

Nexus news

July



Issue 5 – 6/6/18



There has been a lot of hard work this week in school. On Wednesday we were joined by a group of students from Tonbridge School who helped to start transform our allotment and sensory garden area. Our students also helped to move lots of the material. You can see from the picture above that this area is really beginning to take shape with the raised beds and wheelchair accessible spaces. We were also supported on Wednesday by the High Weald and Kent Partnership and the Kent Wildlife Trust who helped to clear and begin to create our woodland area at the back of the school building. This area really looks good with rope trails, bug hotels, seating, pathways to explore and quiet spaces.

It was a pleasure to see so many parents at last night's open evening and meet many new parents. Please let me know if there are other ways that we can communicate and share information with you as I know it can be difficult for some parents and families to attend these events.

We have just started to trial a new online communication system to replace the current home-school contact books. The System is called Class Dojo and we have a few classes that are trialing this over the next few weeks before we decide whether it meets our needs. I have included the responses to the parent questions that were sent in below and have tried to answer as many questions as possible. If I have missed your question then please let me know.

Have a good weekend – Footballs Coming Home?

Scott

Primary 5 News

Hello Everyone!

It is P5's turn to share our week with you.

We always start our day with a sensory circuit. Nikita gives her sensory system a good work out by crossing her midline. Without her knowing it, she is also working to develop her social skills by joining in with this shared activity with adults in class.

I would very much like to share with you our star of the week, Cian, who after lots and lots and lots of practice and repetition said "no" to answer the question "Do you want....." for the first time ever on Wednesday.

Finally a favourite Thursday activity is our drumming session. This activity helps to support the development of our pupil's listening skills by recognising rhythms as well as syllables in familiar words.

Hartlands – Spectrum Breaks

The Hartlands is a delightful Victorian holiday Centre situated in Shanklin on the south coast of the beautiful and tranquil Isle of Wight. The centre was designed and created by Colin and Elaine with the help and support of autism specialists to provide self-catering accommodation and facilities to support families, schools and care homes with members of any age on the autistic spectrum. For a holiday where autism is understood and catered for.

Colin and Elaine continue to expand this unique centre so please take a look at their website for further information www.spectrumbreaks.co.uk



Dates for the week ahead;

Tuesday 10th July Contenance Clinic

Tuesday 10th July Dr Gupta's Clinic

Tuesday 10th July Energy Bar Café Area 2 – 2.45 pm

Thursday 12th July Sports Day

Friday 13th July Parent Partnership Meeting

Friday 13th July Science Enrichment Day

Parent Questions

1. There is always a need for fundraising so would it be better to have a fundraising committee dedicated to that?

Absolutely. There are some fantastic fundraising opportunities available, but many of these require a great deal of time to apply for, or complete bids for grants. There are several parent groups already supporting the school, but I would like to develop a school Parent Teacher Association (PTA) to drive this forward. You may not know, but the school has charitable status and a part time TA who leads on fundraising.

2. Can we do more after school clubs? The ones so far have been a hit and are good for them? Football club?

Yes. Extra-curricular activities are an important element to school life and provide a great platform for developing skills, learning something new or socialising with friends. The clubs we have had so far are reliant on parents being able to collect their children from school and also rely on school staff being available to support these clubs

3. Can we do sports day again?

Yes, this is being planned and is an important part of the summer calendar and a whole school event which should of course include parents and families.

4. Can we have a Xmas fayre?

Yes. See question 1 above and question 3. Christmas Fayres are a great fundraising opportunity as well as providing an opportunity to bring the school community together.

5. When we have parents/carers meetings can they be documented so that we get the answers to any questions raised?

There are two answers to this question. Firstly if the meetings referred to are in relation to ARs/EHCP meetings then these will be formally recorded. Secondly – any other parent meetings such as the 'Parent Group' should be recorded and I would like to be able to include the outcomes of these meetings in future newsletters.

6. Can we do more events at school to involve siblings and grandparents? Other mainstream schools have always got events for these.

Another great idea and something we will be looking at developing further. We already have some sessions in school such as 'Stay and Play' that allow this to happen. However, I am keen to develop relationships with other schools so that we can get siblings more involved and develop their understanding of what their siblings do at Nexus. All family members are invited and most welcome to attend any of our school events such as Enrichment days, outings etc

7. Post-19 provision and how long does it take to set up?

Nexus is part of Kent Special Educational Needs Trust (KsENT) who make up a group of special schools across Kent working together to develop provision and support in special education. As a group KsENT are looking at the options for Post-19 students and actively working with KCC in this area. This is something that will take time to develop.

