



11TH FEBRUARY 2022

NEWSLETTER

office@linkprim.org.uk
office@linksec.org.uk

020 8688 5239
020 8688 7691

DATES FOR THE DIARY

14th - 18th February 2022

SPRING HALF TERM - No School

Wednesday, 2nd March

9.30 - 12.00 - being held at the Primary School

Parent Information and Coffee Morning
"Understanding Myself and Others"

Wednesday, 16th March

9.30 - 12.00 - being held at the Primary School

Parent Information and Coffee Morning
"Early Communication"

Friday, 1st April 2022

END OF TERM - EARLY CLOSURE FOR PUPILS

4th April - 18th April 2022

SPRING HOLIDAY

Tuesday, 19th April 2022

INSET DAY - staff only

Wednesday, 20th April 2022

SUMMER TERM COMMENCES

We end the first half of the spring term with the news that the Government are relaxing the rules surrounding Covid.

Although this news may cause anxiety to some, it is something we all have to embrace, albeit being mindful that if your child is ill, do keep them off until they are better, even though they no longer have to isolate.

The good news this brings is that we can open up our schools to visitors again and our Parent Information and Coffee Mornings are back in the diary. These sessions are open to all parents and carers at both schools and we hope the programme we have put in place will have something of interest for all of you.

If you do intend to come along to one of the sessions, do let Sue or Karen know, so that we can cater accordingly.

Today also marks the end of Child Mental Health Week 2022. This year's theme was 'Growing Together' - a sentiment that the Link community embraces already.

Across the week, we have incorporated activities, which have made our learners take time to reflect on, embracing the positives within their lives and how challenges and sometimes setbacks can help us all to grow and adapt. Remember

We all grow at different rates and that's okay!

Have a lovely half term. We look forward to seeing all everyone return on Monday, 21st February.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING AT THE PRIMARY SCHOOL?

Here at the primary school, Sue Denman started our focus on Child Mental Health Week with a special 'Valentine's Assembly'. Everyone spoke about things they loved - the most popular choices were family and dogs.



Maple Class are enjoying growing together, often helped by celebrating personal achievements and special moments within the class. They had a lovely time on Monday celebrating Marigold's special day.

Some of the pupils from Beech and Willow Class visited Holly Lodge in Richmond recently to take part in their Mission Invertebrate workshop. Reinforcing work they have covered in class on minibeasts, Catherine thought the hands-on sensory workshop was invaluable in bringing the topic to life.



During their trip, the pupils got to visit the walled garden, where images of nature are depicted on a mural surrounding the perimeter. On return to school, Willow Class have created their own nature mural, which now takes pride of place in our atrium, alongside some beautiful paintings.



Growing together teaching life skills is something that Emma does regularly in her Life Skills Group.



Friendships are formed too during these small group / paired sessions.



Comic Strip Conversations (Carol Gray) are used at both schools and this week our therapy teams explain why and how we use them.

First, Lucinda Fordham explains how we use them at the primary school.

We all make guesses about what other people think, feel and believe throughout the day. We develop this ability intuitively during childhood, and go on developing it throughout our lives. For example, when watching a news event unfold on TV, we are able to feel with the people involved. We can guess what other people are feeling and thinking. This "mind reading" ability is what we use to make sense of our world and the other people in it. Children with autism have difficulty identifying the thoughts and feelings of others. They often also find it hard to understand why others do what they do.

For a child who is unable to make accurate guesses about what other people are thinking and feeling, other people's actions can seem random and unpredictable. The world of other people, in school or at home can seem like social chaos!

What is a **Comic Strip Conversation**?

- **Comic Strip Conversations (CSCs)** by Carol Gray, are a visual way to help explore a child's and others' thoughts and feelings about a situation.
- A Comic Strip is a drawing that you create with a child usually about a social situation or conversation they have found difficult or confusing.
- Comic Strip Conversations identify what people in a situation **say and do**, and emphasize **what they may be thinking**.
- They make it easier to explore and talk about feelings, because the focus is not directly on the child.
- Using a Comic Strip Conversation with a child can help them understand more about what the other people in the situation were thinking and feeling and why they did things. This can

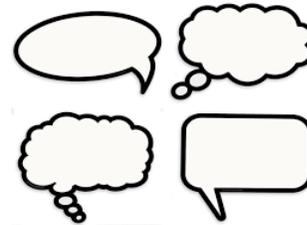
- explain why a misunderstanding happened.
- Comic strip conversations can give the adult excellent insight into what the **child's perspective** of the situation is.
 - Once there is a shared understanding, this gives us a good starting point to visually "work through" a problem situation and identify solutions.

What do they look like?



- The adult guides the student with questions to gather information about the situation to complete the picture.
- Questions include "Where were you?" "Who else was there?" "What were you doing?"; "What happened/What did others do?"; "What did you say?"; "What did others say?"; "What did you think when you said/did that?"; "What did others think when they said/did that?"; "How did you feel?" "How did others feel?"

