

Sensory Inclusion Service Visual Impairment Newsletter

Issue
32
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Sensory Inclusion Service, Floor 6, Darby House, Lawn Central, Telford, TF3 4JA

Peer awareness training



Alfie, supported by Gill and Nancy, delivered peer awareness training to his class. He asked his friends questions about what he uses his braille for, how to be mindful when he is using his cane around school and they also read a story to the class called *Mole's Sunrise*.

Here is a picture of Alfie pretending to be the teacher. He loved being in charge of the class!

Time to shine



Ivie was a regular visitor at our Little Stars Time To Shine family group.

In a recent visit from QTVI, Louise, they focused on playdough. At first Ivie was very reluctant to touch, however with reassurance she loved the sensory feeling of it.

She is so ready to start her next chapter in nursery.





Ryan played Bugle for the remembrance service at school. When he grows up he hopes to be a musician in the army. He loves attending army cadets weekly and is the main person in the music team there. Ryan also attended our Drumming Workshop at Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings where he showed his skills on the snare drum.



Ella passed her kickboxing assessment and gained her yellow belt.
Well done Ella!

Local offer



The Local Offer contains a wide range of information and services to support children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities. These include services provided by the Local Authority and the health service, as well as services provided by the voluntary and private sectors (e.g. charities and disability groups, nurseries, youth clubs, leisure activities etc.)

Information is also available for young adults, to help you make informed choices about things that are important to you such as where to live; transport; social activities, work and training; and becoming an adult.

As well as being able to access the newsletter, there is lots of useful information under Sensory Inclusion Service and the visually impaired section.

www.telfordsend.org.uk/info/1/home/18/sensory_inclusion_service

Fabulous Fundraiser

At the time that George was referred to the Sensory Inclusion Service he had very little visual responses. A QTVI visited regularly and set a visual programme to complete in the dark. Here are some pictures of George locating the lights.



George is now celebrating his first birthday. Here is a picture of him with his parents and balloons in front of a police car.



George and his parents celebrated something very special as well as his birthday. George with his mum and dad, took part in a virtual walk covering the distance from Land's End to John O'Groats to raise money for Hope House making lots of memories on the way. Here are some of them:

He's found a love for planes, trains and automobiles. Having been in a glider, numerous supercars and guest star on board the Sabrina Boat and Severn valley railway.

Took his hand to sport and was photographed with the Shrewsbury town squad.

Played his part by further supporting Hope House by visiting the shops.

Called on his celebrity connections and welcomed Jason Manford for a tour of the hospice to show how important these are.

He also took his story to the local MP Julia Buckley to ensure local families get the support they need.

The family are very grateful for the support that Hope House have given them and have managed to raise over £5,000, smashing their target.

I am sure you will all agree that this is an amazing achievement!

Kenz tells us about his support in college



I started Shrewsbury College in September. I remember being nervous at attending this new setting and whether I would be able to access the curriculum. I didn't need to worry. In the first few weeks it has been better than the five years that I had a school. All my work is modified. I have a laptop to access the PowerPoints and an app on there for a calculator.

I am applying for funding for an iPad through Guide Dogs UK, which will help me access my homework at home.

I can still get anxious about things, however I have been allocated somebody that I can talk to. I have regular meetings with her but she also checks in on me at other times. That has been a big help, I have had less panic attacks at college. There is also an assistant in class who has got to know me well and understands the signals of when I am anxious and in need of help.

My QTVI, Gill still visits me at college to check that everything is going well regarding my sight and if I can access everything Ok. I know that I can contact her if anything arises that I need to discuss. The Sensory Inclusion Service are providing the assistants with some training so that modifying my work will be easier and quicker for them.

Comments from Gill the QTVI.

I visited Kenz at Shrewsbury college in October. I am very impressed with how he has matured and settled into college life. As soon as he applied for his college course he was able to advocate for himself. College have taken his needs seriously and listened to him as well as following the advice in the SIS report. Kenz is able to let them know if he can't see detail and if anything needs adjusting. Kenz is enjoying college and has applied to be student representative. He has ideas for peer mentoring which is a role he did when he was in school.

