



THE HOLMEWOOD SCHOOL



National
Autistic
Society

Accredited
Advanced
2020

Newsletter

Friday 11 February 2022

Dear Families,

This half term ended with some lovely celebrations of student work. I was particularly impressed with the drama showcase for the Lower School, organised by Mrs Axetorn. The students had a great time showing off their drama skills and were all very pleased with their performances. Staff are still buzzing about the high quality observed.

We also had some fantastic LGBTQ+ talks from Lulu and Dylan to every class in the school (Upper and Lower). Lulu spoke about LGBT Black Pioneers, whilst Dylan spoke about LGBT rights in history.



After half term LGBTQ+ History Month continues and Natty will be giving a talk about Alan

Turing. We also look forward to 'The Big LGBTQ+ Quiz' which will include mocktail refreshments!

Students in the Upper School have already started to think about next year's school improvement plan (yes...super early!) and have come up with some great ideas for our school. This included some brilliant ideas for employment preparation. Thank you to this team of students for their contributions.

This week I also want to give a special shout out to Maddie in the Sixth Form who was awarded a distinction for her first assignment at college. Well done Maddie....a very successful end to the half term!

Best wishes to you all for a restful week. We will be back in school on Monday 21st February.

Ms Camilleri

Executive Head Teacher

Dates For Your Diary

- **Fri 11th Feb** - Last day of half-term
- **Mon 14th - Fri 18th Feb** - Half-term holidays
- **Mon 21st Feb** - Spring term (2nd half) starts
- **Tues 22nd Feb** - Spring cafe (Lower School)
- **Thurs 3rd March** - World Book Day
- **Mon 14th - Fri 18th Mar** - STEM week
- **Mon 21st - Fri 25th Mar** - World Autism Awareness Week (WAAW)
- **Fri 25th Mar** - End of spring term
- **Mon 18th Apr** - Bank holiday
- **Tues 19 Apr** - Inset day
- **Wed 20th Apr** - Summer term (1st half) starts

Lateral Flow Tests & School Uniform

Lateral Flow Tests

We are sending more lateral flow tests home today with students. Please keep testing throughout the holiday. Can I please ask that you test your young person on the Sunday evening or Monday morning before we return to school.

Uniform

A reminder that school uniform is compulsory for all Lower School students and Upper School students not in Sixth Form. Most items and sizes are in stock and can be

purchased through ParentMail.

Thank you.

Mr Hardwick
Office Manager

Spring Cafe Opening For Lower School Students



Interpretation Bias

Supporting our teenagers with their friendships is an ongoing piece of work over here at the Upper School. Like all teenagers, disagreements and drama between friends is par for the course. However our lot face other challenges which can complicate relationships.

Staff at the school need to work closely with the young people and their families in order to ensure not only that incidents between friends are managed thoughtfully, but also that these become learning experiences that then can be generalised. That is, our young people gain the tools needed to manage future relationships independently.

Theory of mind is a term in psychology that refers to the ability to understand other people - that they have thoughts and feelings that might differ from our own. We know that some people who are on the autism spectrum can experience deficits in theory of mind.

I have been thinking about how interpretation bias is linked to theory of mind and how these two concepts relate to our young people and their social interactions.

Negative interpretation bias is the tendency to perceive benign or ambiguous behaviours as hostile. People who experience anxiety are much more likely to also experience negative interpretation bias. I can only comment on my own experiences, but I have a hypothesis that young people who are on the spectrum and who are also acutely self-aware can suffer from negative interpretation bias and this rears its head in relationships.



So, a young person may attribute thoughts to others that are really more about their own anxieties. Add social media into this mix, and misunderstandings spiral in a complicated and convoluted manner, leaving all involved hurt and upset. It takes time and patience to unpick these situations.

Being able to label thoughts and feelings helps us weed out negative interpretation bias. An example of this - 'I am feeling insecure and exposed at the moment and that might be why I'm thinking my friend is angry at me.'

The next step is communication. 'You don't seem quite yourself, is everything ok? Can I check in with you because I am worried I may have upset you.'

Most importantly though, is that the adults remain composed so that they can support the young person in this process. Giving all involved the benefit of the doubt, listening empathetically and gently questioning thoughts and feelings will help.

This is such important work because we want our young people to live confident and happy lives. We want to combat loneliness and lasting friendships are the best defence.

Wishing you a lovely break.

