



Red Balloon
LEARNER CENTRES
For the recovery of bullied children



Red Balloon Learner Centre Reading **NEWSLETTER #8**

February 2021

For the recovery of severely bullied and traumatised children



Christina Pepper
Head of Centre

Head of Centre Message

This has undoubtedly been a difficult term for everyone. When we entered our first lockdown I don't think any of us could imagine nearly a year later we would be in our third. Although much more prepared than we were back in March 2020, the shift back to on-line teaching and learning has been a transition for us all.

So I want to begin this newsletter by thanking everyone. Thank you to parents for your understanding and flexibility as we tried to balance concerns for student well-being with concerns for our community's physical health. Thank you to staff for their resilience and pulling together to cover lessons when others were poorly or needed to isolate. And thank you to students for

continuing to engage in your own unique way. Some students have managed to video chat for the first time, others have written beautiful poetry and still others have begun to build new friendships.

We were very fortunate to welcome at the end of last term three new members of staff: Natalie, Jay and Andrea. Also joining the team this term are Alison who will be working with Tash on our Outreach Programme and Jan who is our new Office Manager. While Covid-19 might require us to alter the way we do things it will not stop us from growing and progressing as a community.

Christina Pepper
February 2021



Quote of the month

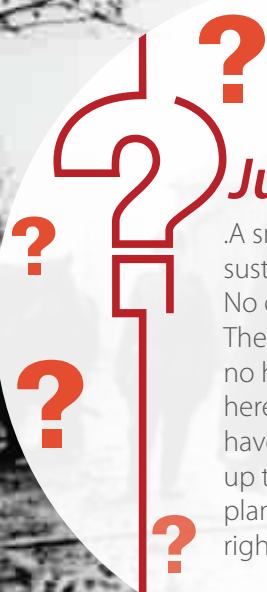
Freedom is not a state; it is an act. It is not some enchanted garden perched high on a distant plateau where we can finally sit down and rest. Freedom is the continuous action we all must take, and each generation must do its part to create an even more fair, more just society.

-- John Lewis



| IT'S CHALLENGE TIME!

The theme is Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.



Just imagine...

A small new planet that can sustain life has been discovered. No one has ever lived there. There are no laws, no rules, and no history. You will all be settlers here and in preparation you have been appointed to draw up the bill of rights for this new planet. If you had to make a right what would it be?

These are the ideas we have been pondering in Challenge Time this half term. Students and staff learned about the Declaration of Human Rights and discussed how they impact us personally and globally. This term we will encourage students to reflect on some of the very rights we take for granted as well as come up with their own ideas of how we can make our Centre more inclusive.

Christina Pepper
February 2021

Remote Learning and Hybrid Teaching is back

Students and staff return to the online classroom

Well here we are again... back in our spare bedrooms and kitchens, trying to teach and learn via a laptop! This time is different though, we are more prepared and experienced (or so we hope) in the world of online learning, even with all the challenges it throws at us! I personally have had a very patchy internet connection all term, typically. However, it has been wonderful to see so many students overcoming their own personal challenges, including joining video calls, attending group sessions, and meeting new students. There have been so many positive comments about students' engagement with online learning and I hope this will continue when we are back in the Centre. There are always going to be hurdles in life, but the perseverance and resilience demonstrated by students and staff this term is truly commendable. Thank you everyone for making the hurdle a little bit easier to jump over.

Ohana Rowen

Deputy Head | February 2021



The Open Road

When we returned to the Centre in September, we knew things would not be as they once were. Our days of hopping on a bus to go to Dinton Pastures or across town to Red Kangaroo or taking a train into London to the theatre would be more difficult to do while in the midst of the pandemic. So instead of dwelling on what we couldn't do, we thought of what we might do when the day comes when restrictions are eased. Or more precisely where we might go and how we would get there? So, a plan hatched to fundraise for a minibus and thanks to the hard work for our Fundraising Trustee and a generous grant by Clothworkers' Foundation we were able to purchase one at the beginning of this year. We look forward to visiting places a bit further afield like Bletchley Park or Kew Gardens. All our mini-van needs now is a red stripe and we could be the A-Team.