Kenz travels independently to college each day, catching two buses to college and back. He volunteers in a charity shop at weekends.

Transition to Secondary



The Sensory Inclusion Service (SIS) is very proud of Zak for a very successful transition to Secondary School.

In the Summer Term Zak was nervous about the change. He was not sure if he would make new friends, he thought he'd have difficulty walking around the big school and he was worried about the workload.

When his QTVI visited him in school, he told her that it was much better than he thought and admitted that he did not need to worry. He wants to reassure Year 6's who may read this article that there is nothing to worry about.

He gave the experience at Secondary School 9.5 out of 10. He said it was better than when he was in primary.

Zak is beginning to use his touch-typing skills in lessons and PowerPoints are shared to his laptop. He is happy that the SIS IT Officer and Access support assistants are supporting the teaching assistants to modify his work. He says the workload is Ok, although he is aware that it will increase as he goes through school.

He has made a few really close friends, however he also named a few others that he calls his friends.

He is confident moving around the school and confirmed that it is not as big as he thought. He likes his teachers and said they are friendly. He also trusts that his new teaching assistants ensure that he is able to access the curriculum. The library are sourcing large print books for him to read.

SIS are very pleased with this outcome and could not imagine it being any better for Zak. Long may it continue.

Close your eyes. Now tell me what you see?



Close your eyes. What do you see? There is sun shining, flowers blooming, friends laughing, the joy in your siblings' faces when you give them sweets. The way your parents look at you when you're acting up, or when they're beaming with pride. The simple smile from someone, a best friend, that simple act of kindness that brightens your day. The look of love, turmoil and pure joy. Now open your eyes.

Imagine it's all gone, you're only able to differentiate light from dark. Unable to determine a smile from a frown and see the beauty in all that surrounds you. Imagine never seeing the faces of your loved ones; mothers, fathers, brothers or sisters. The friendships you long for, your inability to make eye contact, to share a smile. Friendships shielded by the embarrassment others feel of being in your company, not wanting to invite you to gatherings as they feel they're not "suitable" for you. Now think back to a time you have been judged and made to feel less worthy than those around you. That's how I feel every day. How I used to feel. I do not ask for pity or sorrow. I am blessed in so many ways my experiences just simply differ from yours. I may not see the sun shining but I feel its warm embrace upon my face, I adore the potent smell of flowers, rustle of the trees and being awoken by the sweet sounds of birds chirping. For these reasons alone I feel blessed. My lack of vision does not define me; it merely provides me with a different outlook on life. For so long I have wanted to feel excepted. I have never understood how people treat life so carelessly, never embracing what they already have. For me life is like an emotional rollercoaster filled with countless appointments and operations in the hope to restore some vision, any vision, to be just like you.

Operation days are the toughest. I can sense the fear and heartbreak as my mother tries to hold back her tears whilst I feel the comfort of my father's firm embrace. I sit in silence. Nurses cackle in the distance, discussing prior events from the night before, they make me chuckle. Constantly scurrying around making tea. So much tea. The sound of monitors, patients and those mothers desperately trying to distract their children from the dreaded operation that lies ahead. You can hear the sorrow in their voice, their turmoil in the decision they have made. Panic stricken...the dreaded gown arrives... oh how I hate changing into that. Children's cries echo the corridors as they make their way, then silence.

I become distracted. Footsteps are approaching; formal, soldier like but softer followed by an overwhelming smell of metal. It's the anaesthetist. Arrived to draw on the same ink stained arrow above my eye, as always. Soon accompanied by my surgeon; his approach is calming, parent like, extremely focused. He has treated me since birth and although I feel he would recommend postponement of treatments, he never gives up hope, he fights for me, for my vision. Papers begin shuffling, my parents inundated with questions, my mother responds with endless questions, analysing everything they say. I sit quietly giggling to myself as I hear her regimented routine, making sure everyone knows what they are doing, making sure I am safe. She makes me smile. Then there's Angie. She is favoured above them all. I can hear her footsteps swiftly patter the corridors, always seeming in a hurry but never too busy to help. The warmth of her touch as she prepares me for theatre calms me. She has a unique way of instilling hope and reassurance when it's needed the most. She's a protector, always positive. I like that.