8. More school trips, more life skills, more trips to shops/supermarkets.

This is an important area that I would like to see developed in school. The skills that pupils are learning in school need to be generalised outside of the classroom/school environment. It will take some time to embed this further within the curriculum and we need to consider a number of factors such as risk assessments and drivers for buses.

9. More written in the contact books.

Communication with parents is really important. We have several classes trialing a new online contact system called 'Class Dojo' which will make it easier to send pictures and updates about pupils. We need to know how much communication you would like from us as some parents like daily updates and others prefer a weekly update.

10. More colour in the school/on the walls.

It's important to have the right balance of displays, pictures, murals, general information and examples of pupil progress on the walls and displayed around school. Some pupils may find it very difficult to transition around the building if there is too much visual stimulation. We will be having some display boards going up in school and some of the classes already have some really vibrant displays inside. This remains a work in progress.

11. Hydrotherapy use.

This is developing and is now becoming a weekly session for our pupils who require access to the pool working alongside the therapists. More training is planned for the next academic year.

12. Still no signage outside school/road markings/speed limit.

This also concerns me. We have been working with highways to try and get some changes made and this will initially involve moving the national speed limit sign and area further back from the bridge.

13. New teachers starting in Sept - will we get to meet them? what experience do they have?

There are actually four new Teachers starting in September: Lauren in Reception class, Alicia in Key Stage 1, Vicky in 14-19 Department and Matt in SG1. If Parents haven't already had the opportunity to meet the teachers at Open Evening we will ensure that there is an opportunity within the first few weeks in September.

14. After our disappointing Ofsted Report what are Scott's goals to improve the school.

There are a number of outcomes from the most recent Ofsted inspection that have been addressed or are being addressed in school. My focus is on developing opportunities for pupils, parents and staff.

15. Concerned about the staff turnover in school and would the new satellite provision have an effect on the ratio of staff to children in Nexus school.

No, the new satellite provision will not have effect on the ratio of staff to children. The school is growing and as such we will have more staff in school and not less, see question 13.

16. I noticed a lot of collection boxes for Five Acre Wood an SEN school. Maybe Nexus could do the same? Seems like the school needs a lot of fundraising for the lifestyle house and equipment for the playground.

We have successfully applied for and won several grants which have helped with funding for the Independent Living House and playground equipment. There is currently a collection box for Nexus School in Asda Kings Hill and recently in Waitrose.

17. Is there going to be a family liaison officer

This is not currently within the staffing structure of the school. However, I would like to be able to support families better and as a special school we are in a position of being able to signpost you to different services or support you in other areas. I will be looking at the school providing more training opportunities to families in areas that are important to you or you feel you may need more support with.

18. Sensory garden update?

Please see the updates in this week's newsletter.

19. Therapy dogs to visit the school

I completed a research study that was published in the NASEN journal about therapy dogs and their benefits to students. This is an area I would like to explore further for Nexus as well as other therapy options.

20. Staff to use the staff car park to free up more bays for parents. That car park is always empty while some parents struggle to get a place in the main car park.

The top car park is an overflow car park for staff, visitors or Parents. Staff parking in the main car park will not change at present as I do not want staff leaving the school in the dark in the winter months having to walk on their own to the top car park.

I have made it clear to the bus drivers, taxi drivers and any parents that I have spoken to that the disabled bays at the front of the school are accessible to anyone during pick up and drop off times if you need to be closer to the building or have a tail lift. Generally, the traffic moves through this area quite quickly in the mornings and afternoons.

We will continue to monitor the parking as the school grows.

21. Keen to know position/ commitment to after school and holiday clubs. Can't understand why we have such an issue with funding etc - other SEN schools offer far more to their children.

This is another area KsENT are looking at. The provision of after school clubs, holiday clubs and extended services is again lacking for special needs children and young adults. I will be looking in to this further and speaking to other special schools but recent experiences suggest that funding is sadly lacking in this area.

22. How is Scott going to ensure that the transfer of paperwork between the school and the Local Authority runs a lot more smoothly - given that there have been a number of significant delays with EHCP transfers and Annual Review paperwork

I am unclear whether these delays are from the school but would be happy to discuss this further? There have been delays nationally with the EHCP conversion process and transfer of paperwork which in my experience have not always been the result of the school.

23. The stones by the walkway that lead to the children's classroom entrances cause trouble to some parents as the children are distracted by them and throw them or even roll about in them. They are not really suitable to have can they be removed?

We are looking at possible options with these as they also make it difficult for wheelchair users to move around the outside of the building. The stones are there for drainage purposes, but we are looking at solutions for this.

A number of other questions were raised by parents relating to individual pupils or classes and I would be happy to discuss these directly with you if they have not been answered above.