- Speech bubbles are used to show what was said.
- Thought bubbles are used to show what the child and other people were thinking or may have been thinking.



- A child may have difficulty answering some of these questions. The adult can take this opportunity to share accurate social information (what the adult knows about what the other person thought, said or did). For example, a child may say "My teacher thinks 'I want Tom to sit in that chair and do number work all day'". The adult accepts the child's answer as valid and introduces another alternative idea. " Maybe your teacher was thinking ' I like Tom. I want him to learn, I also want him to have fun and play. Number work is first, then play' That may be what your teacher was thinking".
- When all the information has been gathered, adult and

child think of possible new responses for the child to use next time this situation happens.

This can help the child to understand how they might manage the same situation differently next time e.g. "next time you might come and ask a teacher first"

- Some children like to keep a folder of all their comic strip conversations to refer back to; others may want to throw them away once they have used them - either way is ok!
- It can be good to use a Comic Strip Conversation to show a child all the things they did right in a situation, not just to focus on times when things went wrong.

More information about Comic Strip Conversations can be found here

<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/communication/communication-tools/social-stories-and-comic-strip-conversations>
<https://carolgraysocialstories.com>

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING AT THE SECONDARY SCHOOL?

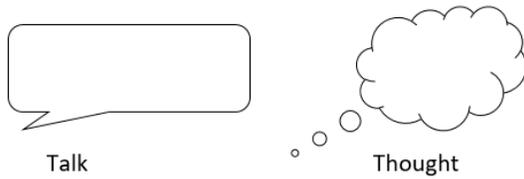
Our Speech and Language Therapy team at the secondary school now explains how comic strip conversations are used there:

Comic strip conversations help our students to:

- See a conversation represented visually
- Differentiate between what people say and what they think
- Understand the more abstract concepts in conversations through the use of drawings, colour and symbols
- Understand that what you say and think may be **different!**



There are two types of bubbles:



Colour is then added to the bubbles to show emotion:

- Green – good ideas, happy, friendly
- Red – bad ideas, teasing, anger, unfriendly
- Blue – sad, uncomfortable
- Yellow – frightened
- Black – facts, things we know
- Orange – questions
- Purple – proud
- Brown – comfortable, cosy
- Mixture - confused

Comic Strip conversations can be used to understand situations that a student is finding difficult, help to plan future events, explore characters in books and develop understanding of historical events.



For more information, please contact the Therapy department at the Link Secondary School.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND AND ABOUT

Sutton Parent Carer Forum are meeting on Tuesday, 22nd February (10.00-12.00) at Sutton Salvation Army Church, 45 Benhill Avenue, SM1 4DD to discuss "What would you like your child or young person (aged 0-25) to be able to access as part of their short breaks or care package?"

With representatives attending from Sutton's Commissioning Team, CYPDS (Children and Young People's Disability Service) and Adults with Learning Disabilities (age 25+) any questions you may have about short breaks and what happens when input is made to your child's EHCP will be answered.

Together with Sutton Council, Sutton Parent Carer Forum are offering morning and after sessions at their 'Play and Stay' on Tuesday, 15th and Thursday 17th February during half term. The theme is 'Alice in Wonderland' and all sessions are for children with additional needs or disabilities (aged 0-10yrs) and their parent/carers and siblings.

Morning sessions are 10.00-12.00
Afternoon sessions are 1.30 - 3.30

30 places are available at each session and will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

To book a place email: suttonparentsforum@outlook.com

MORE DETAIL ON OUR PARENT INFORMATION AND COFFEE MORNINGS

Wednesday, 2nd March
9.30 - 12.00

UNDERSTANDING MYSELF AND OTHERS

In order to understand others, we must first understand ourselves. Emotions and Interacting with others can be very difficult for our children. This session will focus on Theory of mind - that is the ability to imagine what others may be thinking.

We will look at Social Stories and Comic Strip conversations.

Everyone will be very welcome. You may find this session particularly useful if you have a child in Oak, Hazel, Maple or Pine class at the Primary school, but the session is open to secondary school parent and carers too.

Wednesday, 16th March

9.30 - 12.00

EARLY COMMUNICATION

This session will focus on encouraging early communication skills. Gaining and keeping hold of children's attention long enough for them to begin to share communication with us.

We will look at Attention Autism, Intensive Interaction and Interactive Music making. Everyone will be very welcome, and you may find this session particularly helpful if you have a child in Acorn, Willow, Beech or Maple Class.

AND FINALLY

Parents of pupils who are entitled to free school meals will receive a £15 supermarket gift card to help towards the cost of lunchtime meals during half term. These cards will be delivered by Wonde and should have arrived by Friday, 11th February. Please do check both your inbox and your junk mail.

