



Dear Parents and carers

Welcome to the December Newsletter! This newsletter marks the launch of a new initiative at school. On alternate months, the key focus of the newsletter will be “family” – this will include useful contacts and information and support for families. We would welcome your feedback on this, so please do get in touch.

Jacqueline (Head teacher) and Sarah (Family Advocate)

It's been another busy half term, and it isn't over yet! Whether you need support with form filling, letter writing, accessing services that can support your child or young person, sign posting to information, or just need to chat with someone who has experience of parenting a child with additional needs, then I am here to support you if I can.

My work days and times are Monday – Thursday from 10-2 during term time- please do get in touch if you would like my help. You can contact me by email (familyadvocate@hhschool.org.uk) or by sending me a message in your child's communication book.

Sarah

If you haven't already done so, you might like to sign up for the Buckinghamshire Additional Needs Register (BANDS) which helps the Local Authority understand need in the local area. When you register, you can also request a Max Card which entitles families to discounts to lots of attractions throughout the UK.

<https://familyinfo.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/send/disabled-children-register-and-max-card/>

DID UK CARD – is a nationally recognised Disabled Identity Card. The aim of the National DID Card is to remove the need for individuals to carry their paper documentation with them at all times. The card will have a photograph of the cardholder and will only be issued to disabled people who are in receipt of some form of disability allowance or medical evidence to support your application. The card is valid for two years and can be applied for online or by post - www.did-card.co.uk/



GENERAL REMINDERS:

•**School uniform** – a reminder that school uniform is compulsory – the deadline for all learners to wear school uniform has been extended to January 2024 to support families. Class Teams are encouraging (and will continue to do so) learners who are reluctant uniform wearers!

•**Friends of Heritage House School (FOHHS)** – We now have a committee of Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. We will be holding a Christmas Raffle – details and tickets will be sent to families very soon – we have some fabulous prizes, so please do support us if you can.

•**Hobbies at Home** – this is now live, please remember to complete the loan agreement and return to the school office as soon as possible. Even if you don't wish to borrow items at the present time, please do complete and return the agreement as this will help to minimise delays when you decide that you are ready to begin borrowing. We have over 80 items available to borrow, so there is sure to be something for everyone!



•**Buckinghamshire Family Information Service** – provides Information, support, childcare and things to do for families, children and young people up to 19 years (25 years with a disability/additional need)- <https://familyinfo.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/>

•**Don't forget to check out the SEND Local Offer** for your area ideas of things to do during the holidays and at weekends. They are a great one stop resource for families of children and young people with SEND. They can be accessed as follows:

Buckinghamshire: <https://familyinfo.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/send/>

Hertfordshire: <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/local-offer/the-hertfordshire-local-offer.aspx>

Slough: <https://www.sloughfamilyservices.org.uk/kb5/sloughcst/directory/advice.page?id=NNNtmkbEwv8>

Hillingdon: <https://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/article/4654/SEND-local-offer/>



PARENT WORKSHOPS

- This academic year, our therapists Alice, Liz and Karen have supported parent workshops on “Supporting your Child’s communication at home” and “Fun with Food”.
- Ella (Dragonfly Class Teacher and Sleep Practitioner) supported families with a workshop session on supporting sleep.
- The school’s EHCCo, Natasha, the Transitions Social Care Team and I held a session for parents of our older learners to share information about transition to adulthood.
- Next term, we plan to hold a Transitions Fair for our older learners, as well as workshop sessions on the approaches that we use in school to support learners (including SCERTS and Studio3).

The Community Nurses for Children with a Learning Disability Team will also be coming into school for a question and answer session. These are just some of the sessions that are planned – please do check the newsletters for dates of forthcoming events.





DLA APPLICATIONS – TOP TIPS!

I have supported a number of families with DLA applications, renewals and reconsiderations this academic year. Below are my top tips for completing your application:

- It can be demoralising and upsetting to focus on all of the things that your child cannot do, so try your best to view the application form as a means to an end.

