyed the snow days that we have had too; snowball fights, sledging and building a snowman. I hope you are all keeping safe and well – I can't wait to see you all again in Swallows class.



A message from Mrs Begum



Hi all,
It's been a while since I've seen you all and I'm missing you all terribly. During the Christmas holidays, I was poorly so had to stay in the house, which was difficult. However, I kept myself busy by cooking and taking plenty of rest. I spent my time with my family, which was nice! I've been in school over lockdown teaching some fantastic Swifts and Swallows - which has been great - and seeing all the progress that everyone is making in a school and at home. I can't wait to get back to my NELI intervention as soon as you're all back to school. I'm looking forward to seeing you all, hopefully sooner than later.

A message from Miss Arkinstall

To all the lovely children of Hill West,

I hope everybody is keeping safe and busy over the current lockdown. I miss seeing all your happy faces every day but feel so lucky to be able to teach some of you virtually and in school. It has been a new learning curve to teach online but we've got through this together, so thank you all for your hard work and patience.

During the lockdown, I have kept myself busy by watching some of my favourite shows, reading books and taking long walks in the park. In school, I have enjoyed making gingerbread men and writing Gingerbread men descriptions. It is so fantastic to see all the progress you are all making in school and at home. I can't wait to see you all again soon!

A message from Mrs Thomas

Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow! And snow it did, causing chaos on the roads and fun in school! The morning routine remained pretty much as normal. As the children warmed up in the cosy classroom, we did the register and handwriting practice and then recapped on the story of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears'. Breaktime was approaching and the children were excited to play on our wonderful school field. So they all got themselves suitably toggled up and rushed outside straight to the top and up the slope. Gloves on, the children were throwing the soft, powdery snow at each other (oh, and us!) and the air was filled with laughter. Our break turned into a much longer break than usual as the children began to concentrate on rolling the snowballs from the top of the slope to the bottom. The focus was then on making snowmen. We had that many large snowballs that the children decided to stick with our theme and focused on creating the three bears from the 'Goldilocks' story. Daddy bear, mommy bear and baby bear. Pretty good, aren't they?



A message from Mrs Hart

I hope you are having lots of fun with your learning whether you are at home or in school. Those of you at home we are missing you and can't wait for your return to school when you can! I am in school and continue to read with the children who are attending. We have been reading some lovely books - some of our favourites are: The Way Home for Wolf; Stick Man; Lost and Found. I would love to hear what bedtime stories you have been reading and any recommendations for us in school - perhaps you could tweet some pictures of you reading! I can't wait to have you all back in school and to see your smiling faces!

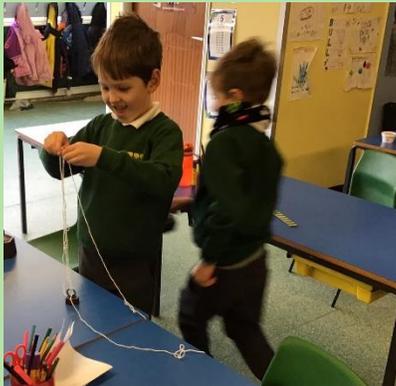


Celebrating Life and Learning in Year 2

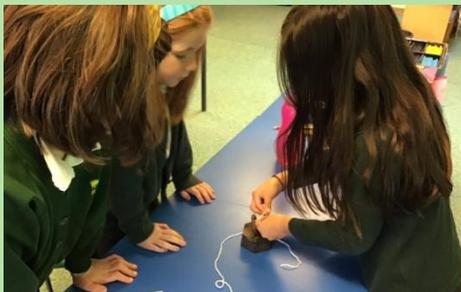
By The Year Two Team

A message from Ms Whelan, Mrs Massey, Mrs Kaur and Mrs Pick

Wow, what a year it has been in Year 2! We started off the year concentrating on our Recovery Curriculum. The children all worked incredibly hard, focusing on Maths, Reading, Writing, Science, PDW and PE and all of the children made good or better progress compared with their starting points, at the beginning of September. They are superstars! As parents in Year 2 will know, the children had a particularly challenging time in the Autumn term, as they were set the challenge of Phonics Screening, made all the more tricky by the school closure in March 2020 due to the first COVID-19 national lockdown. As a team of staff, parents and children we worked incredibly hard, practicing phonics once or twice every day, and the children achieved an outstanding 97% pass rate in

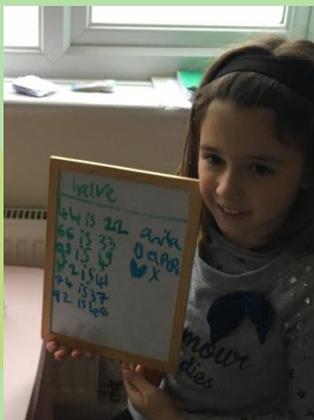


December 2020. Since January, when school unexpectedly closed again, we have been working hard to continue our ambitious teaching program for the children in Year 2, whether they are at home or in school. The children have been studying materials in Science, learning about how their properties are linked to their uses. The children then built their own space buggies, choosing the materials they used so that the space buggy worked properly. They also investigated which ball was the bounciest, linking this to the material the ball was made from.