5 WELLBEING TIPS FOR REMOTE LEARNING

- Practice mindfulness and be kind to yourself.
- Create a work environment.
- Get out of your pyjamas and have breakfast.
- Make sure you've planned your lunch in advance.
- Cancel out distractions.

Know the Students



STUDENTS SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS OF REMOTE LEARNING



BP

STUDENT

For many online school has been a struggle, a change, maybe even an inconvenience. However since joining Red-Balloon I have had the opportunity to do small online sessions at the centre, helping me feel what online schooling is really like. When working from home was announced, I had my fair share of concerns and doubts, but after the first week I had already started to feel comfortable and content. I've been able to meet many different students through virtual lessons and have already started to form great bonds! I am really enjoying learning from the comfort of my own home but am still looking forward to reintegrating back into the centre!



JT

STUDENT

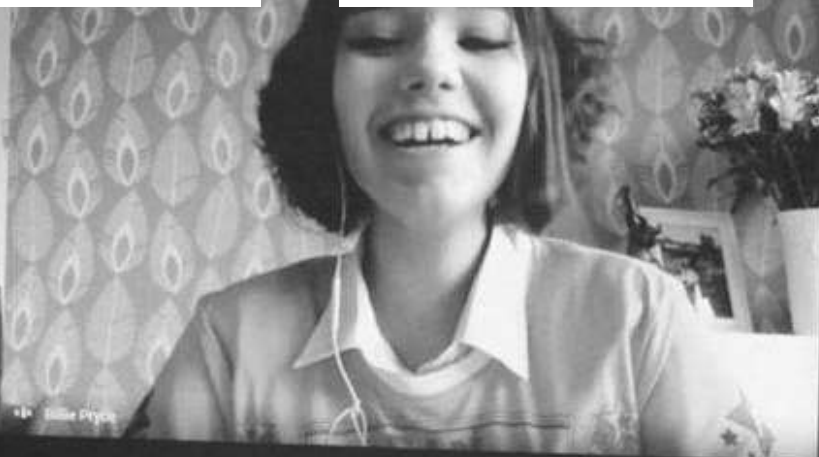
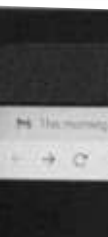
Attending lessons at Red Balloon has been relatively normal these past few weeks as I didn't spend much time in the centre normally as the majority of my lessons were originally taught online in the first place. I do miss going into the centre and seeing the other students though. The majority of my lessons are going smoothly with only a few connection issues here and there, which didn't particularly impact the lesson. There's a break time chat group that I can talk to the other students on.



AM

STUDENT

Remote learning has been a struggle for me because it's a big change. If you know me, I don't like it when things change and I have felt quite lonely not being able to see anyone. Although I am not seeing anyone physically, I am still seeing familiar faces online. I am still going on bike rides and spending a lot more time with my guinea pigs and family. I am getting out a bit more than I was in the 1st lockdown. I am still seeing my friends around my area. I am still going to the farm that I used to go to on Wednesday. I sometimes find online learning a bit stressful, but it is nice to not have to travel an hour to get to school!



UK LGBTQ+ HISTORY MONTH 2021

at Red Balloon Reading

What is LGBTQ+ History Month?

LGBTQ+ History Month is an annual celebration that provides education and insight into the issues that the LGBTQ+ community faces.

In 2017, a study conducted by LGBTQ+ rights charity Stonewall discovered that two in five LGBTQ+ students have never been taught anything about LGBTQ+ issues in lessons.

One in five also stated that they don't know who they can speak to at their schools for advice on same-sex relationships. The aim of LGBTQ+ History Month is to primarily teach young people about the history of the gay rights movement and to promote an inclusive modern society.

