



Red Balloon
LEARNER CENTRES
For the recovery of bullied children



Red Balloon Learner Centre Reading **NEWSLETTER#7**

December 2020

For the recovery of severely bullied and traumatised children



Christina Pepper
Head of Centre

Head of Centre Message

Although we have been back in lockdown for a good amount of this half term, life at the Centre has continued as "normal." There may still be temperature checks, hand gel dispensers around each corner and a nip in the air as we continue to keep rooms ventilated, but the community is still coming together each day to learn from and about each other. We started the Autumn with a small group of returning students and we now end the term full of new faces. We have also recruited 5 new members of staff. It has been lovely to welcome both new students and staff and there is a definite buzz around the Centre. We also welcomed a furry friend, Lily the labrador, who with her handler Angela are providing canine therapy on a Monday in our chill out room. It is with a sad heart we say goodbye to Pam who will be leaving us at the end of term. Her ability to turn



Quote of the month

A thankful heart is not only the greatest virtue, but the parent of all other virtues.

- Cicero



her hand to just about everything from crafts to cooking, science to maths, will be missed. We wish her well on her next adventure and hope she will come back to visit us from time to time. As we look toward the holiday season with an uncertainty of whether we will be able to spend it with family and friends, it's been inspiring over the past term to be able to celebrate a wide range of cultural celebrations with our Red Balloon family. I was particularly touched by the Thanksgiving feast in November and the chance for all of us to reflect on those things for which we are grateful. I am grateful for the students who make me laugh each and every day, for the dedication of the team whose creativity has shone brightly this term and for the opportunity to work in a place I truly love.

Christina Pepper

December 2020



It's Challenge Time!

Making Changes in our Centre

After a half term of learning about some of the environmental challenges our planet faces, this half term Challenge Time has been very hands-on. We started by upcycling an old wood pallet into a 5 star bug hotel complete with Covid-friendly signage. Students helped gather leaves and sticks, cut bamboo, staple wire mesh and paint the signage. Alongside they researched the kinds of bugs we would like to attract to the garden and created a pamphlet that will help us to identify the creepy crawlies. Another litter picking excursion also helped us find some unlikely items to upcycle while helping to keep the streets around the Centre clean. Staff and students have also been looking at environmental issues in other lessons including writing a review of *The Lorax* in English, calculating how much electricity we use in Maths and creating recycled Christmas decorations in Mentoring.





Creative Project and Cultural Celebrations

Diwali Lamps Arts and Crafts

The students learned why Diwali is celebrated in the Hindu faith. They understand why The Festival of Light is significant. Some students created their own Rangoli patterns and others made Diva lamps from clay. The clay work was great fun and the lamps are very impressive. The Rangoli patterns are very colourful.



Remembrance Day

We had a discussion about the World Wars and our families' links to war. It was so interesting to learn about each other's family members that took part in the war. We rounded the day off with poppy crafts. We also got to enjoy nibbling on some poppy seeded rolls and a delicious lemon poppy seed cake!

Thanksgiving

This session started with Christina sharing about how Thanksgiving came to be and the story of the Mayflower boat and its passengers. This led to some great discussions on diversity and views being shared on the importance of gratitude. Students then wrote about some of the things they are grateful for on leaves and added them to the gratitude tree.

Rebranding Red Balloon logo

Red Balloon is turning 25 next year and we thought it would be a great opportunity to rebrand. Students considered words that represented Red Balloon and there were some great ideas with 'confidence' and 'support' being very popular! Other students worked on the logo and illustrated wonderful pictures.

Anti-bullying Week and Odd Socks Day

**Lonely socks lurking in the drawer
had a moment in the spotlight.**

Anti-bullying Week is a significant date in the diary. It is a chance for students and staff to appreciate their differences. We started off the week celebrating "Odd Socks Day". There was an array of brightly coloured odd socks and great fun was had by all. Staff and students brought in photographs of themselves as babies and at the end of the week, there was a "Guess the Baby" competition. The students guessed well.....far more successfully than the staff :)...