- To request an application pack, you should phone the DLA helpline and ask for the application form to be sent to you, rather than downloading it yourself. This is because the DWP will stamp the form with the date you made your call. If your child qualifies for DLA, it will be paid from this date. If you download the application form, the earliest you can get DLA from is the date the benefits office actually receives your completed application.

- Remember that a decision on your child's claim will be made by someone who has never met your child. They may have little or no experience of your child's condition. Try to use examples to describe your child's needs wherever possible, providing as much detail as you can.

- The form is long and needs lots of information. Read through it first and make some notes before you start filling it in. Keeping a diary for a week before tackling the form can help you to think about the amounts and types of care your child needs during the day and night – this will also help you to think about all of the extra support and help that your child may need which may be different from children of the same age.

- If your child's needs can vary, try to use the terms 'bad days' and 'better days' to describe the changes. This is because if you use terms like 'good days' or 'normal days' the decision maker might think that your child requires no additional help or support on those days.

- Check the form carefully before you submit it. Keep a copy of the form - this will be extremely useful if you need to renew your claim or ask for a reconsideration in future.

Please click on the links below for a range of information (produced by the charities Cerebra and Contact) that you can use to support and guide you through the application process:

<https://cerebra.org.uk/download/disability-living-allowance-dla-guide/>

<https://cerebra.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/mythbuster-DLA-low-res-2.pdf>

<https://contact.org.uk/help-for-families/information-advice-services/benefits-financial-help/benefits-and-tax-credits/disability-living-allowance/>

<https://contact.org.uk/help-for-families/information-advice-services/benefits-financial-help/benefits-and-tax-credits/disability-living-allowance/tips-on-completing-the-dla-form/>

<https://contact.org.uk/help-for-families/information-advice-services/benefits-financial-help/benefits-and-tax-credits/disability-living-allowance/dla-videos/>

MY CHILD AND ME



Background

This was a pilot project that ran towards the end of the last academic year, in collaboration with the Local Authority Educational Psychology Service. The project was facilitated by Ella Cummins, Trainee Educational Psychologist and Sarah O'Donnell, Family Advocate at Heritage House School, in collaboration with a small, pilot group of parent carers.

Aims of the project

The aims of the project were to support families to acknowledge and address their feelings and emotions as their child journeys through school life and beyond, to potentially roll out these workshops to a wider audience and to produce a “top tips” resource to support families.

The project comprised a series of workshops, each involving a short presentation, practical exercises, group discussion and feedback.

The themes we explored included:

- Journey through school
- Supporting behaviour/regulation
- Puberty and transition to adulthood
- Managing my own feelings

At the end of all of the sessions, the feedback from participants was collated and the “Top Tips” guide set out below was created:

Top Tips/advice/recommendations

- You may have preconceptions about special schools. Before starting at a special education school, you may think of the ‘worst case scenario’ e.g., my child will not fit in, my child is not like those children, this is not the right place for my child. Ensure you go to the school, look around, and speak to staff, to parents, to learners. You can also ask your previous/current school’s SENCo to join you on these visits – they may be able to ask questions that you hadn’t thought of. Do not rely on the websites – they are not always reflective of what the school is actually like. Remember: it is normal to experience these feelings.
- Progress is not all about academic progress. Your child is more holistic than just academic attainment. For example, your child’s goals might to be happy, to manage routines, to be able to cope within the classroom, to regulate their emotions, to create connections with others, to develop functional and life skills etc.