LGBT+ History Month takes place every year in the UK in February. From the 1st February through to the 28/29 February.

While LGBT+History Month originated in the US in 1994, in the UK it began 11 years later following on from an initiative that created by a couple of teachers.

In 2005, educators and activists Sue Sanders and Paul Patrick organised LGBTQ+ History Month as part of a Schools Out UK project, a programme that aims to educate young people about the issues members of the LGBTQ+ community face and to make schools feel inclusive for everyone, regardless of their gender identity or sexual

The event was held in February to coincide with the 2003 abolition of Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act.

Section 28, a piece of legislation introduced by Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government, stated that local authorities were not allowed to "intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality".



Tash Williams
Outreach Manager

If you have any questions about LGBTQ+ issues or just fancy a chat about it, please contact Tash Williams, our Outreach Manager. She is a member of the LGBTQ Community and would be very happy to speak to you.

Email her on:
**tash.williams@reading.rblc.org.uk or
call her on 07851539776.**

For more information visit
www.lgbthistorymonth.org.uk



CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS CHINESE NEW YEAR

2021

ELEMENT: METAL
LUCKY COLOURS: BLUE, YELLOW, GREEN
LUCKY NUMBERS: 1,4
LUCKY FLOWERS: LILY OF THE VALLEY, LUCKY BAMBOO

新年快乐

Gifts to give

Tangerines are the most traditional fruit to grace the table during Chinese New Year, though you'll likely see oranges and other citrus fruits. Originally a Cantonese tradition, a homonym associated with luck: the word for tangerine is 橙 (chéng /chng/). This sounds the same as a word that means good fortune. They are eaten at the end of a meal and given as gifts to relatives. Red envelopes are given as gifts with money inside to acquaintances and family. Clean crisp bills inside that NEVER contain the number 4 (the pronunciation for the word four in Chinese sounds like the word for death), and amounts including the number 8 are said to bring good luck.



| Chinese dragon celebrations

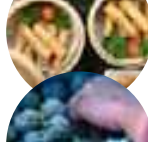
Chinese food we can cook



**VEGETABLE SPRING NEW YEAR FRIED RICE
- WITH LUCKY COLOURS!**



EGG NOODLES FROM SCRATCH - WITH A SAUCE OF YOUR CHOICE.



VEGETABLE SPRING ROLLS - LEARN THE KNIFE TECHNIQUE "JULIENNE".



DUMPLINGS - A LITTLE TRICKY, A LOT DELICIOUS!

Vegan Chinese Spring Rolls Recipe

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/collection/spring-roll-recipes>

February is a busy month for celebration! Starting it all off on the 12th February is Chinese New Year - the Year of the Ox. This is our opportunity for eating tasty spring rolls and giving red envelopes to friends and family to wish them luck in the new year. Bring on the 14th February Valentine's Day! If you don't have a significant other, no stress, it may be more important this year to show ourselves the love and kindness we give to others. So why not write yourself a valentines card, appreciating all the things

that make you loveable. Or you could get a head-start on preparing what flavour pancakes you're going to make on the 16th February Shrove Tuesday (Pancake Day!). This term in Challenge Time we are looking at equality and diversity, which brings us to the 21st February International Mother Language Day and a chance to promote mother tongues, encourage language diversity, and increase awareness of linguistic and cultural tradition around the world. Nie mogę się doczekać!

FRIDAY 12TH FEB

YEAR OF THE OX

Bringing **Mindfulness** to students and teachers



**The theme
for this February
is 'Body, Mind,
Spirit'**



**Cindy
Woods**
Science
and PSHEE
Teacher

At Red Balloon we have always been aware that mindful practices are important in managing mental health and therefore highly suitable for our students. However it is critical that it is taught in the correct way! Having already had sufficient experience in mindfulness practice, our PSHEE teacher Cindy trained to teach the Mindfulness in Schools Project curriculum.

