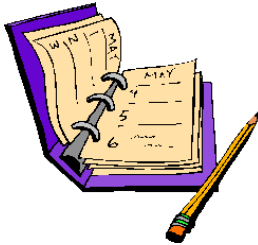


NEWSLETTER

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Dates for your Diary



Wednesday, 18th

October

7.30pm

Link Association AGM

Half Term

23rd - 27th October

Wednesday, 29th

November 9.30am

**Parent Information
and Coffee Morning -
'Early Communication'
Being held at the
primary site**

This week Rachel Lee (from our speech and language team) explains the use of 'Visuals' within the school and the importance they can play for all of us.

Sian Jones also throws the spotlight on Lexia, a system used at the secondary site which helps to develop independent literacy skills.

We hope you find these articles informative.

The Link Association AGM is being held next week - 7.30pm on Wednesday, 18th October. As you will know from the letter circulated earlier, Claire and Sally have come to the end of their 3 year terms of office and due to personal commitments are unable to stand again.

This means that we have a vacancy for a Chairperson and a Treasurer. **In order for The Link Association to survive we need to fill these roles.**

For over 25 years our PTFA have brought the community together and we have all enjoyed summer fairs, winter fairs, quiz nights, comedy nights, race nights etc. All of which have helped raised much needed funds for the school - providing extras for our young people, that the ever decreasing school budget cannot provide.

If you are unable to attend the meeting, but wish to learn more about either of the roles, please contact linkptfa@gmail.com

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING AT THE PRIMARY SITE?

Visuals.

You will hear us as a school team, talk about Visuals and the need for visual support. We thought it may be useful to explain what we mean by visuals, the importance that they can play in helping our children and how we use them in school.

"Visuals" - What are they?

At The Link, when we refer to visuals we are talking about: Real objects, photos, pictures, symbols, written words, drawings, signs, facial expression and body language.

Why do we need visuals?

Many of the children within our Link community have significant difficulties understanding spoken language, making sense of body language or facial expression and being able to make themselves easily understood by others.

The use of visual support helps for both understanding of language and to be able to get your message across more clearly.

How do they help?

Understanding what is said:

Imagine constantly being spoken to in a new or usual language. You may

not recognise and understand the words said to you and feel completely isolated from the world around you. You may pick up on the occasional word and be able to add some knowledge from the context, but you are then likely to make mistakes and get it wrong - leading to low confidence and a reluctance to try again. If you are shown in a different way (e.g. a picture or a physical example) and not then relying on the spoken word alone, the message becomes clearer. Anxiety is reduced, resulting in increased confidence as you now understand, which can make such a difference to how you feel, react and function in a confusing world.

Many of our children process information at a slower rate and need more time to make sense of spoken words. A picture, symbol or a written word is a permanent representation, whereas a spoken word disappears once it has been said. Showing a picture for example, gives more time and a reminder of what has been said - helping them to focus on the key information and over time helping to further develop their vocabulary and language development.

The use of signing (at The Link usually Makaton) can be useful for gaining attention of children who find it difficult to focus. Signing also slows us down as speakers - we

focus on the key information and gives more time for the children to watch and take on board what is being said.

Expression:

In the same way, the use of visuals (pointing to signs, symbols, photographs) allows children who have difficulty with speaking another way of getting their message across - they can show you and give you extra clues as to what they mean. Think how babies look in the direction of what they want, point or physically take your hand and drag you to the item they want before they are able to speak. Communication is so much more than just a spoken word.

Visual Timetables:

In school we use visual timetables within our classroom as a way to show the children what is happening. It is all very well being told "maths is on Tuesday and Horse riding is on Thursday" but for children with short term memory difficulties and anxiety about what might happen next it can be very uncomfortable and fear inducing. By showing them in small steps what to expect each day or within the next couple of hours this can significantly reduce the anxiety as they can see for themselves and begin to anticipate. They can also refer back to a visual timetable many times to remind themselves

without having to constantly ask what's coming next - giving them confidence and a sense of peace about to expect.

Social stories:

Having a story or a visual representation for a certain event or to help you to remember how to act in certain situation can be very powerful and supportive. Again - just being told how to behave is so much harder to remember than actually being shown and having a permanent reminder that you can refer back to as many times as needed.

Why use visuals?