It's my time. My mother frantically fussing with anything, desperately trying to disguise her emotions. "See you soon, love you" is all I hear as I am guided by my father's warm embrace as we make our way. Countless jokes, laughter, smiles. I feel safe. Taking my position, I feel overwhelmed with nerves, a million thoughts flood my mind; will the world turn dark when I wake? what will I see? I pray it works this time. The potent smell of anaesthetic consumes me as I feel the cold tingling sensation travel up my arm. I can still feel the warmth of my father's touch as he gently strokes my face and hear the sweet sound of Angie's voice. Three, two, one. Then silence.

I can't focus, the rooms spinning. The excruciating pain I feel is hard to ignore. Awoken by familiar voices. I can sense the pride and relief in my mother's voice that it is all over. Medication is administered at timely intervals hoping to ease the discomfort. I frantically try to rub my eye to stop the pain, only to be defeated by a plastic shield. My enemy. As anticipation grows stronger the same questions remain. As the days pass by I feel conflicted. Consumed by excitement of the possibilities whilst trying not to become disheartened by imagining a world of darkness. Until the swelling subsides, I never know what the future holds.

Operations come and go. All of which were deemed a success but inevitably have resulted in failure. There are an estimated 39 million people worldwide who are blind and a further 246 million people who have limited vision. They say only 3 - 6 people out of every 100,000 suffer from the same condition as me and it is believed that global blindness will triple by '2050'. I have accepted that this is my life. This is me. Collectively the experiences I have encountered in such a short period of time have made me the person I am today. They have made me realise what is important in life and question myself; Why should I chase for acceptance for who I am? Why should I chase for friendships? because flaws and all I am no different to anyone else.

I never take for granted opportunities that come my way, always focusing on the best of any situation. I shall continue to undergo surgery until my eye decides to give up. This is not for you but for me. I long to see the beauty in the world beyond my experiences. I have come to the realisation that yes; we can dwell on what we haven't got but what happens if we looked beyond that? Anything is possible with the right support, kindness and courage. Remember who we become in life is what we give back to life.

Now ask yourself.... What do you take for granted?

Sensory Inclusion Service Family Group

SIS (VI) Family Group takes place every Tuesday during term time for visually impaired pre-school children and their families.

Families can arrive anytime between 9.30 am – 11.30 am.

Spring 2024

January

7th - Guide Dogs session

14th - Bird crafts

21st - Guide Dogs session

28th - Snake crafts

February

4th - Guide Dogs session

11th - Heart crafts

18th - Half Term

25th - Guide Dogs session

March

4th - Wildlife crafts

11th - Guide Dogs session

18th - Mother's Day crafts

25th - Guide Dogs session

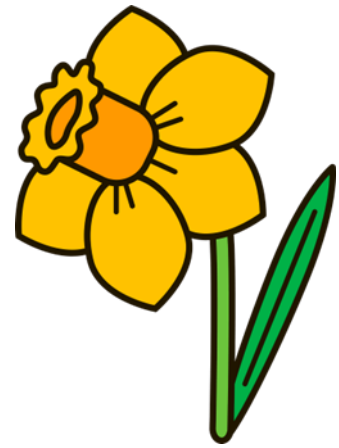
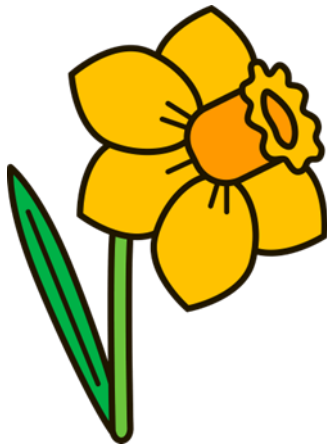
April

