



Step by Step Newsletter



March 2021

Step into spring!

Head's update

I read back on the March 2020 newsletter before penning this one, when the pandemic had just started to affect the school more significantly and what a year it has been. I don't think any of us could have anticipated the enormity of the situation and how much it would have dominated our lives in many different ways.

We were delighted to be able to accommodate all pupils for 5 days a week from 8th March and really hope that further school disruption for your children can be avoided. It will be more of a slow return to all of our normal activities, where we can get back out and utilise all of our community resources as we would wish. We aim to do this as soon as restrictions are lifted and we can gain access. Community participation is at the heart of our priority learning and we know how vital it is for everyone.

The AGM at the end of February did give me the opportunity to reflect on all the progress we have made over the past year, despite the adversity of the pandemic. My report and the minutes from the meeting accompany this newsletter, which I hope you gives you the opportunity to celebrate all the past 12 months' achievements with us, even from a distance.

The staff continue to amaze me with their resilience and in their commitment to assisting your child to make progress. We are currently in the process of reviewing and moderating all pupils' progress over the term, with our multi-disciplinary meetings. This combines evidence from all professional's working with your child across the school to provide a summary judgment of their progress and what we can do ensure they continue to make progress in the Summer Term.

The pupils just continue to amaze me, full stop!

Check out our Youtube channel for activities to do with your child, reading, cooking, Attention Autism and lots of fabulous exercise.

Parent Workshops – Sian to update

Ways forward after consultation

Sleep training info

Parent Survey Feedback

Thank you to all who responded to our annual survey in January. We had a 67% response rate, and again, the overwhelming majority of responses were positive.

100% of responses agreed that their child was happy and felt safe at school, were well looked after and well taught. 95% of responses agreed that their child makes good progress and the school is well led and managed.

Some of your comments about what the school does well included:

- Communication
- Treating your child as an individual
- Supporting you as well as your child
- Everything!
- Always ready to help and listen
- Teaching

Suggestions for further support included:

- More of what we do, after school clubs and holiday provision, allowing staff to be PAs
- More community visits (when Covid allows)
- More direct time with OT
- Teaching parents PECs
- Nothing – their support is excellent

A more detailed summary and responses to your questions will be sent out prior to the Easter holidays, so you can see how we have responded to your suggestions.



Office News

We have big news for this edition of the newsletter!

Sadly, Fiona will be leaving us at the end of this term. After 7 ½ years of excellent service, she has decided to take early retirement to spend more time with family members. We know that many of you have established a very positive relationship with Fiona and will miss her as much as we will do at school.

We have appointed a new administrator Allison Charman, who took up her post on 1st March and is currently doing a handover with Fiona, ready to take up the reins after Easter. We would like to officially welcome Alison to the team and are in no doubt that there will be a seamless handover and you will all get to know her very quickly.

Following the completion of the office work as part of the new build, we have been delighted to move back up to the first floor of the building. The office space the school was using on the ground floor of the building will now become a permanent home for an office, which gives us more space to work in. The DLS room will be relocated once the log cabin can be used again (as this is temporarily being used as an additional staffroom, due to pandemic restrictions). We look forward to welcoming you to our new spaces very soon.

And finally, I'm very pleased to announce the Deborah Kittow has become a permanent member of the team. Debbie has been contracting at the school since 2008 and works tirelessly behind the scenes making sure the schools finances are all in order. I'm delighted we've persuaded her to join us permanently

Build progress

The build is really beginning to take shape, with walls erected on the first floor and the new office area now being habitable (minus the heating at present though!)

I have included some up to date photos for you to view to get an idea of the current progress. We are still aiming to move into the new build during the INSET days at the end of the academic year.



Health and Safety

Staggered start/finish times

Thank you to those that have provided feedback about the staggered start and end times for pupils. The overwhelming consensus is that it has reduced stress levels with finding somewhere to park, as well as reducing the amount of time your child has to wait in the car prior to the start of the day.

Although originally introduced as a Covid measure, we shall be keeping this arrangement in place for the Summer Term whilst we continue to have reduced parking on site due to the new build.

Once the new build is complete we should have additional spaces for parking as two of the portacabins will be removed over the summer, creating more space and be able to park at the rear of the school once again.

Please remember to adhere to the speed limit when coming on site as there is a lot of movement around the school at all times.