Think how much information you gain from visual representations is life - I'm sure you see the golden arches of Macdonalds on the road sign first and recognise other shop logos much quicker than you would by stopping to see what kind of shop it is.

How many of you have sat through episodes of Wallace and Gromit, Tom and Jerry or Pingu and been able to follow the story and know exactly what's going on before you realise that they use very little, if any comprehensible spoken words? Visual information is powerful!

Learning and navigating our world can be hard for many of our children. You may think they do not

need visual support and are managing just fine. But why not make use of a few simple tricks that may make life easier for them if we know these things help?

Understanding a new language can be tiring, confusing and stressful. We want to support our children to be at the optimum level of understanding, comfort and security in order that they can learn, flourish and thrive, not just survive.

.....

We were immensely proud of the School Council this week during our trip to St Michael's and All Angels Church. We had a warm welcome from Mother Bernie, who showed us round the church, garden and foodbank where we donated our Harvest donations on behalf of the Trussell Trust.



This wonderful visit incorporated so many of our Link Priorities:

LP 2 Community - Friendship

LP 3 Spiritual Development

LP 14 Emotional Development - Theory of Mind

LP 9 Community - able to manage different environments in the community.

LP 10 Community - Generalising skills - able to apply skills learnt in school in the community



WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING AT THE SATELLITE SITE?

It's been a busy week at the Satellite site this week.

This week, Artemus have been doing some work for Black History Month. Lucas, Leyland, Leo and Finley learnt about Martin Luther King Jr, Nelson Mandela, Rosa Parks and Mary Seole. They used their iPads to do their own research and find an interesting fact about them.



As it was World Mental Health Day, our wellbeing lead of school council, Leyland ran a clinic. A safe established safe space was established with wellbeing games to help discuss our emotions. It ended in a fun game of ghost chase with Roman, Blake, Lucas and Leyland. After half term, this will be a weekly club to support each other.

Our head of club management, Emily, introduced a Dungeons and Dragons club. It went really smoothly, especially as we are all learning the game. Emily is hoping to start a fitness club and cookery club this term.

Finally, we celebrated Harry Potter book day! We dressed up as our

favourite characters, there was a virtual lesson that we took part in and lots of other activities for everyone to enjoy.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING AT THE SECONDARY SITE?



What is Lexia?

Lexia is an interactive on-line programme that helps children develop their literacy skills independently and at their own pace. At the secondary site we use Lexia in English lessons once a week. Lexia can also be accessed by students at home, for homework purposes. **3 x 30-minute sessions is the recommended weekly usage.** Lessons provide opportunities to develop and consolidate language and literacy skills at the student's own pace. Targeted content helps our students build their listening, reading, and writing abilities. These opportunities can be:

- Responding to open-ended questions
- Building fluency with oral reading
- Engaging in collaborative discussions with peers

We, as a school, are provided with a full picture of academic progress

across the school year. This progress can be tracked school-wide, as well as within each of our form groups and at the individual student level. **We are able to see our students' strengths and needs, so we can intervene with the right help at the right time.**

How do our students use Lexia?

When a student first logs into Lexia they are given a one-time adaptive placement test that checks their word recognition, as well as their reading and listening comprehension. This helps the student to be put into the correct level for their lessons.

Students will begin each session with a warm-up activity, these are designed to engage them in the lesson and develop processing speed.

- At the start of each session our students will be shown:
 - Their individual usage goal
 - This week's progress towards their usage goal
 - The minutes needed to meet their usage goal
 - The number of units they have completed that week

All of this provides our students with **ownership of their individual progress** and provides them with **awareness of their individual performance.**

- The Lexia programme uses 3-step instructional branching:
 - Standard - This is the first step in a unit. If it is completed successfully the student will progress through the activity.
 - Guided Practice - This step is reached if errors are made during Standard mode and provides scaffolded practice to help correct those errors. If the student is successful, they are returned to Standard mode.
 - Instruction - This step is reached if errors are made in Guided Practice and explicit instruction is provided to help and support the student. Upon completion of this step the student is then returned to Standard.

If a student is really struggling with a lesson Lexia will generate an off-line lesson that is given by a

teacher on a one-to-one basis. In this way we can provide targeted support that really benefits our students.

