

# Links Journal

## Spring Term 2021



Dear Parents and Carers

I find it very difficult to believe that we are looking at the end of a very busy term. The first half of the Spring Term felt a little bit lonely as all our neighbouring schools were shut and we remained

open. Things feel a little more normal since the return of all children to schools on Monday 8 March 2021.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your ongoing support over the last 12 months and especially the students and staff for their co-operation and support. Without this it wouldn't have been possible to remain open.

The school will re-open to students on Wednesday 14 April 2021, Monday 12 April 2021 being an Inset Day and Tuesday 13 April 2021 a Student Parent Review Day. We will also be continuing with the Lateral Flow Tests for staff and students for the foreseeable future and I would like to thank everybody for their co-operation in recent months.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a healthy and quiet Easter/Spring break. I look forward to welcoming you all back on 14 April 2021.

Best wishes and kind regards.

David Allen, Headteacher



### School Calendar

#### Term Ends

Friday 26 March 2021

@ 12.30pm

#### Easter Break

29 March — 9 April

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#### INSET DAY

Monday 12 April

No Students in school

#### Parent Review Day

Tuesday 13 April

Form Tutors will arrange a convenient time to meet with Parents & Students (Virtually)

#### Term Starts

Wednesday 14 April

#### Half Term

1 — 4 June

Happy Easter  
Everyone

Links Academy welcomes comments from parents/carers and families about any aspect of school life.

Please contact us via our email [admin@linksacademy.herts.sch.uk](mailto:admin@linksacademy.herts.sch.uk)

[www.linksacademy.herts.sch.uk](http://www.linksacademy.herts.sch.uk) to view Ofsted reports, key dates, journals and school information

# Attendance

When we returned to school in January at the start of the Spring Term, the country remained in the midst of another national lockdown due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The announcement made by the Prime Minister on 4 January 2021, confirmed that schools and colleges would be closed for a further lockdown period.

At Links Academy, we knew that this announcement would mean no change from the previous lockdowns, as being a setting for vulnerable young people, we would remain open for all students.

Our challenge was .... **How** do we get our students to engage in school and physically attend school, especially if a student's siblings, friends and peers didn't have to attend school because their settings were closed?



A challenge we undertook and throughout the lockdown period students continued to attend school. By the end of the first week 60% of our students were attending school which increased to 80% by the end of the lockdown period.

For those who were unable to attend, learning packs were delivered and teaching staff remained in regular contact both via telephone and virtually with students throughout and door step home visits were made by the Senior Leadership Team.

## **Post lockdown .... 90% of students are back in school.**

Rewards for good attendance still remain very important and have a positive impact on students. Tokens have continued to be earned by students achieving 100% attendance each week, with a further token for 100% punctuality for the week.



At Cedars PSB, the attendance during the Spring Term has been outstanding, achieving 98% attendance since the beginning of January.

A well-deserved reward will be hopping its way over to the students at the PSB at the end of term in recognition of their **egg-cellent** achievement.



*Mrs S Porritt/Attendance Officer*

# School Clubs

## History Club

I have run a History Club this term that centres on film. KS3 students have attended this weekly and enjoyed discussing *The Pianist* in order to broaden their understanding of the Holocaust and life in Nazi Germany for those persecuted on account of their culture and ethnicity. This has taught them more about empathy and added weight to their study of Hitler and Germany in their history lessons this term.



*Miss A Thomas/Teacher of Humanities and English*

Dodgeball has become a much-anticipated lunchtime activity which students from all years get involved in every week. Many staff are also eager to join in some friendly competition with the students. Initial rules are laid out by staff, which the students do very well to follow. It is great to see so many of the students work together creating tactics to help their side win.

## Dodgeball Club



*Mr M Broadbridge/Teacher of PE*

## YCH Services

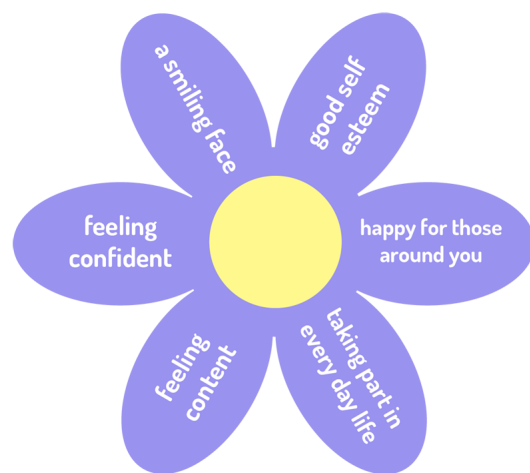


My name is Marie and I work for YCH Services for Young People, who are part of Hertfordshire County Council. YCH provides youth work projects, information, advice and guidance, work related learning and wider support for young people in Hertfordshire.