In maths this term, the children have worked on comparing numbers using $>$ and $<$ before moving on to addition and subtraction using a range of different methods including number lines, grids, using number facts, they have been measuring in g and kg and comparing the mass of different objects. In Art, the children have learnt about Jackson Pollack and his art work, and have compared his abstract art style with that of Matisse, looking at line, shape and colour.

Zoom sessions have been a great way for children to stay in touch with us, and to be able to ask questions about the day's learning or areas they might find tricky. The quality of work produced at home has been truly amazing and parents should be very proud of their children – we certainly love to see what the children have been learning about! When the Prime



Minister, Boris Johnson, thanked all parents and carers of the children in our country, this sentiment was much deserved! Inevitably the children are missing their friends and the classroom is a little quieter than usual. We are all looking forward to coming back together again as soon as possible!



Celebrating Life and Learning in Year 3

By The Year Three Team

A message from Mrs Lampitt

Being in another lockdown has allowed my family and me to enjoy spending time together. We have developed a passion and love for the outdoors in our free time, since we had our puppy Daisy, and she is one already!

Lockdown in The Lampitt house has meant that the children are at home, studying and completing their online studies, which they have found a real challenge; they miss their friends and school life. Mr. Lampitt has been furloughed, which has meant that he has become a teacher, a cook and a cleaner, amongst many other things, while I have been in school teaching our Key Worker children.

Being asked to support the teaching and learning in Year Three has been a wonderful adventure, the children are hardworking, articulate and humorous! Although very different to my normal teacher role in Year Six, I have adapted and found it to be a memorable experience/ However, I miss my masterclass and long for things to return to normal - as we all do, I'm sure.

Take Care and stay safe!

A message from Mrs Swain

Breaking up for our Christmas holidays seems so long ago. I was looking forward to welcoming all our Rabbits and Hedgehogs back for an exciting new term but lockdown number 3 put a stop to that. Still I find myself busier than ever. I am in school every day with the Hill West Team helping to teach and take care of our critical worker's lovely children, then its home to help my boys with their home schooling. Like a lot of you, they are missing school and their friends immensely and are not really enjoying having to work alone.

One thing I must say that I have not missed too much is standing at the side of a football pitch at the weekends! Football is a huge part of the Swain Family's weekend and although I love to watch my boys play, I really do not like standing in the wind and rain, travelling miles from one match to another. Obviously, my boys do not agree and are desperate to get back to training and their weekly matches!

With football on hold it has given us a chance to spend time together doing other activities like walking in the park, practicing our baking skills, watching films together, quizzes, board games and of course we made the most of the snow when it came, building snowmen, igloos and having lots of snowball fights with me losing every time!

I am so looking forward to us all being back together and excited to see all our Rabbits back with Mrs Chan and I. Remember the lovely words of Sir Captain Tom "The sun will shine on us again and the clouds will go away."



A message from Mrs Chan

Well, coming to work at Hill West has been full of new experiences – writing this being one of them! As we broke up for the Christmas break, I didn't imagine it would be so long until I would see my class again. I was quite overwhelmed by the beautiful Christmas gifts and messages I received from parents. Christmas was lovely, as my daughter (a former Hill West student) was back from University and this break extended to six weeks. Like many, my husband is on furlough, so at least I'm spared doing the cooking (he is a much better cook than me)!

Returning to work with reduced numbers has meant that I and my Rabbits have got to know some new children from Hedgehogs, which has been great, and we have learnt a new mode of working with smaller numbers. That said, we are all missing the other children and I was so glad to see all the home learners on Zoom this week, some of them were even spinning excitedly in their chairs! I look forward to the day we are all working together again!

A message from Ms Bailey

It has been a long time since I have stepped foot into Hill West. I remember getting all of my things ready for our first day back in January. I even cleaned my school shoes, and then heard the news that school would be shut the next day.

I felt so worried and anxious about the unknown, but now I absolutely love teaching from home! It certainly is not the easy option; I still work hard, but this new challenge has been a great experience.

I am so lucky to have the best Zoom crew in the whole world! My Year 3 pupils work so hard and take part in everything I set them. They are all making all of this worthwhile!