Ms B Young

Head of Upper School

Patrick's 'Flick For Fun' Masterpiece



Bakerloo Class student, Patrick, has successfully completed his Silver Arts Award!

His final assessment was to plan, organise and run an arts event of his choice. Patrick chose to run a 'Flick for Fun' event. The participants were invited to flick paint at a large canvas.

The event was highly successful and the end product is that we now have an amazing piece of art to display which captures how well the students from Holmewood enjoy the creative arts.

Well done Patrick!



Elizabeth students have had an excellent start to the new year. January saw the students really come together as a collective unit and it was a real joy to experience.

Each of them made great strides to achieve in all of their subjects and feedback coming back from teachers was very positive. There were countless days when every Elizabeth student in the class received at least one golden raffle ticket. The teaching team are very proud of each and every one of them. Not only did they gel in the classroom, but also mature friendships started to emerge.

It's great to see Elizabeth students becoming increasingly more visible at the lower school. Being socially older they certainly stand out in the playground. The students are growing into very good role models for the other Lower School students.

After the half term, Elizabeth Class will be tasked to become more aware of their literacy

and numeracy beginnings in the broader sense of the words. They will be exposed to children's book stories based on the Old Nubian alphabet, one of Africa's oldest writing systems. "Nabra's Nubian Numbers" is Mr Berko-Boateng's choice for Elizabeth Class to take the reading initiative with. It will stretch the students' understanding of early counting (learning one to ten) from a non-English perspective in terms of language, history and culture. Maybe, just maybe, Elizabeth students will be inspired by the wonderful story telling, characters and illustrations. We are also very much looking forward to World Book Day!



Have a lovely half-term.

Mr Berko-Boateng & Mr Gibbs

Elizabeth Class Teachers



I want to start by saying a big thank you to the teaching assistants in the class. Ms Watson who has been in the school a while now has been so supportive with the students and a help to me, where she is happy to jump in to cover me when teaching.. We also have Ms Williamson who joined us in January. She has settled in really well in our class and started to build positive relationships with the students. Both staff supported our students through their exams.

It has been a challenging few weeks, but myself and the rest of the Bakerloo team are immensely proud of the class. They have risen to the challenge of sitting their mock GCSEs and proved to themselves that they are able to do it.

As a reward for all of their hard work, we all had pizza which they thoroughly deserved and loved. The students are looking forward to which reward they will be having once they sit

their real GCSEs!

After half term, I will be creating revision timetables for the students. I would like them to be prepared as possible for their GCSEs in the Summer. I will be having discussions with the students to work together to work out a realistic time when they can revise.

We have begun to have careers interviews with an independent careers advisor Jo Rampling. I have sat in on these meetings and it is so lovely to hear that the majority of the students have some kind of plan for after they leave Holmewood. They show confidence in their meetings and they look forward to receiving their action plans, so that we can get started in researching and putting things in place in preparation for the next few years.

We are lucky in our class to have some talented chefs. I have been very impressed with the standard of cooking and I really encourage them to cook at home so their family can enjoy their cooking.

We had fantastic Art's events for their Art's Award from Danya-Leigh and Patrick.

Danya-Leigh organised an Anime event which was hugely popular by the students and staff. She had prepared well and was very organised. Danya-Leigh was confident and completely engaged her audience.



Patrick's event was hugely popular with students and staff. Patrick had a blank canvas and invited us to flick different colour paint onto the canvas. He was very considerate and provided aprons for all. He was confident and very clear in his instructions. The end result looks amazing.

I hope you have a lovely restful half term.

