

Dear Families,

Last week was children's mental health week and we had a visit on Friday from Jess and Charlotte from the NHS Mindmate team again. This time we were thinking about big emotions and how we can learn to manage them when they happen. I was very proud of how much the children remembered from the last visit and they learned a new breathing technique, 'snake breaths' to add to the 'Bunny Breathing' already in their repertoire.

The children have also been enjoying learning about tactics and practising their team games skills in PE at the moment. I must say they are brilliant at listening to instructions and following them so we can all enjoy the new games.

In phonics over the last two weeks we have we have learned the long 'oo', short 'oo', 'ar', 'or' and 'ur'. We have been practising writing tricky words 'no', 'go', 'the' and 'to' and reading new tricky words 'you' and 'they'. All the children now have the tricky word list 4 to practise at home and the only word we haven't done on that list is 'here', which we will be look at after half-term. The children's writing is really coming on and we will be focusing more on writing sentences from dictation over next half-term. Some of the children have already started having a go at composing their own captions or sentences to write down when we work together, and also through lots of child-initiated writing, which they have been using to support their own play. You will have noticed writing a caption was a task I included in the homework this week. Remember to keep your captions short and simple if you do more at home. Say the words together and see if the children can remember what order to write them in before segmenting each word in turn. Holding a sting of words in their heads is a very tricky thing to do at this stage but they will get there with practise. Spaces between words is also really important and we usually refer to them as 'finger' spaces at school. As well as during choosing time, the children used their developing writing skills to write the targets for our PSHE 'Going for Goals'. I have seen a big improvement in the children's alphabet recital, as well as identifying individual letters by their 'names', these are both things we have been working hard on through different games and activities.

Over the past two weeks in maths we have been comparing height, length and time, which the children were very good at. We thought about numbers, counting order and representations, consolidating understanding of numbers to eight using games as well as the ten frames and counters. We also shared one of my favourite picture books called 'Window' by Jeannie Baker, which links to many areas of the wider school curriculum as well as maths, including history, geography and science (Understanding World in our Early Years curriculum). The 'story', which we told together whilst looking carefully at each picture from the book on the interactive white board, is about a little boy growing up in Australia. Each of the pictures are two years apart (the children cleverly deduced this by seeing birthday cards on the inside windowsill). In each picture we see how the environment in which Sam lives is changing over time and how his window, which initially looks out into the Australian countryside, ends up looking onto a busy street. The children showed great powers of observation and, amongst other things, learned that the little boy was called Sam. After sharing the book and talking about how the environment outside Sam's house changed over the years, from countryside to busy town, the children all drew a picture of what they would like to see from their window.

In RE with Mrs Minshull over the last two weeks the children have thought about Jesus as a boy, compared how he might have lived to how we live today and changes over time. They shared the story of Jesus visiting the Temple when he was twelve years old and how he got separated from his parents. Mary and Joseph thought he was lost, but he was in the temple talking with the wise men

about God, who he called His father. The children enjoyed the story and used the pictures to help them retell it in their own word.

Mrs Jarvis has given me the following information about her music lessons: *In music lessons, we learnt how sound effects can help to tell a story. We read the story of Jack and the Beanstalk and thought about the different sound effects that might fit into the story. Then we listened to a version of the story with lots of sound effects. We had a lovely discussion about how this made the story more interesting and helped us to use our imagination. We sang some songs related to Jack and the Beanstalk, learnt how to speak and walk like the giant, and played the Bean game – our favourite was the French bean!*

*This week we listened to the Australian traditional story of Tiddalik the Frog and to a song written about the story. Firstly, we had a look at a map of Australia to see where in the world it was and had some interesting conversations about what life might be like there. We identified the musical techniques that were used in the song to reflect the words and help to tell the story. We looked at the fast and slow rhythms, picking them out of the song and clapping them. We listened carefully for the high and low notes. The children heard some special words which helped to tell the story like 'swish' and 'rumble'. We found out about an Australian musical instrument called the didgeridoo and listened to the very unusual sound that it makes.*

There has been lots of lovely role play based on the story of The Wizard of Oz and the children were keen to watch the whole film (the 1939 version), from which I took the pictures and clips a couple of weeks ago. I sent an email out yesterday to get your permission to do this, as it is a PG certificate. Although the film is not as graphic as many modern films, for even young children these days, I do think it has some scary parts (but maybe that's just me remembering when I saw it as a child). I hadn't heard anything back by this morning, so we started the first part and will return after the holidays to continue following Dorothy and her new friends on their adventure to see the Wizard.

Thank you for your support for the Book Fair. I took the children in yesterday afternoon as a little treat and they had a good look at some lovely books together.

I haven't sent dinner menus, as from now on the children will be choosing their dinner each morning, as they do in Class Two. We will help them of course and you can always see what's for lunch on the school website if you still want to help them choose. I also haven't sent any specific homework for the half-term, as the children all deserve a rest. However, I put an extra reading scheme book in everyone's reading folder and you all have a new mini book. You can of course look back at the old phonics books and mini books to go over GPC, tricky words and correct letter formation, as well as the alphabet names. For maths practise you can count anything and everything and help the children see relationships between and within numbers to ten and beyond if you wish, as well as numeral recognition of course. Most of all though, enjoy family time and have a great half-term. I look forward to seeing you all on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> February.

Have a great week everyone and stay safe, I think there are some nasty bugs going around. Kind regards from Mrs Watts.