Mr Bailey has needed to put his teaching hat on to help our son, Marleigh, with all of his work. It is safe to say that school life has taken over our house! We are being very sensible and staying home, we only adventure out for fresh air. Nora-belle's legs are so short it takes us 40 minutes of walking before we even get to the woods to play! Despite all of the changes, we have made so many memories since December, we are so lucky!



It was also Marleigh's 6th birthday, so we had a UV party at home, to celebrate – we even had a McDonald's! I am looking forward to seeing you all soon, but until then we must keep safe!



Celebrating Life and Learning in Year 4

By The Year 4 Team

Learning from home means 'Zooming'. This is not a phrase that most children would have recognised 12 months ago, but now, the stay-at-home children in Year 4 'Zoom' twice a day.

At 09:15 precisely, the portal opens to another world and Mr George's familiar (that's one word for it) face appears on screen accompanied by the rapt students of Moles and Squirrels.

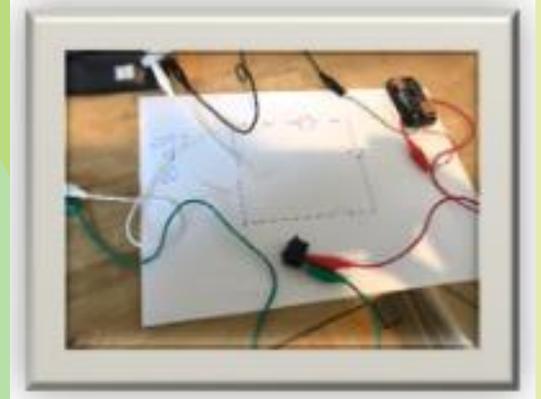
Muted, they listen carefully to the class novel, then the procedure for the morning's learning. After questions and answers, it's down to the hard work on the Year 4 curriculum!

Another 'Zoom' at 14:30 outlines the final lessons and there is more hard work; a day in the life of a 'lockdown zoomer' is a busy and fruitful one – take a look at the pictures!

At school, we are trying to carry on as normal (or the new normal at least). We are greatly reduced in number and missing the familiar faces of our homebound classmates. It is reassuring though to know that we are all following the same learning, whether at home or in school, and we have certainly covered a lot of interesting ground in class this half term!

The term got off to an earth-moving start with our earthquakes topic, where we recreated the earth's tectonic plates built our own seismographs and created fabulous non-fiction pieces on earthquakes. We thoroughly enjoyed experimenting with electronics in the lead up to creating our own functioning mini lighthouses. We brought the entertaining visual literacy narrative, 'The Lighthouse', to life with our own retelling of the story. We were excited to follow our news-reading ambitions by reading our self-scripted reports on the strange happenings of Tuesday night.

However, the most exciting couple of days was when the snow came. Thick snow covered the playground and field. So ...well... there was only one thing to do ... BUILD SNOWMEN!



Celebrating Life and Learning in Year 5

By The Year Five Team

Our Year 5 Home-Learning Experience

From the outset, Year 5 have started as we mean to go on! Mr Holmes and Mr Horne have been 'blown away' by the numbers of children who are coming along to our zoom sessions each day. We have loved seeing so many excited faces, eager



to learn and show off exactly what makes the children of Year 5 so exceptional! Every zoom session is packed full of energy and desire to learn and the proof is very much in the pudding when it comes to the work which has been shared. You can see the quite incredible Anglo-Saxon villages, which have been built in

Minecraft by some of our resident experts. We have loved the artistic creativity and ingenuity of the Year 5's who have adapted so well to learning from home. WE LOVE A QUIZ!!! Every session has a devilish quiz of around 4 questions which tests the knowledge of even the die-hard learners among the Year 5 cohort. This has helped us to identify any gaps in knowledge, which we can then address.



We have been able to stick quite rigidly to the curriculum that we had planned prior to lockdown, which has enabled the home learners in Y5 to keep up-to-date with the expectations and challenges of what is a tricky year. Home-Learning has opened up opportunities for our Y5 children to get seriously creative with

the way they investigate and create work.

Look at some of the incredible pulley systems - which they have made in lockdown!

Being able to interact with so many of the children from Hares and Badgers is such a pleasure and it has been an excellent opportunity to get to know each other a lot better. We always bring something special along to our afternoon sessions, which gives children an opportunity to share what is truly important to them.



Our Year 5 In-School-Learning Experience

In school, things are running smoothly under the circumstances, we have been trying to maintain as much routine and normality as possible for the children who are in school. We know the strain and pressure there is on all of our children and we have been working closely with the children in school to talk about how their lives are being impacted by lockdown and we have a key focus on the mental health and well-being of these individuals.