Mindfulness in Schools Project is a charity and the most established provider of mindfulness training for schools, delivering world-leading curricula for classroom-based mindfulness. Their materials are based on rigorous research in clinical psychology and neuroscience, written by teachers for teachers, and used successfully in a wide range of educational contexts.

The course starts with students learning how the brain works through interesting slides, animations, video clips and discussions. We chat about topics such as what animals do human minds sometimes act like? A cheeky monkey mind? An untrained puppy mind? A lazy hippo mind? Responses tend to be varied and easy to identify with, which allows students and staff to be able to relate to each other, but without the pressure of having to share personal experiences.

Students are not expected to participate in any of the very short practices during classes. However, they do get a link and a password to resources which allows them to practice in the privacy of their own home, if they so wish.

Cindy will be offering a new group on Wednesday afternoons after half-term, for those students who have not yet started the course. For more information, please check out the MiSP website.

<https://mindfulnessinschools.org>

There are some great video clips with student feedback and an animation example to give you a sense of what we welcome your child to access.

<https://mindfulnessinschools.org/videos/>



For more information visit:
www.mindfulnessinschools.org

Boost **Wellbeing** to students and staff



**Caroline
Uwais**
Lead Therapist

In wellbeing we sometimes use Grounding Techniques which can help when we have feelings of anxiety. Grounding is something that distracts us from the anxious feelings.

When we become anxious, we can become 'ungrounded', feel out of control, find anxiety growing, our thoughts can become more panicked or fearful and our bodies react with tightening or other sensations.

There are some techniques which can really help. Here are some which you can try. Some might be helpful and some might not, but you can adapt them or try others. You can create your own. If you do, I would love to hear about them and maybe we could share them in the next newsletter.

Take 3 Categories

Choose at least 3 categories and name as many items as you can in each.
Some suggestions are:

**Movies | Books | Sports | Teams | Colours
Countries | Cars | Games | Famous People
Fruits & Vegetables | Animals**

Counting



Count backwards from 100 to 1
Count in multiples of 2
Count in multiples of 10



Take 3 slow, deep breaths.

Remind yourself, "I am safe and I can get through this" Look around the room and name or list:

5 things you can see
(notice the detail eg colour, texture, shape)

4 things you can feel
(your clothes, the chair you are sitting on, the sunshine. Is it comfortable, soft/rough, warm/cold?)

3 things you can hear
(outside noise, a clock ticking, a laptop fan, breathing...)

2 things you can smell
(perfume, cut grass, food, air freshener..)

1 thing you can taste (If you don't have something to taste you can imagine the taste of something like toothpaste, gum... think is it salty, sour, sweet etc)



Maths

$$\frac{3}{\sqrt{x}} * 4x \quad 3'_x = (2x^4 + 2 + \frac{0}{2\sqrt{x^4-1}}) * 4x$$

I am continually amazed at how students persevere and show such resilience during difficult times, and again students have excelled during this most recent period of online learning. During the first week of remote learning when we had little notice of switching the week's learning over to online, I stuck with my original plan and most students worked on geometry. I have to say it is a credit to each and every one of them that they stuck with it, demonstrated great flexibility and creativity and continued to keep a sense of humour! It was not easy! If we can manage that we can manage anything! Well done to everyone for your continued enthusiasm and focus these past few weeks - can't wait to see you all back at the Centre soon.



PSHEE



After the Christmas break we had a well-being session to check how we are feeling, discussing changes and emotions. This was a great opportunity for the students to reflect on just how resilient they are and to remind them that there is always support available during difficult times. We then refocused on health, looking at sugar content in a variety of food and drink items. This was a timely reminder that looking after our health is a very important part of self-care. We have recently moved onto thinking about how we spend our money and the importance of being an ethical consumer. We discussed how as consumers, we can influence many global factors such as plastic pollution and the importance of supporting local businesses. We discussed Fairtrade and sustainability, in relation to palm oil and deforestation. I was very impressed to hear that some students said they would be more conscious about ethical shopping following our last lesson. This is why PSHEE is so important, for the individual, the community and beyond!