It is due to this that it is vital that students complete each unit completely independently, with no help from adults here or at home. This is so we can see where our students are excelling and where they need guided support from us. When a student has completed a unit, they will be presented with a certificate in our Friday assembly. They will also be given a Skill Builder workbook; this is provided by Lexia and is a great way to embed the learning from the completed unit. For our older students (KS4/5) this will be handed to the student directly to be completed at home and returned to their English teacher by the date indicated on the cover sheet of the workbook.

Our recently appointed Lexia Lead is Nicola Wythe. If your child should have a query relating to Lexia, they are encouraged to speak with Nicola.

So far this term, we have celebrated 3 of our students completing a unit on Lexia and we look forward to many more!

Website Link

[Lexia Learning](#)

Student Website Links

1. [Lexia Core 5](#)
2. [Lexia PowerUp](#)

User guide videos

1. Lexia Core 5: [Click here for user guide](#)
2. Lexia PowerUp: [Click here for user guide](#)

How-to guides

1. Lexia Core 5: [Lexia Core 5](#)
2. Lexia PowerUp: [Lexia PowerUp](#)

WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND AND ABOUT?

The PDA Society hosted a Q&A session in which guest speakers (including our principal, Sandy Turner) discussed effective provisions for PDA learners as part of a series of Q&A lives focusing on PDA and Education. This Q&A is suitable for both professionals and parents & carers.

Guest speakers included:

- **Jilly Davis**, Trustee & Education Lead for the PDA Society and consultant to the Robert Ogden NAS specialist school
- **Ceri Hamer**, Head of School for a mainstream primary in Lancashire

- **Sandy Turner**, Principal of the specialist provision The Link School in the borough of Sutton.

The session was a sell out, but you can pre-register for the recording of that session - the recording is due to be released, via our Training Hub, on 12th October 2023*

We are also delighted to confirm that due to a generous grant from The Openwork Partnership **this recording will be free until we've received a total of 500 live and recorded bookings.**

*(*The PDA Society reserve the right to amend the date the recording will be available at any time.)*

[Click here to pre-register here](#)

Please note, the recording will be available to you from the date of release for 14 days.

The pre-register button will open a new window to the PDA Society training hub where you will be asked to log in with either Facebook, Google, LinkedIn or an email address. Once you're logged in and the enrolment or purchase is complete, you will then be able to access the recording when it becomes available via [your dashboard](#) using the same login information.

For further information about using the PDA Society training hub, please refer to our [user guide](#).

The PDA Society training hub is hosted on a third party platform called Thinkific Labs Inc. By registering with and using the PDA Society training hub you agree to the following [Terms and Conditions](#) and [Privacy Policy](#).



NAS Surrey Branch is hosting a free family swimming session at the Spectrum Leisure Centre, Guildford at 6.30pm on **Saturday, 18th November.**

The event will be staffed by the NAS Professional Team from the Godalming Resource Centre. They will have exclusive use of the leisure pool, but the diving, lane and teaching pools will remain in use by other swimmers.

All children under 9 or non-confident swimmers must be accompanied by 1 adult for every 3 children in the pool.

If you would like to attend, please email SEResourcecentres@nas.org.uk with the following information:

- 1) Number of child places required
- 2) Number of accompanying adults who will be swimming
- 3) Ages and swimming ability of children under 18

Your place will be confirmed by email and you will get a reminder two days before the event.

A young man called Max who is a young ambassador and campaigner for the National Autistic Society is helping with a campaign to help get support in schools for other autistic children to ensure they don't go through the traumatic experience he had.



Max states “I know my experience isn’t unique. In fact, it’s very common. National Autistic Society research shows **only a quarter of autistic students are happy at school and nearly three quarters of parents or carers of autistic children say their child’s school**

is failing to meet their needs”

Help us to change that by making sure your MP is at the event so we can tell them to **Let Every Autistic Child Learn.**

[Invite my MP now](#)

Frylands Wood have let us know about two Christmas Event they are running.

On Saturday, 2nd December (10.00am to 4.00pm) they will holding a Christmas Market with lots of stalls. They are hoping it will be their grandest Christmas Market yet!

The on Saturday, 9th December (7.00pm until 9.00pm) they are holding their traditional carol singing event around the campfire. Tickets include a hot drink and snack. To purchase a ticket, please head to their website: <https://frylandswood.co.uk/events>

AND FINALLY

Sandy often uses the following quote when talking to staff and it is a firm reminder of how we plan our lessons and tasks

“Begin with the end in mind”

Steven Covey