We really enjoyed the snow day 2 weeks ago and took the opportunity to challenge the Year 6 class to a snowman building contest. There was lots of snow to make snowmen, snow dogs and cats, glasses and even snowballs. The weather did nothing to dampen the spirits of these resilient learners.

They've even begun a class art project around a book we have recently finished! We're keeping our lips sealed for the time being, but it will surely be epic! Our classroom routine mirrors much of the activities done in the home learning sessions and we are of course using the same resources and materials that are available from home in order to keep our teaching and learning consistent across both learning styles.

We have recently completed some

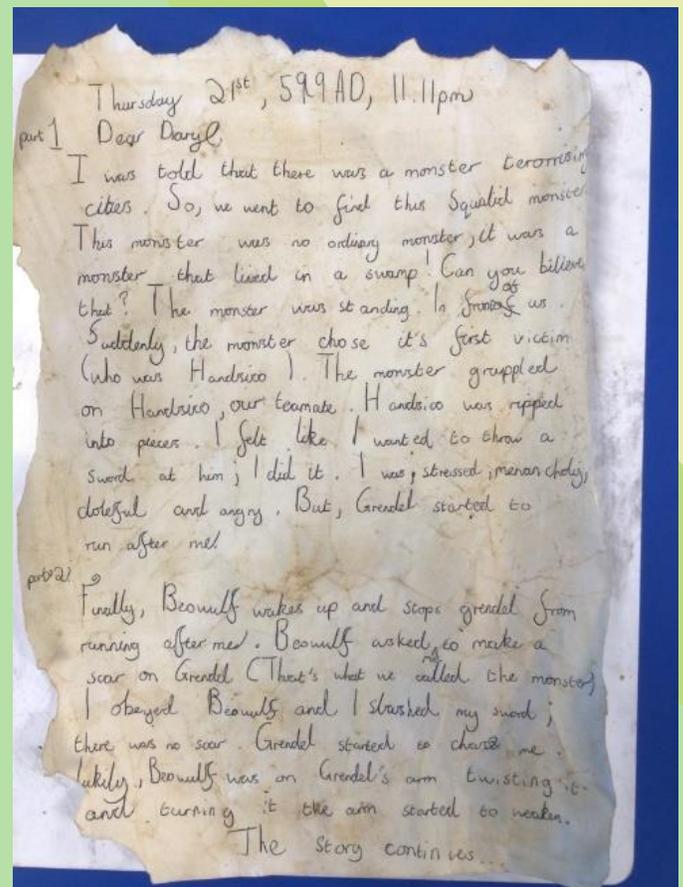
memorable diary entries all about Beowulf which we then took and tea stained to create very 'ancient' looking documents.

The Deserted Island

Slowly, I came to a stop in the forest. I could here the trees crackling like a bonfire. I could see the water walking down the mountain. Could I have been more peaceful? The birds singing and the crystal clear water. I built a boat and followed it down the mountain.

I was floating and listening to the birds sing, it was so peaceful. The water was carrying me into the deep ocean. I looked forward, I saw a waterfall. I got nervous as I went down, I SCEAMED really loudly! my boat broke and a whale offered me a ride. We went so far out but then a killer whale threatened the whale, I swam away like I was in the Olympics and ended up on a deserted island. Could things get any worse?

Wearily, I staggered to my feet and began to look around my new surroundings. Out in the distance something caught my eye, it was something silver and sharp, pointed like a dagger. Loads started to appear and I took a closer look. It was the FIN of a SHARK! I quickly realised I was surrounded by shark infested water because there where loads of sharks jumping out of the water snatching at the fish. I nearly fell in, it was like the fins where calling me. I was hanging over the edge and something grabbed my shoulders, a tingle went down me. I turned round...



In maths, pupils have been given the opportunity to review arithmetic and apply this to numbers containing decimals. We have also been having a lot of fun at plotting coordinates onto grids as well as translating and reflecting shapes! While we have been tested and

strained a number of times this year already, we are determined, along with the Y5 children to make this year a success.

Celebrating Life and Learning in Year 6

By The Year Six Team

A message from Miss Lynch

I hope you are all safe and well. Since Christmas, I have had the pleasure of working in school with the Key Worker children of Year 6. It has been a tough term for us all.

Even though the children have been happy in school, they have missed their friends and the normal routine of the classroom. We have been making sure we social distance as much as we can when in the classroom so to keep each other safe. We have been working extremely hard, doing the same learning as the children who have been attending the zoom sessions (some of us have been in school and at home attending the Zoom sessions) it has been lovely to see the children producing the same quality of work.



During the cold, frosty, bright mornings, the children have had the chance to take their Maths outside; measuring the playground to find out the area.