Curriculum Team

Primary – Sarah-Jane

To celebrate World Book Day on 4th March we shared the book 'The Great Pet Sale'. The pupils enjoyed listening to the story and counting out the giant coins to pay for the pets in our role play pet shop.



We also had a lovely time making rice crispie cakes with World Book Day cake toppers to decorate them.



Governor News

We formally appointed Bronwyn to our board of governors at our AGM, Stuart as Chair and Jill as Deputy Chair. We also said goodbye to two governors, Kelly and Daniel who have stepped down.

We will be seeking new parent governors during the course of next year and Gayle would be delighted to have a conversation with any parents who feel they might be interested. The school was set up by parents and they have always been an integral part of our school community. Alternatively, you could speak to one of our current parent governor's to gain a more detailed understanding of the role.

Our governors are linked to areas of the inspection framework. Currently these are:

- Stuart (Chair, Leadership and Management and Finance)
- Jill (Deputy Chair, Quality of Education, Health and Safety)
- Bronwyn (Safeguarding, Finance)
- Athene (Behaviour and Attitudes)
- Catherine (Personal Development)
- Claire W (Staff governor)

Curriculum Team

Secondary - Nicole

This Term, Secondary classes have been looking at the topic 'Funny Bones'. They have explored the bones in their bodies and have made vertebrae from egg cups, ribs from cotton buds, and bones from paper mache. They have been working on labelling bones including skull, ribs and pelvis, and locating them through matching, with a visual cue or through memory.

Both secondary classes showed a lot of enjoyment playing the 'operation' game, working on their fine motor skills and turn taking ability. S1 have generally enjoyed learning about bones but showed a lot of interest in trying new foods (when learning about food groups) and trying different types of exercises in the gym (when exploring ways to keep our bones healthy).

Leavers and Joiners

Welcome to our new starters Allison and Carina since our last newsletter in December, who have joined the admin teams.

Well done to Kim, Hollie, Amy, Katie for passing their probation and moving to Tutors. Well done also to Vikki (add names) and who are now Senior Tutors.

Following the departure of Ella, Jasmin has been promoted to Trainee Tutor from her Support Assistant Role and we have appointed Joanne in her place.

Lucy has also left full-time employment with us but continues to support when she can by doing supply work for us.

We have recruited a psychology undergraduate, Martha, who will be joining us next year for her year's work placement.

The summer term is always our busiest when we recruit for new tutors to work with us at the beginning of the next academic year. All posts are advertised on the school website, so do signpost people to this if they are interested in becoming part of our team.



Rainbows

Sophie - Class Leader

The surprise visit of Snow meant that Rainbow Class could go on a Snowy Walk to Blacklands farm. Everyone enjoyed the looking at the snow covered tress, and running around. All the pupils enjoyed being outside and enjoy going on our weekly walks.

Rainbow Class have welcomed all our pupils back in school and have enjoyed Fun with Friends group during lunchtimes. The pupils have played games: Connect four, pop-up Pirates. The visit of the sunshine has meant pupils have been outside playing in the playground. We enjoy playing chase with our peers.



Gruffalos

Caroline - Class Leader

Pupils in Gruffalo class have continued with their hard work and having fun at school. Everyone has really enjoyed participating in curriculum groups covering E-safety and making their own fire engines. Everyone also enjoyed taking part in OT groups where they baked and then ate cupcakes. Being restricted on suitable and safe outings due to Covid-19, the pupils have really liked going on walks to Blacklands farm, practicing safe road crossing on their way. They have loved jumping in the puddles whilst getting some fresh air.



S4

Isaline - Class Leader



Pupils in S4 have been adapting to therapy lessons on the laptop with evident enjoyment



A snowy walk at Blacklands Farm was wonderful for all the pupils and tutors



OT Exercise Groups give the pupils fitness and fun

Otters

Amy - Class Leader



As part of OT group, Otter class have been completing yoga. They are doing great with following the group leader and becoming more independent with the routine!

In curriculum groups Otter class have been learning how to keep safe. This has included internet safety and fire safety.



Senior Leadership Team News

Welcome back Bekah!