1st - Spring crafts

8th - Guide Dogs session

15th - Easter Holidays

22nd - Easter Holidays



The Stepping Stones Centre, Brunel Road, Malinslee, TF3 2BF

Sat Nav TF3 2HZ

Sensory Inclusion Service, Floor 6, Darby House, Lawn Central, Telford. TF3 4JA

Samba Drumming

Following the hugely Taiko Drumming Workshop at The Hive, we were very excited to be offered the opportunity of a Samba Drumming workshop at Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings. The day consisted of a guided tour for students and their families of the exhibition which tells the history of this incredible building, the first multi floored iron-framed building in the world, the grandparent of all skyscrapers!

Children then took part in the workshop with the fabulous Beth and Jon. A great time was had by all!



Custom Eyes Books



Did you know you can buy tailor made children's books to suit your child's visual needs, at the same retail price as standard print?

'CustomEyes Books for a child with sight loss and/or dyslexia means children and young people can have exactly the same books as their friends and classmates. This not only helps them keep up at school, they can share books with friends too.

If your child is not comfortable using a magnifier, or gets tired using a screen, they can pick up a real book and still enjoy reading and learning'

Find out more from: <https://guidedogsuk.my.site.com>

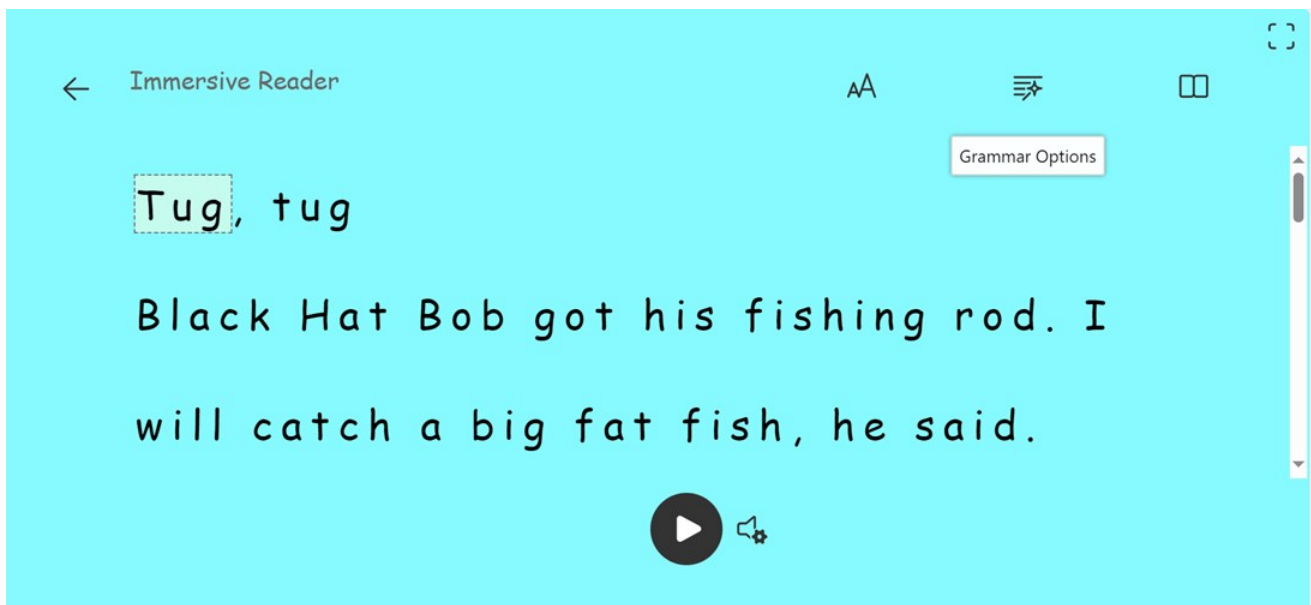
Claire's ICT top tip

ICT top tip - Microsoft Immersive Reader

Did you know that in the online version of Word you can read documents with Immersive reader? **Use Immersive Reader in Word - Microsoft Support**

Choose the immersive reader icon from the view menu;

Then you can choose the font, size, layout of text and more!