STOP BULLYING

PHYSICAL-VERBAL-SOCIAL-CYBER

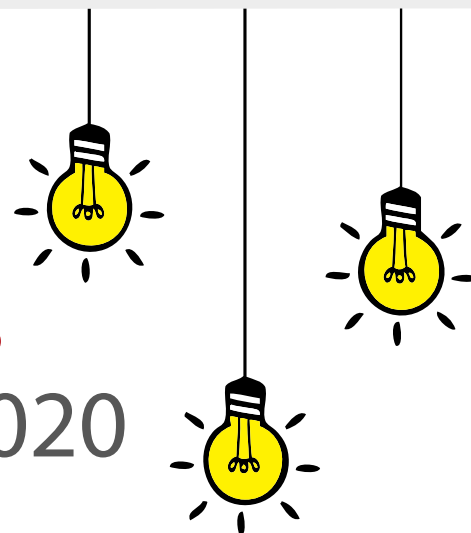
Guy Fawkes Night Craft Afternoon

For many of our cultural celebrations at the Centre, we are looking at them with new and fresh eyes this year in light of all that is happening in the world. This was the first time we celebrated Bonfire Night at the Centre and it felt important we do so as some many of the traditional celebrations were cancelled because of Covid-19. The students learned some fun facts about the infamous Guy Fawkes which then led to a lively debate about the legal system and the death penalty. The students then created firework decorations to adorn the ceiling of the community room. There was a bit of competition (mostly amongst the teachers) on who had the most dazzling firework but in reality they are all pretty spectacular.





RB-Reading New Students Thoughts of 2020



Students share their thoughts about our
changing world



BP

Student

2020...what a year it's been! Having been locked down for a large percentage of the year, a lot has happened. Positive as well as negative! It's been a long road to get to Red Balloon, but honestly I'm the happiest I have been in a long time at Red Balloon Learning Center. I'm so fortunate to be in this position and finally

love learning again; I'm currently also starting my 2 year Art GCSE, which I'm really enjoying. Among this strange year has come a fresh healthy start for me, where I can express who I really am and show and share the things I love.

BP x



RM

Student

When 2020 started it was no different to 2019... then coronavirus began. At first, I didn't really see a difference but lockdown affected me and my family. It made me feel quite anxious and I missed hanging out with my friends. I got to spend a lot of time with my Dad, which was nice. Towards the end of 2020,

I was introduced to Red Balloon. At first, I was very shy but I'm starting to settle in and feel a lot more relaxed.

RM :)



JT

Student

2020 has been a rough year for everyone but this seemingly disastrous year has surprisingly had more upsides than you may have previously thought. Most

people have had more time to think about things and learn new skills or even improve on skills you already have. You can spend the time that you would normally spend in incredibly uncomfortable social situations doing things you find more enjoyable like for example crocheting, reading, baking, embroidery or even gaming. This means you have more time to do what you want to do. But basically at the end of the day wear a mask, social distance and look after yourself because if you can't, who will? Thank you for reading this. Take care and have a lovely day.

JT x



RB-Reading showcase their art with Christmas Cards

Designed in collaboration with the
students and the art teacher.

This year Christmas arrived early at Red Balloon - Reading; our art students created such a fantastic bunch of festive cards in collaboration with the art teacher. Our students showed off their incredible art skills using several different design techniques including watercolour, graphic design, oil pastel, collage, and they are all well designed.

1 | JT Christmas London Scene

2 | AM Christmas Night

3 | LM Snow Field

4 | BP Japanese Landscape

5 | RT Xmas Landscape

6 | QD Reindeers

7 | QD Father Christmas



Christmas is around the corner

Although the first printing of cards sold out fast, you can still share your Christmas cheer and order cards online at www.redballoonlearner.org.

Maths

$$\left(\frac{3}{2\sqrt{x}}\right)^4 \cdot 4x \quad \frac{3}{x} = (2x^4 + 2 + \frac{0}{2\sqrt{x^4} - 1}) \cdot 4x$$

It has been lovely to welcome new students into Maths lessons this term along with the range of ideas and creativity that they have brought with them. I have been so impressed with the insight students have demonstrated when thinking about what they want to achieve this year and recognising hurdles they may need to overcome to achieve these goals. Students have been busy working on

a variety of topics - ranging from functional maths, to prepare for independent living, to more abstract concepts involving algebraic geometry. My favourite activity has to be our use of weighing scales to solve algebraic equations. Who would have thought we could solve the equation $2p + 13 = 37$ using two whiteboard pens, some weights and a pair of scales!



PSHEE

The theme of internet safety and what we need to do to protect ourselves has continued through the rest of the term. The topic brings some difficult but important issues, however all the students engaged well and in a mature manner. We have also looked why we need to plan for our future job roles, which ties in with Life Skills class on Thursday afternoons.