Ms Gunning

Bakerloo Class Teacher

SaLT News

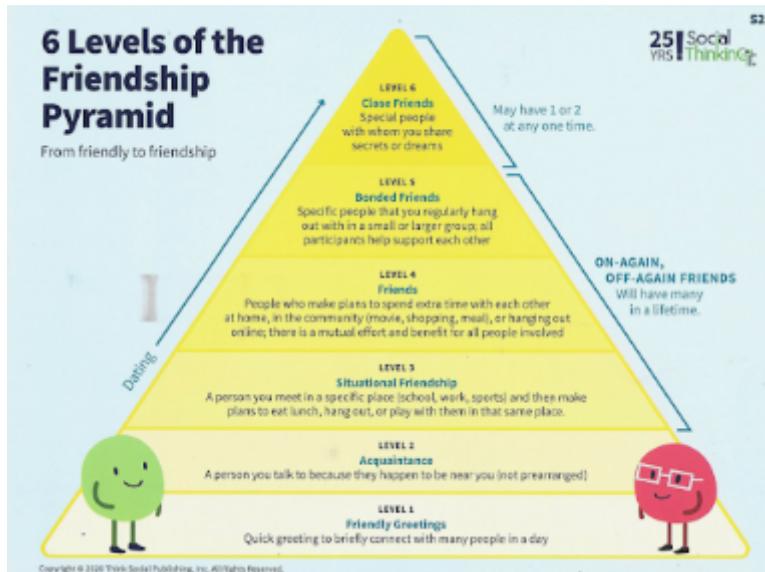
Friendships

This half term, we have been basing much of our work around friendships: considering what friends are, why we need friends, why we may sabotage friendships, how to make new friends, how to talk to peers in a different way from adults and how to keep conversations going, among other topics. All young people face friendship issues at different times as they develop into adulthood - particularly through the teenage years - and we know that these issues are likely to be more challenging for neurodivergent people. Some of our young people tell us that their social anxiety prevents them from engaging in

most social activities in and out of school.

Our aim is for our young people to get to know and accept themselves enough so that they are comfortable being with others. Our message is that all people want and need the opportunity to be included (even if they are telling you to go away!); everybody needs to understand that they are a part of our community; something bigger than just them.

Ms Wallis-Jones, Ms Wiltshire and Ms Young ran a staff training session called “What is a Friend? Do I Need Friends?” at the end of January, based around the Social Thinking framework. With staff, we considered how we can best support our students to develop their friendship skills, and to be confident and motivated to seek out friendships and relationships with others, so that they can enjoy meaningful connections in their lives. We have been using the “Friendship Pyramid” from Social Thinking to support students in working out their social lives and what kinds of friends they have or are to others.



Update on Ms Shafique

We have all missed Ms Shafique this term. She is making a slow recovery after breaking her foot very badly in December. She has just started working from home, and plans to be working full time after half term, with a gradual return to school as she is not yet very mobile. When she comes back, Ms Shafique will be working in a different room until she is able to make it up the stairs again!

And finally ... Singing Clubs!

I have started up a lunchtime singing club on each site (Wednesdays at lower school and Thursdays at the Upper School) and we have been really enjoying singing a variety of songs together! The students have been practising really listening to each other, turning their volume up and down for different styles of songs and blending their voices, and trying to keep their own line while singing rounds. At the upper school, the students have also been taking it in turns to sing a solo every week. Anybody interested is welcome to join us after half term.

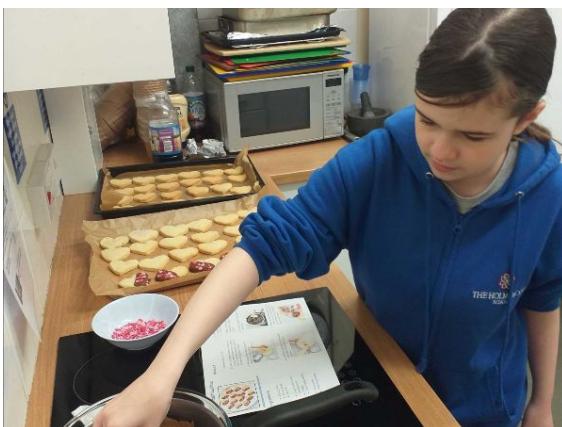
Wishing you all an enjoyable break.

Ms Wallis-Jones

Senior Speech and Language Therapist

The Holmewood Gallery







Designated Team For Child Protection And Safeguarding

If you are a student and have been harmed, or are at risk of harm, these are the people who can help. You can also talk to us if you are worried that another student is at risk of harm.

Lower School			
			
Ms D'Silva (Assistant Head and Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer for Lower School, Level 3)	Ms Lempaszek (Head of Welfare & Behaviour, Deputy DSO for Lower School, Level 3)	Mr Gibbs (Humanities & PSHCE Teacher, Deputy DSO for Lower School, Level 3)	Ms Camilleri (Executive Head, CEOP Ambassador and Deputy DSO, Level 3)
Upper School			
			
Mr Lamb (Deputy Head and Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer for Upper School, Level 3)	Ms Young (Head of School and Deputy DSO, Level 3)	Ms Young (Assistant Head and Deputy DSO, Level 3)	Ms Camilleri (Executive Head, CEOP Ambassador and Deputy DSO, Level 3)

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