There is a wide range of youth work projects across the county in which young people can get involved. Through these projects they meet new people, learn new skills and take part in challenging opportunities. They are encouraged to develop their personal and social skills by taking part in activities including sports, drama, dance and music.

YCH also have access points around the county where young people can arrange to meet with an adviser and have a 1:1 conversation with them about a range of subjects, including career advice, health and emotional wellbeing.

I have been working with the Links Academy for six years now and my role is to help and support the students, particularly Year 11. The aim is to give them some career options and ideas for when they leave school and hopefully move forward into their chosen career paths.



**Ms M Nissen**

## Outreach News

I am writing this article on the first day of schools being fully open following Covid 19. It is so exciting to see all the children making their way to school this morning. The Outreach Team have continued to work with children and schools remotely during the Spring Term, however, we are very excited to be going back into schools as we have missed the children so much.



We are busy preparing the Year 6 Transition Programme early this year, as there are not any Year 6 SATS. This will allow primary schools to deliver the programme at a time that will suit them. Following a consultation with secondary schools to explore how the present Year 7 have managed transition, we have established that many children have experienced anxiety during the last year.



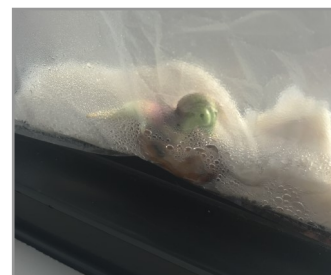
The Outreach Team have worked with other professionals in preparation to support children with this and here are a few tips to support emotional wellbeing/anxiety:-

- Remember each child's anxiety will be unique and stem from different sources. Anxieties may link to the virus itself, changes of routine, a different cohort of friends or adults in school etc. Identify the route of the anxiety before planning how to support your child best.
- Take it slow! The steps to overcoming anxiety are often very small and slow, but this doesn't mean you are failing. Don't be disheartened if you take a step back every now and then. Focus on the destination and don't worry what shape the journey is.
- Offer your child opportunities to ask questions about what is happening, etc. Some children may prefer/find it easier to write down their questions or worries and post them in a box or a worry monster as an alternative to asking questions directly.
- Talk about positive things to look forward to and what is going well.
- Address any anxieties with the minimum amount of factual information to satisfy their worries and avoid adding your opinion. Remember, the priority is to make our children feel safe. For some children, this means having all the facts and figures!
- Practise a range of relaxation techniques with your child to ensure that they have strategies to reduce their anxiety at times of need. These may include breathing techniques and mindfulness activities. Examples can be found online.

**Mrs V Alderman/Outreach Worker**



During the Spring Term we have been growing plants and bean seeds. Our students created their own experiment to find out the best conditions for growth of a seed. We were amazed with our results!



We created our own dinosaur habitats and made a documentary about them. We had to research all about our dinosaur and we found out some amazing facts! Did you know a dragon fly existed during the dinosaur era? We also watched 'Walking With Dinosaurs' and saw a range of dinosaurs, our favourites were the Sea Monsters!

We used the film 'Cloudy with a chance of meatballs' as a stimulus for writing for our English lessons. We made our own 'foodimals' and then created our stories with our creations. Our students loved creating our foodimals and we had some fantastic ideas for our writing.



We reached our goal for our Class Dojo points and were rewarded with a McDonald's trip. We chose what we wanted and calculated how much it would cost. The McDonald's was well deserved by Cedars as all of our students have tried extremely hard to work towards their targets.

We've been looking at the world and our planet. We explored different natural disasters and looked at the planets. We found out lots of information and had fun in making our own volcano which erupted!