Looking back at 2024

What a jam packed year it's been! Let's take a look at some of the highlights of 2024.

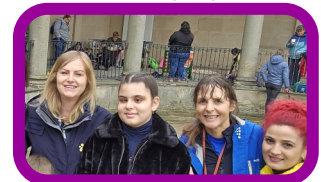
It's been an exciting year with Sensory Inclusion Service for our students and families, seeing many events and celebrating the successes of our incredible students. The year started off with a bang during our Taiko Drumming workshop with James, at the Hive in Shrewsbury. Children were taught a piece of music by practising section by section. They then brought all of those sections together to form the final piece which was performed to parents at the end of the workshop.



Springing forward to March saw our Easter Egg Trail at Attingham Park. Families came together to complete the activities at each of the 10 stations along the trail. The children were awarded an Easter egg for completing all activities. New friends were made and a great time was had by all!

Speeding along to May, we were incredibly lucky to secure some funding from The Powell Family Foundation which enabled us to take our Students on a Driving Experience Day in Loughborough. Students had great fun, being able to drive a supercar with the support of a professional instructor. The experience also included a thrilling Hot Lap, where our instructor took students for a ride in a super-fast saloon car. It was a really special day for our students, this is some of the feedback from the day:

- The experience made me feel very free and alive!
- I feel more confident about having Driving lessons soon.
- Empowering and pleased to have the opportunity of saying I can drive despite knowing I cannot drive on roads.



A fun time was had when Circus Starr came to town. Families had a great time being entertained by acrobats, jugglers, skating duo, dancers, Nula Hula with the sensory hula hoops and not forgetting Lukinha, the hilarious Clown!

The end of the term was a time for us to celebrate the achievements of our amazing children. Children were nominated by QTVI's and then presented with gift vouchers for their outstanding achievements. A huge thank you to Sight Loss Shropshire for kindly donating the gift vouchers.

There is a huge amount that goes on behind the scenes to ensure that these events run smoothly. Planning has already started for 2025 so keep a look out in your emails to sure ensure that you don't miss out on the fun! Remember to check your junk!



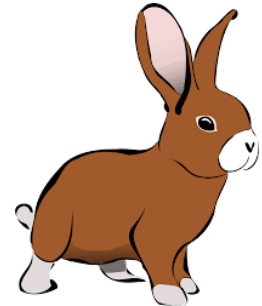
Upcoming events

Circus Starr - 21st January 2025

Animal Encounters - 8th March 2025

Arthog Outreach - 12th & 26th March 2025

Attingham Easter walk - 5th April 2025



Wishing you seasons greetings for a happy holiday.



Local Offer for Special Educational Needs and Disability

Discover everything you need to know about education, health and care services in your local area for children and young people with SEND 0-25yrs at...

www.telfordsend.org.uk



Key features...

- Search for clear and accessible information, advice and sources of support.
- Explore leisure, fun and short breaks activities.
- Find out about specialist services and education health and care plans.
- Learn how schools support special educational needs.
- Use the interactive map showing what is available near to where you live.
- Have your say through our online feedback form.



www.telfordsend.org.uk

Need this in large print or Braille?

If you would like to receive this newsletter in Large Print or Braille, please email

sendandinclusion@telford.gov.uk



[Shropshire's SEND Local Offer](#) is a single place for information and services for children and young people with special education needs and/or disabilities, their families and the practitioners who support them.

Take a look at the [SEND Family directory](#) for local events, groups and things to do. For news and updates please like and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Email: Local.Offer@shropshire.gov.uk Telephone: 0345 678 9063

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