On the first day that we had snow, I could not make it into school, so the children were lucky enough to have Mr Ellison for the day. They all went outside to build snowmen plus a snow dog. An amazing two days where we had the chance to forget about the pandemic and have lots of fun in the snow, having snowball fights on the Tuesday. Well, what I meant to say is: the children enjoyed chasing Mr Minto and myself with snowballs.



A message from Mr Ellison

On the other side of things, most of us have been slowly getting used to life through a lens. Year 6 have shown incredible resilience and resourcefulness whilst working from home – a credit to them and you – the parents. Whether from the desk, table, sofa, sometimes a bed and once even a trampoline... the Year 6 children have shown willing to tune in to the daily Zoom sessions live from the Lego-box-on-an-ironing-board studio that is my front room.

To start, we showed excellent teamwork and collaboration as we navigated the unfamiliar territory that was Zoom together. We battled the torrents of Wi-Fi woes, power-cut problems, microphone musings (ahem, I think you're off mute again... although, dinner sounds lovely tonight) and solved severe sound scenarios – together - with ever increasing efficiency (MR ELLISON! I CAN'T HEAR YOU!).

Some of the children have also joined me for the daily reading session of Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone. This has been an extra special time for me as it was first read to me by my Year 6 teacher – all those years ago. A great way to relax, unwind, do some doodling after a busy day.

Although it'll never be the same as being in the classroom – Year 6 have stepped up and are doing incredibly well keeping on top of their learning, socialising and 'figuring out who the impostor is'. I am yet to have a day

when they do not make me laugh during the Zoom lessons. I am genuinely grateful for them taking part and their continuous optimism. The work, pictures and doodles that I have received always brighten up my day.

Although we are nearing half term, and the signs of fatigue are starting to set in, I just want you all to know that, when we finally get through this, we will have got through it together. Thank you, Year 6 – you are brilliant.

Keep staying safe and we look forward to seeing everyone again... when it is safe to do so.

The small thin girl, with a face as pale as a ghost, was forced to roam the streets trying to sell the only possession she had of any worth; a wooden box of matches. Dressed only in a dirty grey blanket and over-sized slippers the desperate raven-haired maiden was starving and freezing to the bone. She almost felt like a chunk of ice but she couldn't bear to go home for she knew she would get beat by her evil, disgraceful father. In an effort to keep warm the weak, sensitive child struck a match from her ancient mahogany box as she warmed her small, skeletal hands around the tiny flame. She gazed jealousy into a brightly lit window. On the table through the window, a delicious feast was laid out like a banquet for a King and a Queen. A tear fell from her eye because she knew she would never eat scrumptious food such as this, for as long as she lived.

By Lola



Thursday 28th January

The Little Match Girl

From around a blustery corner in the overshadowing gaze of the tall Copenhagen houses, there shuffled a little girl, no more than eight years old, her golden encrusted hair stuck to her face while her "clothes" hung helplessly to her small, snow-soldier body. All she wanted to do was help out her hungry family by selling some matches to the rich townspeople. Yet this task was far from easy...

Not a soul made eye-contact with the elfin-faced girl and she could feel her resolve melting as quickly as the softly falling snowflakes. But she stuck to her thankless task. Driven by her fear of a fatherly beating and the look of despair on the faces of her younger, starving siblings, she pressed on determined to fight her own pangs of hunger and the harshest elements of a deep Danish winter.

With snow stung soles and feverishly burning fingertips, she pitifully held out a bundle of life saving matches as if an offering to an unseen God, but no-one wanted her wares or heard her silent prayers. No-one cared to help her, and she felt herself disappearing into the winter's scene like a ghostly apparition, never properly seen, never loved, and never needed.

Busy with their own concerns, the people hurried past her. She was invisible... As her fingers became numb, she could barely hold the little match boxes in her hands. With the biting wind nipping at her extremities she shuffled into an alleyway to find at least a little warmth. Weak with hunger and the cold she slumped to the freezing stone floor.

After an hour of contemplation, having not sold even 1 match, she decided to strike one on the wall, not knowing that was the worst decision she would ever make! Was she hoping for some warmth? Was she hoping to attract attention? We will never know... As the sun set and the darkness deepened, the Little Match Girl drifted into an inner world.

Stars are my only friends.

Have you ever felt like stars are your only friends?
And watched them twinkle in the night sky,
and they would watch you from above,
you wish upon them in your darkest times.

Have you ever seen them make a shape before?
They work together like a colony of ants,
and produce the most magnificent pictures,
and become the most beautiful vision in the sky.

When a new star joins the sky,
a new friend joins my heart,
they shine down on me like glowing angels,
they will be there for you if you try.