- You may have to advocate for your child. This may be to a different extent than other parents. Parents of children with SEN may need to skill up and spend time learning their rights, processes, panels, laws, tribunals, people's roles and responsibilities. Some parents have retrospectively wished they would have fought more for their child to get what they need earlier and trusted their instincts. Parents advise documenting everything and keeping diaries and records across your child's journey, including who has been involved and why.
- You may experience the judgement of others who do not understand. This may be especially so if your child has a 'hidden' disability. People can be judgemental about your parenting, e.g. 'If that was my child, they wouldn't be doing that', or 'you're just rewarding the bad behaviour' or 'it could be worse'. Within some cultures, there are expectations or assumptions that can be difficult to manage and can be especially painful if judgement comes from people within your family or community.
- Language and acronyms can be confusing. Parents speak of entering the world of SEN and meeting acronyms like SALT, OT, EHCP, PT, EP etc. It can feel frustrating to not have these explained to you and have people assume that you know it. Sometimes the meaning of this language is not easily accessible.
- You are on your own journey of understanding your child and managing your feelings along the way. For each person, there will be different sources and strategies of support. It may take some time to comfortably accept and understand that your child has SEN. Feelings of loss for the child you thought you would have are likely to reappear from time to time, especially at milestones. This is okay, this is normal.
- It is sometimes difficult to feel a sense of school belonging. Some parents may feel they are not part of the school community or are isolated from other parents more so than they would be at a mainstream school, particularly if their child is transported to and from school on home school transport. They feel they miss out on 'school drop-off/pick-up conversations' and that informal peer support. This can lead to feelings of being alone and feeling like they are the only ones experiencing things. It is important to remember that you are not alone.
- Understanding the provision in an EHCP. Provision may look different to how it's explained in the EHCP. For example, provision that mentioned SALT or Physio once a week may not be set sessions, it is more likely to be embedded across the curriculum and take a more holistic approach. It is important to discuss any concerns or confusions with trusted staff at the school.

LEARNING DISABILITY AND AUTISM LIAISON NURSES AT STOKE MANDEVILLE HOSPITAL

- Available from 8.30am to 4pm Monday – Friday, the learning disability nursing liaison team helps adult patients with learning disabilities and autism, and their carers, to access high quality care and to have a positive experience in hospital. The nurses can provide support with emergency admissions, outpatient appointments and inpatient stays. They can also help when you leave hospital, and support families and carers throughout the patient journey.

For more information about the service, please use the link below

<https://www.buckshealthcare.nhs.uk/our-care-and-support/patients-with-learning-disabilities/>

Though they work to support adults, I have spoken with one of the nurses and she has confirmed that they will intervene to support children and their families too, if they can. The team can be contacted as follows:

01296 316991

Email: bht@learningdisabilityandautismliaisonnurses@nhs.net

Karen: 07876 231051

Catherine: 07818 646262

COST OF LIVING SUPPORT – at a time when household budgets are under increasing pressure, the following organisations may be able to offer advice and support:

Carers Bucks have put together a resource containing information and links to organisations that can offer advice and support. It can be accessed via the Carers Bucks website, or by clicking on the link below:

<https://carersbucks.org/information-for-carers/adult-carers/money-legal-matters/cost-of-living/>

• Turn2us (www.Turn2us.org.uk) is a charitable organisation that provides information and support about welfare benefits and charitable grants through an accessible website and a free phone helpline.

• Buckinghamshire Council have put together an information resource to support residents across Buckinghamshire. It can be accessed by clicking on the link: www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/cost-of-living

• Buckinghamshire Council's Helping Hand Service is available to help individuals or families who are in need, on a low income or who are facing a financial crisis/emergency:
www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/helping-hand

Contact, the charity for disabled children and their families have put together an extensive resource on cost of living support and advice. Please click on the link below to access this:

<https://contact.org.uk/help-for-families/information-advice-services/cost-of-living-advice/>



Mental Health
Support Team
Buckinghamshire



MALE CARERS DROP IN

Lets talk about: Common Childhood Behaviours

Session Overview:

- Arrival/general introductions
- Introduction to MHST - Who are we and what can we offer
- Overview of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD and Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD)
- Behaviours and Strategies
- Increase confidence in managing child's behaviours
- Parenting Programmes
- Q & A/Feedback

Venue: Princes Risborough Family Centre
Wellington Avenue
Princes Risborough
Bucks, HP27 9HY
Time: 6.30pm - 8pm
Date: 14th December 2023

www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/camhs/bucks/mhst
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