Step by Step School Conference

DIARY DATES

End of Spring Term

Thursday 1st April (2 o/c finish for pupils)

End of Summer Term

Wednesday 21st July

INSET Days

Thursday 22nd/Friday 23rd July – moving into new building

Parent Workshops

These will be resuming shortly – date if available

One parent asked a question regarding INSET days over the course of the year. We have between 5-8 INSET days over the year, dependent on our School Improvement Priorities. This year we will have 6 days in total.

Our term dates are the same as all Local Authority East Sussex School's, which has been the case for many years.

Therapy Team

In therapies it has been a busy term. We have been working creatively with our pupils and their class teams to make sure that therapy is taking place virtually. Some pupils have surprised us with how engaged they are in the sessions online. In addition, class teams have been sending videos to us to show progress pupils are making and we are discussing strategies regularly to overcome any barriers presented.

Therapist Training

This term each therapist has completed further training to continue our professional development and to provide training for the rest of the staff team in the future.

- Jess Wanstall (Speech and Language Therapist) has attended the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) training.
- Sian Kelly (Occupational Therapist and Therapy Lead) has attended Sleep Right training. This means that Step by Step is now a Sleep Right accredited school. Sian will be delivering training for staff in this area over the next few weeks. In addition there will be a workshop available for parents to attend in the remainder of this year.
- Rebecca Williams (Speech and Language Therapist) has completed training to become a Signalong Tutor to deliver training to staff in the school. Rebecca is very excited to begin delivering training to staff who are new to using a sign supported system so that we can furthermore support our pupils understanding and use of language.

Virtual resources

Just a reminder that we do have some Attention Autism videos on the schools you tube channel for you to view at home with pupils. These have some fun ideas in them and also give you an idea of some of the sessions we deliver in school.

Enjoying a new way of therapy sessions (but looking forward to getting back into the classrooms!)



Therapy Resources!

We have seen some courses, offers, and charity projects that may benefit our pupils at home and wanted to share them with you

Little Parachutes are a collection of picture books that help children cope with worries, health issues, and new experiences:

<https://www.littleparachutes.com/?fbclid=IwAR0jtVwtfRFZ3-XTiew88IfkZvSW8ktskOesl2ZpTO97-34A1jo2OueMQms>

You may be interested in applying for a sensory pack from Claudwell Children. Follow this link for more information on what's available and eligibility:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/CaudwellChildrenGetSensoryPackApplicationForm>

SALT ideas??

School will close at 2 pm on Thursday 1st April for the Easter holidays. Please remember to collect your child at that time or inform your child's transport.

Secondary 1

Secondary 1 have been enjoying learning about bones and celebrations during their curriculum groups. They have been working on building their independence whether it's individually or during groups. This has included a range of skills from hand washing to completing times tables challenges, with every member of the class growing in independence.



6th Form 1

Carly - Class Leader

Before February half term, the Sixth Form 1 pupils voted on a special end of half term activity. The pupils practised their conversation skills by inviting the tutors from S1 to join us. On the day, the pupils took turns selecting songs to dance to, chose some party clothes to wear and practised their money skills by buying some party snacks.



We chose glowsticks to wear.



The pupils took turns demonstrating their favourite dance moves for the tutors to copy.



6th Form 2

Claira - Class Leader

Sixth Form 2 have ensured Lockdown hasn't stopped them from getting outside! Whether it was walks at Blacklands Farm, the allotment to begin preparations for spring planting, or embracing the snow.



Snow angels... River paddling in the sunshine at Blacklands Farm.... Parachute games on a sunny, windy day to build on their social skills as a group, make choices and best of all have lots of fun!

Sixth Form Curriculum Group

Sarah Wells and Lizzie - Teachers

This term Sixth Form have continued to do a fantastic job at the allotment. They have been weeding, turning the soil, spreading compost and covering the ground all in good preparation to sew new crops during the spring.

The pupils have enjoyed their ASDAN topic of 'Things we can do independently'. They have been practicing safe shopping skills following the government guidelines using our tuck shop area on site. Additionally, they have made lemonade and sunshine bars using the items they were able to buy. Recently they have also learned about other things we can do independently such as, keeping ourselves clean.

Sixth form have been doing a fantastic job at using learned skills such as stenciling to paint and decorate bird feeders as part of their mini enterprise. They will eventually be able to sell these in the tuck shop.

Finally, the students did brilliant during our fire safety topic we organised this term. They learned to use the term 'fire' and how to keep safe by evacuating the building quickly and calmly when they hear the alarm.