Mental Health and Wellbeing during a Pandemic

By Dr Rhian Warrack

Mental health problems in children and young people

Data gathered before the COVID-19 pandemic indicated that mental health problems affected about 1 in 10 children and young people. Issues include depression, anxiety and conduct disorder, and these were often as a direct response to what was happening in their lives. Emotional wellbeing of children is just as important as physical health, as good mental health allows children and young people to develop the resilience necessary to cope with whatever life throws at them and allows them to grow into well-rounded, healthy adults.

Dealing with change

Mostly things that happen to children don't lead to mental health problems on their own, but traumatic events can trigger problems for children and young people who are already vulnerable.

Changes often act as triggers: moving home or school or the birth of a new brother or sister, for example. Some children who start school feel excited about making new friends and doing new activities, but there may also be some who feel anxious about entering a new environment.

Teenagers often experience emotional turmoil as their minds and bodies develop. An important part of growing up is working out and accepting who you are. Some young people find it hard to make this transition to adulthood and may experiment with alcohol, drugs or other substances that can affect mental health.

Risk factors

There are certain risk factors that make some children and young people more likely to experience problems than other children, but they don't necessarily mean difficulties are bound to come up or are even probable. Some of these factors include:

- having a long-term physical illness
- having a parent who has had mental health problems, problems with alcohol or has been in trouble with the law
- experiencing the death of someone close to them
- having parents who separate or divorce
- having been severely bullied or physically or sexually abused
- living in poverty or being homeless
- experiencing discrimination, perhaps because of their race, sexuality or religion
- acting as a carer for a relative, taking on adult responsibilities
- having long-standing educational difficulties.

What can people do to look after their Mental Health and Wellbeing?

Other things that can help keep children and young people mentally well include:

- being in good physical health, eating a balanced diet and getting regular exercise
- having time and the freedom to play, indoors and outdoors
- being part of a family that gets along well most of the time
- going to a school that looks after the wellbeing of all its pupils
- taking part in local activities for young people

Other factors are also important for good mental and emotional wellbeing, including:

- feeling loved, trusted, understood, valued and safe
- being interested in life and having opportunities to enjoy themselves
- being hopeful and optimistic
- being able to learn and having opportunities to succeed
- accepting who they are and recognising what they are good at
- having a sense of belonging in their family, school and community
- feeling they have some control over their own life
- having the strength to cope when something is wrong (resilience) and the ability to solve problems.

Most children grow up mentally healthy, but surveys suggest that more children and young people have problems with their mental health today than 30 years ago. That's probably because of changes in the way we live now and how that affects the experience of growing up.

Children's Mental Health Week (1st February 2021)

Children's Mental Health Week took place this year between the 1st and 7th February 2021. This year's theme was 'Express Yourself'.

The Royal Patron, HRH The Duchess of Cambridge, recorded a video message to mark the start of the week, which you can find at the following link: <https://www.childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk> along with access to a virtual assembly (from BAFTA and Oak National Academy) – featuring Jodie Whittaker, Oti Mabuse, Matthew Lewis and many more...

Children and parents are being encouraged to share their thoughts and feelings, particularly during such a challenging time.

In the midst of this third national lockdown due to COVID-19, if you're worried about the impact of coronavirus on your mental health, or that of your child/children, you are not alone.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a new and uncertain time for all of us, so it is only natural that it will affect our mental health in different ways. However you are feeling right now is valid. With the right help and support, we can all get through this.

During COVID-19 national lockdowns, Children and Young People have reported:

- Feeling anxious all the time
- Having a low mood because of all the bad news
- Feeling anxious about all the changes to normal life (or about returning to normal life)
- Struggling with self-isolation and social distancing
- Difficulty managing pre-existing mental health or wellbeing issues
- Dealing with the death of a loved one

What help is available for Mental Health or Wellbeing issues?

Parental help

When children have a warm, open relationship with their parents, they will usually feel able to tell them if they are troubled. One of the most important ways parents can help is to listen to them and take their feelings seriously. Children may want a hug, they may want you to help them change something or they may want practical help.

Children and young people's negative feelings usually pass.

However, it's a good idea to get help if your child is distressed for a long time, if their negative feelings are stopping them from getting on with their lives, if their distress is disrupting family life or if they are repeatedly behaving in ways you would not expect at their age.

Professional help

If your child is having problems at school, a teacher, school nurse, school counsellor or educational psychologist may be able to help. Otherwise, go to your GP or speak to a health visitor. These professionals are able to refer a child to further help. Different professionals often work together in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

Most support for troubled children and young people is provided free by the NHS, your child's school or your local council's social services department.