English Language

It's definitely been an interesting term in English and for the Centre in general! KS4 students have continued working on their Functional Skills and GCSE qualifications and the effort I have seen has been so impressive! Some KS3 students have started to look at Shakespeare's play 'The Tempest' by thinking about stormy weather and Shakespeare's England, including a tour of the Globe theatre (virtually, of course)! Some students have also been exploring poetry, with projects on acrostic poems and Romantic poems. I have been so impressed with everyone's effort this term and although I always enjoy English, this term has been extra fun! I can't wait to see you all again soon.



Word of the Month

“ Perseverance

Continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition : the action or condition or an instance of persevering : steadfastness.



Tech

In the Centre or on-line, we continue to think creatively. At Red Balloon we are used to getting stuck into making, whether it be textiles or wood-work. So over the last few weeks we have had to rethink things, finding more time to talk about design and designing. All of the DT students received a pack of mini project ideas in the post for us to dip into over this lockdown period. We have been looking at some iconic designs from the past, along with creating costume designs, developing fantastical ideas for tree-house designs, also looking at logos and the power of branding. As Chinese New Year approaches we will be creating our own lanterns and trying a bit of decorative calligraphy, all to help join in the celebrations. At the Centre some students had already started researching Japanese and Chinese design styles, with a view to creating silk painted lanterns with wooden & bamboo structures. Although it has been a very different experience working together on-line, I have really enjoyed getting to know some of you better and delving into your imaginations!. I am looking forward to continuing with our hands-on making, before too long.



Food Tech



Being a new face at Red Balloon has been incredibly exciting and fulfilling. Despite the frustration of another lockdown just as I had started my new role, it has given the students and I an opportunity to get to know each other via video calls and group chats. I have been amazed by their creativity and perseverance during these difficult times, and the projects we have planned together for when we return to the Centre has given a healthy dose of motivation for the students and myself. Ideas such as: creating your own cookbook, food science experiments to raise money for charity, treats for pets, personal nutrition plans - even trying to incorporate other subjects into Food Tech, such as using natural food colourings to tie dye aprons (Art and DT). My goal for the end of the year is to encourage the students to take control of their daily food habits and have a basic understanding of the nutritional value of what they consume to benefit their lives - if we don't get that far, perfecting a cookie recipe is also an amazing achievement!



Art

This term I am pleased for the students that are committed to finishing their Arts Award as we currently have four working towards and progressing well with this qualification. I have seen good achievements too with our other two students working on their art GCSE. One is specialising in Fine Arts - painting and drawing - and another is specialising in photography. Digital work is gaining an interest in our art students. For example, LS is working towards a fundraising project in creating digital and interactive pieces of art, which could be sold in the future to benefit Red Balloon - Reading. I look forward to the new half-term ahead after we break for the holiday and see you all soon.



PE

As you can imagine PE isn't the easiest subject to teach online. Only joining the Centre just before Christmas it's not been easy getting to know the student over video call, but I've managed and we've had some great sessions! The students are coping really well with the online learning and are working hard everyday. We've done work on sporting inspirations, lifestyle plans, and the health benefits of sleep throughout some of our sports lessons. I am amazed everyday at the work the students and the staff are putting in each and everyday to make this challenging time better for everyone! I'm using this time to plan what PE will look like when back in the Centre, so we can all have some fun!

COVID-19 COMMUNICATION TO PARENTS



Have a good half-term

We'll see you on the 22nd of February

Spring Term 2021

Half Term: Monday 15 February – Friday 19 February
Inset Day: Wednesday 10 March

Easter Break: Friday 2 April - Friday 16 April

Staff INSET

Wednesday 10 March

Information

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

Special Thanks to:

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