We looked at different faiths and cultures in Britain today and discussed attitudes to difference. It is always great to hear student thoughts and opinions in PHSEE, because we all share similar feelings and experiences as well as differences. Well done everyone for your valuable contributions in class!



English Language

This term most students have been taking part in an exciting media unit. We have been watching the recent adaptation of Dr. Seuss' 'The Lorax', keeping up with the environmental theme, but also to enjoy the cheesy songs and humour. Students have been examining the media techniques used in the film, including camera angles, sound and colour. We are currently working on writing film reviews in which students will express their opinions and evaluate the film.



Word of
the month

Respect

To show regard for the
feelings, wishes, or rights of
others.

"Respect is an important part
of being in a community"



Science

In Science some students have been working towards AQA certificates which has included looking at organs and organ systems, such as the names and functions of the organs of the digestive system. GCSE students have learnt about the functions of macronutrients such as proteins, carbohydrates and lipids as well as the function of enzymes. They have also been learning the difference between diffusion, osmosis

and active transport and how they transport molecules within the body. Key Stage 3 students have looked at the lives of lions and reptiles and compared living and non-living things. I have been very impressed and proud of all the students' engagement in Science this term and although I will no longer be teaching this subject from January, I will still be here to witness the achievement that I know that they are all capable of.



Food Tech



In Food Tech this term it has been lovely to see some new faces in the basement kitchen starting their foodie journeys with us. We continued our exploration of good nutrition, using the Eatwell Guide to find out what constitutes a balanced meal and sent some great dishes home for families to enjoy including macaroni cheese and enchiladas. We investigated traditional foods for Diwali and had a great time wrapping up vegetable samosas for our special celebration meal. We also contributed to the Thanksgiving feast with a pumpkin pie and cornbread (with jalapenos at Christina's urging!) With the festive

season approaching we've strayed slightly from our five-a-day to experiment making sweet treats. We had impressive results making caramel filled chocolates and some very cool peppermint creams. To continue our cross-curricular learning we investigated whether a layer of marshmallows will help to keep your hot chocolate warm (it does!). Of course there have also been cakes and biscuits, always rich in chocolate and always light on leftovers.



Design Technology

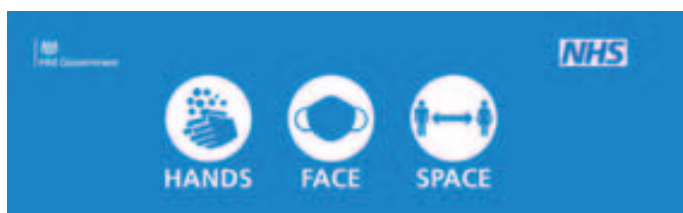
As the colder weather arrives, some of our students have been making bug hotels to hang up in the garden to help the mini-beasts overwinter. The eye-catching wooden tea-light holders, (which were created around Diwali) will give a warm glow on these darker evenings. Others have been busy creating beautiful blankets, (patchwork tie-dyed fabric, backed in fleece), perfect for a cosy winter day wrapped up on the sofa. A game or two is always good at Christmas, so the production of a traditional wooden solitaire with marbles was good fun to make. Other creations included a beautiful mosaic mirror frame and an embossed metal box. There are plenty of designs in the pipeline for 'Monster Cushions', an automata and a special soft toy. There are lots of ideas up students' sleeves, so we look forward to a creative 2021!



Sport

For our basketball sessions we were unable to get a venue this year due to Covid-19 so had to use the local park for basketball with instructors from Reading Rockets. We've really enjoyed playing football for some of our more recent PE sessions where the learners were divided into teams to have a match. We've also introduced using laser quest for PE along with flying a frisbee; both have proved very popular with our young people. Will continue to provide a variety of sports for our students in PE hoping the current pandemic will end soon. The weather is getting colder too so it'll be nice to have the sports activity indoors where it's a little warmer.

COVID-19 COMMUNICATION TO PARENTS



Have a great winter break

We'll see you on the 5th of January

Spring Term 2021

Monday 4 January – Thursday 1 April
(Students return on the 5th January)

Half Term:

Monday 15 February – Friday 19 February

Staff INSET

Monday 4 January
Wednesday 27 January
Wednesday 10 March

Information

As always if you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact us.

Follow us on our Facebook and Instagram page and get the latest school info.



@RedBalllonReading



@RedBalloonLCG