Assessments and treatments for children and young people with mental health problems put a lot of emphasis on talking and on understanding the problem in order to work out the best way to tackle it. For young children, this may be done through play. Most of the time, the action that professionals recommend is not complex and it often involves the

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK

Check in with each other:

The best thing to do through this stressful time is communicate. Be kind to your loved ones and let them know you're always there for a chat.

Visit the **FREE, SAFE & ANONYMOUS** Young Person's Mental Health Community at

kooth.com



“Your wellbeing is always the most important thing to take care of, particularly at times like this. It is okay to be upset now but remember that we're all in this together, and there are always going to be people who will listen and who you can talk to.”

rest of the family. Your child may be referred to a specialist who is trained to help them explore their feelings and behaviour. This kind of treatment is called a talking therapy, psychological therapy or counselling.

What can be done to support Children and Young People's Mental Health during COVID-19 restrictions?

YoungMinds (the UK's leading charity fighting for children and young people's mental health) has shared some suggested actions that people can take to keep mentally healthy during these exceptionally difficult times. See the YoungMinds website for detailed help, advice and support: <https://youngminds.org.uk/>

- ***Talk to someone about how you are feeling***
 - While it is normal to feel worried, if you are starting to feel overwhelmed, it's important to acknowledge your feelings and speak to someone you trust, whether that's a friend, a family member, a teacher or a helpline.

- ***Arm yourself with the facts***
 - There is a lot of information about the virus out there and false reports can fuel anxiety. Stay on top of what's happening by using the government website; it is the most up-to-date and reliable source of information. The NHS coronavirus page can also be useful if you are worried about symptoms or family members.
 - You might see stories or posts on social media that makes you feel anxious. It can be very hard to know whether or not social media posts are true, so try not to rely on updates from there.

- ***Know what you can do***
 - If you are feeling scared or panicked by coronavirus, remind yourself that there are practical things you can do – see the NH website for practical advice
 - You might feel anxious about this advice because it might trigger compulsive thoughts and unhelpful behaviours to do with washing and hygiene. If this happens to you, please talk to someone you trust about it. You could ask them to help you, and let people around you know what you find helpful and what you don't.
 - It can also help to have a few gentle and regular reminders up your sleeve if you start to feel anxious about washing or hygiene. Remember this advice is about caring for yourself and others, but there is a limit to what you can do – so whatever happens, try to be kind to yourself.

- ***Don't overexpose yourself to the news***
 - Staying informed can make you feel in control but the constant news reports could also become overwhelming. Try to get your information from reputable websites.
 - If you do want to read or watch the news, try to limit the amount of time you spend and stick to regular intervals in the days. If you are finding it hard not to think about the news, try to plan some activities that you enjoy and which will take your mind off things, whether that's texting or face-timing a friend, watching a film, reading a book or going for a walk.
 - Do take a break from social media if you feel like the updates are getting too much. Remember you are in control of what you see on your feed. Take breaks when you do feel like things are getting too much or mute and unfollow accounts that make you feel more worried.

- ***Plan your time***
 - It's likely that you've been asked by your school, college or workplace to stay at home for a period of time. If you are living at home, talk to your family about this and share your feelings with them, if you can. Although it may be a daunting prospect, try to think of this as a chance to live in a different way for a while. Think about what you might want to do during this time, how you will stay connected and how you would prioritise your wellbeing. Planning might help reduce any anxiety or troubling thoughts. With so much uncertainty in the news, creating a routine you stick to can really help maintain a sense of structure and normality. Try to find time in your routine for activities that help you feel calm.

- **Find things that help you feel calm**
 - Like at any other time, it's important that you are not only looking after your physical health, but your mental health too. Think about some activities that can help when you are feeling overwhelmed, like breathing techniques, writing down how you feel, making a self-soothe box, playing music or talking to a friend
 - Often things that distract you will help ease feelings of anxiety.

- **Find ways to deal with self-isolation**
 - The Government is now advising everybody to 'self-isolate' where possible. Self-isolation means staying away from other people to prevent the potential spread of illness. The Government have guidelines on their website on how to do this. Wherever you are when self-isolating, think about who you can keep in contact with and how you can use apps such as WhatsApp and Zoom to talk to someone face to face. It's important that you talk to people you trust during this time and continue to stay connected. They might be in the same situation and can help you navigate anything you are going through.
 - If you are on any medication, please do continue taking it, unless advised otherwise by your doctor. If you are worried about getting your prescription, call the pharmacy where you collect your medication, or your GP. They can arrange getting your prescription delivered or picked up by someone else.
 - Maintain your routine as much as possible by getting up in the morning and going to bed at the same time. Eating regular meals and staying hydrated will help also, as well as taking breaks throughout the day to talk to someone or do something that you enjoy. If it's possible, try activities in your home that get you moving, like yoga or dancing.
 - It's important during this time that you keep checking in with and acknowledging how you are feeling. We know that things might continue to feel overwhelming or scary. It's good for you to talk about this where possible – know that you can say "I feel anxious about..." whenever you need to, and as regularly as you need to.
 - You may find that you need extra support, so think about who you can turn to. It could be someone you know, or a helpline that you can talk to about how you might be feeling.