**Miss N Di Tella/PSB Teacher**



Another successful period at the Woollam Inclusion unit. We have all been working under strange conditions with COVID-19, but the students have adapted brilliantly and do the testing much better

than most of the adults, me included! Evie continues to do well in both the class and the PSB work experience she is doing. She has also undertaken a Childcare Course at the main site, which is also going well. Frank has re-joined us and settled well, completing some components of his functional skills English. Mo continues to surprise me with his levels of engagement and progress. His reading age has shot up by two years in three months, and his ability to interpret books will hold him in good stead in the future. Leland has produced some excellent work, especially in English, where he has passed his functional skills speaking and listening and is ready for his reading component. Well done Leland and Miss Fields. It was lovely to see Citrine back at Links, and she has had some excellent sessions, passing her reading component of Level 1 functional skills English, as well as taking level 1 Maths. The last student to report on is Rio, who is new to Links. He has settled well and we will help him to get as much accreditation as possible in the time he has with us. It just leaves me to thank Miss Fields for her contribution this term, and Mr Holgate for just being excellent. Have a great Easter and see you in the Summer Term.



*Mr S Boatwright/Senior Practitioner*

## HEALTHY LIFESTYLES



I would like to introduce myself to you, as I will already have met your child in school and possibly worked with them one-to-one.

My background is in substance misuse and I have worked in both drug/alcohol treatment and education for over 20 years. Some of my previous roles have included working for the Youth Service (now called YC Herts), the Probation Service, Herts County Council (as a school consultant), the Adolescent & Families Drug & Alcohol Service for Herts (AFDASH), and several drug treatment charities across our county. Prior to joining the Links, I worked for the Community Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), setting up the new Mental Health Support Team for St Albans schools.

Having joined the Links Academy in October last year I've been made to feel very welcome by the staff and students alike. There is a 'family' feel and a positive, friendly attitude which I have not experienced in other schools, so it's a pleasure to work here!

My role is to provide advice, support and information to the school community around their mental and physical health and well-being. This supports the work of the pastoral team and includes topics such as drug awareness, healthy relationships, sleep hygiene, healthy eating, exercise, anger management, and generic mentoring. It's very much a supportive, nurturing role rather than a traditional counselling one, so students who require a higher level of support can be signposted to the relevant service accordingly.



I work across the three Links Trust sites of Hixberry, Woollam and Hatfield, as well as two additional mainstream schools, Marlborough Science Academy and Roundwood Park in Harpenden. Occasionally I provide training sessions for other school staff/students who may choose to buy me in on an ad-hoc basis.

My intention is to provide a safe space for our young people to talk about their lives and experiences, to air their problems, and to give advice and direction which enables them to make pro-social life choices and informed decision-making.

Additional elements of my role include promoting local & national health campaigns (such as *Dry January* and *Mental Health Support Week*), developing staff support (via Well-Being Wednesdays), presenting updates at secondary Heads meetings, and recently becoming a COVID-19 lateral flow tester.

I've really enjoyed working with the students and particularly our departing Year 11s, whom I wish a very happy and healthy life, whatever they choose to do after leaving our school. Their progress has been amazing!

**Mr Richard Boxer/Healthy Lifestyles Lead**

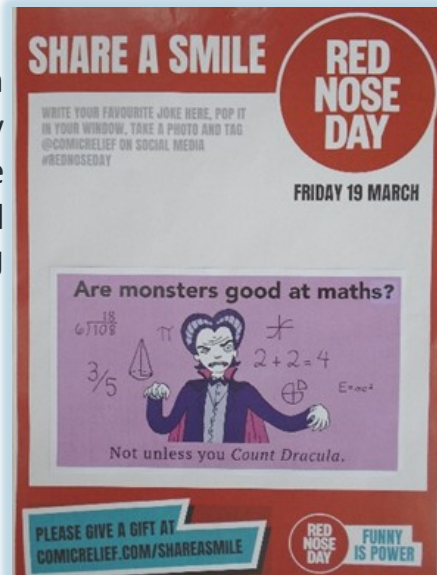


## RED NOSE DAY



19 March 2021 was the **RED NOSE DAY** and of course we all excitedly got involved. Unable to wear the traditional red noses with our face masks, Links have fashioned their own red noses that fit over a facemask. We still “bought” them and managed to raise £26.50 for the charity.

