



Newsletter

Autumn 2: December 2020



We want to start this newsletter by wishing every member of our Sunfield community- staff, children, young people, families, local authority social care and education teams, our NHS partners- a very merry Christmas! To say that this year has been challenging would be a serious understatement, but we could not be more proud of and inspired by the work that everyone at Sunfield has put in to ensure that our children and young people continue to be safe, well cared for, and supported to develop their

independence and education. This could not have happened without the contribution of every member of the community of Sunfield and we would like to share our utmost appreciation with each and every one of you.

We are happy to share that, during this difficult period, Sunfield has not just coped with the circumstances, but has continued to celebrate our children and young people's achievement and to grow as a community. We have had a number of new learners join Sunfield over the past term and are looking forward to welcoming more at the start of the New Year. In addition, we are actively recruiting in all of our staff teams and developing more areas of the site, such as the children's garden and hazel and willow field. Perhaps more importantly, we have been able to celebrate the season through a socially-distanced Advent festival and even managed to fit in a visit from Santa.

We believe Sunfield is a very special place and have striven this term to retain a sense of joy in the work that we do. Hopefully that feeling comes across in this newsletter, with contributions on our Advent celebration, an update from our therapy team, and an overview of some developments in our safeguarding programme.

Advent at Sunfield Celebration

“We must seek the things that are subtle and quiet

And venture forth to gain the light”

Christian Morgenstern 1871-1914

The celebration of the festival of Advent at Sunfield marks a special time of the year for our community. Four weeks before Christmas, when the days are short and we enter the period when winter’s dark and cold become prominent, we gathered in St Marys Hall to celebrate the light in the darkness. This year has presented us with special challenges due to the COVID crisis. This year, the children and young people visited the spiral in their allocated groups due to the COVID situation. They had participated in collecting greenery from the land for our spiral and put an individual candle into candle holders that they had made. They



then were present in the spiral and their individual candle contributed to the greater light of the whole spiral.

This image of collective candle light is a powerful and visceral experience which many of the children anticipate. During the celebration, each group heard a short Advent reading and Christmas music, experiencing the peace of the candle light and of becoming part of the light shining in the darkness. At this time when social distancing has given us challenges, the children touched the apples and greenery and the festival marked a very deep sensory experience. They experienced the balance in the picture of the spiral, the soft candlelight in sight, the life and smell of the greenery, the deep emotional warmth of the experience, the hearing of special music, the Word read in the form of the beginning of the gospel of St John (“In the beginning was the Word”) and knew that their unique individuality is being honoured by the placing of their own candle onto the vibrant green spiral. This gentle but powerful experience has become a special moment for the Sunfield community where both individuality and community are celebrated in the lead up to Christmas.

Richard Tucker

Head of Training, Sunfield

Therapy team update

December, being the last month of the year, brings us the opportunity to reflect on what the year has been for us. Christmas brings us the opportunity to celebrate... and that is exactly what we did on 16th December, when the full team met to reflect and to celebrate.



We reflected on how, despite the pandemic, the Sunfield Psychology and Therapies Department kept going. We did our best under the difficult circumstances. Consultations with staff continued, OT and SaLT collaborated with the craft team, we attended meetings... and so on. We did miss the children though, and so we knew we had to be very creative when it came to think about some guidelines and risk assessments, to allow us to continue seeing the children, even during restrictions and the second lockdown!

We too celebrated. We celebrated the goodbye to the old world and the beginning of the new one. As a team we had a year of adjustments, a year to get to know each other, and to learn how to embrace whatever challenges were coming our way. We



realized that only trusting each other, and listening to each other, we could become an entity much bigger than just our disciplines. Before we knew it, we found a new harmony within and between us.

I wonder if this was the reason why we were in Santa's good list... It must have been!- because he came to Sunfield and we saw him, and we even got some presents from him. Having the full team around filled my heart with pride. We have shared so much this year (the good and the bad) that it was only fair that we ended it with a big celebration!



As a Head of Department I can only be grateful to every single one of them, and to them as a team, for the acceptance, resilience, flexibility, insights and professionalism they have all shown. I am proud of them and proud of what we have become, together. Thank you team.

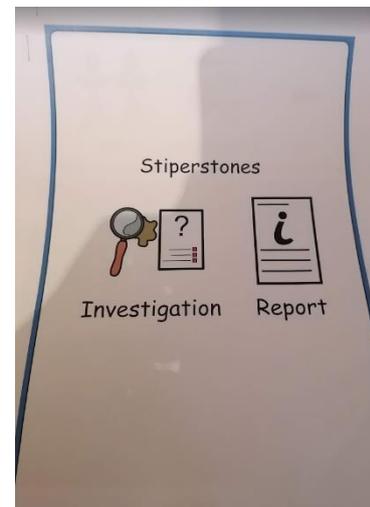
Have a lovely Christmas.

Maria Peris

Head of Psychology and Therapies Department

Safeguarding update

As you may be aware, every half term Sunfield devotes a week of our termly cycle to a specific safeguarding theme. For Autumn 2's Safeguarding week we asked all our students to become safeguarding and health and safety experts. We tasked them to look at "keeping our places Safe". Our intention was for them to look at their environment and the site to see what we do to keep them safe, as well as for them to tell us what more we can do. Each group then filled in a feedback sheet to inform us at Sunfield what they found out and what could help them. We got a fantastic response with lots of suggestions and great observations. The young people were able to start to see danger but also recognize signs that would help to keep them safe.



Class Cleo identified a slippery area near their class room and suggested a mat to help solve the problem and Stiperstones looked at the kitchen garden area and identified not only the muddy paths, but also a wall that had a drop the other side which could be dangerous to them. Another group identified the prickly bushes we have around the site, and how they need to keep away from them, as well as identifying the drive has cars on it and they need to stay on the path.

We will be investigating these places and putting in measures to ensure that Sunfield continues to keep our community safe.

This has been a great opportunity to involve our children and young people in looking at risk and in developing ways that we can keep everyone safe. Any other contributions from families are more than welcome!

New Year's wishes

As is traditional, at the end of the year we are reflecting on the time past and thinking about our hopes for the next. Despite everything, we feel that this has been a very successful year for Sunfield and we have the highest hopes that this will continue in 2021. We would like to wish everyone the best for the coming year and look forward to being a part of our continued development. Merry Christmas and happy new year to all!