- **Know where you can go to get help:**
 - **YoungMinds Crisis Messenger**
<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/get-urgent-help/youngminds-crisis-messenger/>
 - Provides free, 24/7 crisis support across the UK if you are experiencing a mental health crisis
 - If you need urgent help text YM to 85258
 - All texts are answered by trained volunteers, with support from experienced clinical supervisors
 - Texts are free from EE, O2, Vodafone, 3, Virgin Mobile, BT Mobile, GiffGaff, Tesco Mobile and Telecom Plus.

 - **Childline**
 - Comforts, advises and protects children 24 hours a day and offers free confidential counselling.
 - Phone 0800 1111 (24 hours)
 - Chat 1-2-1 with a counsellor online

 - **The Mix**
 - Information, support and listening for people under 25.
 - Phone 0808 808 4994 (24 hours)
 - Get support online

 - **Samaritans**
 - 24 hour confidential listening and support for anyone who needs it. (Adults included.)
 - jo@samaritans.org
 - Phone 116 123 (24 hours)

Pancake Day

By Mrs Rebecca George



When is Pancake Day 2021, why is it celebrated and how do you make a pancake from scratch?

As we stay in to save lives for a few more weeks at least, we must focus on the smaller pleasures of life to keep our spirits high. For many, Pancake Day is certainly one of the mood-boosting celebrations to get excited about at home.

From watching your children get involved with mixing to enjoying your favourite calorific topping - and all the inevitable pancake fails in between – we all seem to love Pancake Day. But what day does it fall on this year, why do we celebrate it and how do you make a pancake from scratch?

When is Pancake Day 2021?

Each year Pancake Day occurs on a Tuesday (Shrove Tuesday). This year, the day will fall on Tuesday, February 16, during half term. So that leaves you with just a under a week to master your pancake flipping skills. Supermarkets have already started stocking more pancake related ingredients and toppings including maple syrup - and dry pancake mix bags if you're not going to attempt to make them from scratch.

How is it celebrated in the UK?

Shrove Tuesday is a Christian festival celebrated in many countries across the globe. It falls on the Tuesday before the beginning of Lent – a period of around six weeks leading up to Easter. During Lent, Christians give up luxuries to remember when Jesus went into the desert for 40 days to fast and pray. The name comes from the old word 'shriving', which means to listen to someone's sins and forgive them. In Anglo-Saxon England, Christians would go to church on Shrove Tuesday to confess their sins and clean their soul. In other words, they would be 'shriven'.



Shrove Tuesday was the last day Christians had to use up their fresh produce like eggs and fats - and pancakes were the ideal recipe to up all of these ingredients that would otherwise spoil. Traditionally during Lent, Christians give up rich, tasty foods such as butter, eggs, sugar and fat (some Christians continue to do so, in fact). Shrove Tuesday was the last chance to eat them – and what better way to do so than with a delicious pancake!

It is believed that the tradition to flip your pancake came from the 15th century after a woman from Buckinghamshire rushed to the church to confess her sins while mid-way through making pancakes – bet you didn't know that!

Pancakes have become such a popular Shrove Tuesday tradition that on this day, a whopping 52 million eggs are used in the UK alone! That's 22 million more than your average day. Egg-citing stuff!

So, grab your ingredients, choose your toppings and get flipping!

How do you make pancakes?

Pancakes are relatively simple to make and you only need a few base ingredients - eggs, plain flour and milk.



100g plain flour
2 eggs
300ml semi-skimmed milk
Pinch of salt
1tbsp sunflower/vegetable oil
Butter for frying
Bowl
Whisk
Spatula



Crepe-style pancake recipe:

1. Put 100g of plain flour into a bowl, make a well in the middle of the flour heap and crack two eggs into it.
2. Start whisking from the inside out and slowly add 300ml of milk to the mixture a little bit at a time. Whisk until there are no lumps.
3. Heat a drizzle of oil or a small knob of butter in a frying pan on medium heat and wait until the pan gets hot and fully greased.
4. Pour in enough pancake mix to coat the base of the frying pan and cook for 1 minute on each side until golden. You might need to use a spatula to loosen round the edge of your pancake until you attempt a flip.
5. Once cooked, transfer the pancake to a hot plate and top with your favourite toppings.

We can't wait to see how our Hill West families celebrate Pancake Day – remember to Tweet your children's pancake flipping and creations!