We also all wrote our favourite jokes and placed them on display in our classroom windows. Some were obviously funny and some needed explaining. After a quick vote the winning joke was: ‘*Are monsters good at maths?*’, and the answer was: ‘*Not unless you Count Dracula*’ (by Mrs J Malpas).



## St Patrick's Day



The world may be in a pandemic but nothing stops the Links Academy staff from an excuse to celebrate. This year is no exception. All in green, but not with envy, Happy St Patricks Day! Up goes the Flag of Ireland and somehow, on this day, everyone seemed to have developed an Irish accent which varied from sounding like a Leprechaun to being Jamaican! Let's just hope at the end of this mock exam week the year 11 have the 'Luck of the Irish'.





# British Science Week



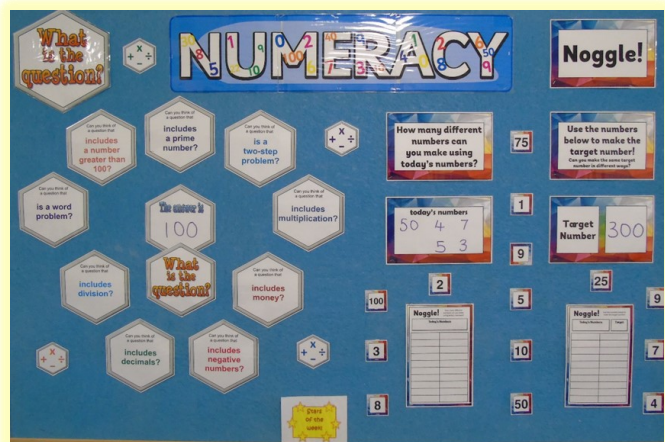
This year's theme

was ***Innovating For the Future***. Here at Links Academy, the teachers enthusiastically looked into how their subjects could be taught in the not-too-distant future. Looking at the display board it appears as if virtual reality will feature greatly; from



3D hologram dissections in Biology to being on stage at the Globe Theatre reciting Shakespeare. Most subjects look like they will be taught more practically, including Maths. But what is amazing to see is that Science is driving the way to a future that uses less resources, with paperwork becoming nearly obsolete. With Media reporting doom and gloom for our future generations, this week has shown us that there are steps being taken to improve our effect on the environment and our lives. After this week the future is looking to be truly bright!

**Mrs G Trotman/Teacher of Science**



## WELLBEING

As part of the staff's '**Wellbeing Wednesday**' activities, Mr Broadbridge put together 'The Links Quiz of Greatness'. Living up to its rather confident title, the quiz was a big success. This was a fantastic way to unleash the competitive side many members of staff hide so well. It was great to see staff come together on Microsoft Teams to take part in an activity which really highlighted the level of random knowledge Links staff have.



### **Other Wellbeing Wednesday activities have included:**

- a Design & Technology session crafting a wooden plaque (to be used when the sunflower growing competition starts or the tree planting begins) and dedicating these to loved ones or those we have lost to the pandemic;
- outdoor activities weeding the flower beds and prepping the herb garden for use in the kitchen;
- a Comedy Mystery Tour which consisted of comedy-based puzzles leading to a link to a new sitcom about a Pupil Referral Unit;
- an Indian Head Massage workshop using the Health & Beauty room's dummies;
- and a 'Just Dance' session, throwing shapes and busting moves to complicated dance routines.

We will also be encouraging staff to use the gym and meditation space after Easter when they open up again. Everyone needs exercise, rest and relaxation!



*Mr Richard Boxer/Healthy Lifestyles Lead*





### Helping Children Thrive Into The New Normal

#### **A six-session course with worksheets**

The coronavirus has forced children and families to deal with uncertainty head on. As you continue adapting to the latest information, you and your children may be anxious for a whole host of reasons, leaving you and them feeling stressed, overwhelmed, or exhausted.

There is an immediate need to preserve children's wellbeing and build resilience at this point in history, where it is genuinely needed. To support this need, *Bounce Forward* have developed a series of sessions to help parents help their children cope and thrive.



The sessions provide reflective and practical approaches in resilience to support positive changes in cognition and behaviour. Parents will learn how to build skills to help their children be more resilient during this uncertain time.

Please use the website below to book on to the course:

<https://bounceforward.com/raise-resilience-hertfordshire-parents/>

***Miss G Nash/Assistant Headteacher***

