

Weekly Newsletter

Thursday 2nd April 2020.

Dear Parents and Carers,

Today we celebrate World Autism Awareness Day



Firstly, thank you once again for your openness and excellent communication throughout this second week of our journey. Today is a day to reflect and celebrate the amazing children that we have the privilege of knowing and teaching.

I feel that families are beginning to find a routine that works for them and we are mindful that your family life isn't too pressured by 'tasks' sent home that your child may not engage with. At this stage, I would like to emphasise routine, feeling safe and enjoyment of the day is the aim. Your feedback to teachers has been honest and extremely helpful so that we can enable all children to adjust, feel good about what they have achieved and engage through their own interests.

Some of you may still feel apprehensive if your child is not yet ready to transfer school activities to the environment of the home. I would like to reassure you this is OK and your teachers will take your feedback to further personalise activities for home. To have a little fun and connect with each other is so crucial for mental health and resilience. Parents and carers you are all doing a great job!

As a passionate advocate for early years education, I was reminded of the importance of learning through play by my eleven year old. The science test sent home was put to one side, and after years of being 'too old' for lego it was retrieved from the cupboard and an entire day was spent building all manner of space ships and complex constructions (and dad too!). I gave up with my pestering to complete the assigned school work and celebrated this self-chosen play as a fine example of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) . The sense of enjoyment gained from 'just playing' far outweighed the formality of the science test for that day.

I use this example to illustrate to you daily structure is important, however it is alright to 'go with the flow' and not feel pressured to complete school activities every day. Taking a break to allow your child to be self-motivated and engage through play or self-chosen activity is important. Play and learning go hand in hand. Research tells us of the importance of play as children (and adults) learn to apply their skills and knowledge of what they know and can do to. This enables them to make neurological connections, make links, explore, challenge, make sense of their world, generalise, investigate, problem solve, hone fine and gross motor skills, practice vocabulary, interact, imagine, express and think for themselves, become independent and create. All this supports good mental health and development. The list of benefits of play is long and does not end when we reach adulthood. It is ok to revisit activities from school at a later time and teachers understand this.

Mrs Tipler, our school educational psychologist, has sent some links below that you may find useful:

- For our Dr who fans for a message about staying calm and getting through by being kind.
<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/lifestyle/tv/jodie-whittaker-doctor-who-video-17982300>
- A resource list of websites and activities: <https://www.cambslearntogether.co.uk/home-learning>
- Interesting view of taking the 'foot out of the gas' re: education and focusing on mental health etc. Not putting too much pressure on yourself or our children. Coronavirus, and helping children with autism – Episode 4 'Autism, a parents' guide by ACAMH on #SoundCloud
<https://soundcloud.com/user-664361280/coronavirus-helping-children-with-autism>

The check in, check-up and check out contacts your teacher has made with you at points throughout the week has worked very well. Teachers will continue this consistent approach with you after the Easter holidays, beginning again on the first day of term. The photographs and videos you have been sending throughout the week are greatly appreciated and Keep us smiling.

I thought I would share a flavour of some of the great things that have been happening in our community this week ...

Baking at home has been very popular with many of you this week – some future contestants of Master Chef and Great British Bake off in the making !



Practising letter formation and name writing:



Amazing drawing



A cheeky skeleton and labelling bones as a science activity.

Some children have been creative with paper, shape and construction:





A great way to practice number formation and counting outdoors in the sunshine

A science activity to make slime!



A great power point produced as part of a project about food from the USA!



And what about this fantastic castle that Henry has built? Most impressive !

Sometimes what can seem to us to be little things are huge milestones in the life of our younger pupils. This is captured from a parent in Busy Bees class. *"We had a nice WOW moment earlier in the week where he spilt some of his water which we didn't realise. He pointed to the box of tissues so we gave him one, and he then went off to wipe up the water himself! So he got a big high five for that!"*

A huge hats off to Mrs Soulby, who has dedicated her time to make much needed scrubs for the heroes of the NHS!



What have our staff been up to this week....?

Here's how we have celebrated **Autism Awareness Day!**



I think you will agree the talent, skills and character that all our children express in different ways is simply amazing as they show resourcefulness and resilience at this time. We are so proud to know them. What a way to celebrate the diversity, uniqueness and brilliance of the Medeshamstede community on this World Autism Day.

If any parents/carers have photos or would like to share some of activities they have been up to, please send them for the next newsletter. I know there has been some gardeners and DIY going on this week.

Finally, we sadly say goodbye to two of our lovely teachers this week.

Mrs Soulby has been our science teacher for many years and has really brought science to life at Medeshamstede through many exciting experiments and investigations. Mrs Soulby has put plans on hold to move to France and renovate a wonderful new house. We will stay in touch and cannot wait to visit for a working holiday once things return to normal!

Mrs Johal, is developing her talents at a mainstream primary school as their Early Years Leader. Mrs Johal has brought great passion for teaching phonics and outdoor learning to Medeshamstede and we hope to make some links with her new school and pupils. Mrs Ives and Mr Spalding will oversee activities for Hedgehogs class, until school resumes, ably supported by Mrs Plant.



Happy Easter to you all.

Please stay safe, well and healthy and we will be in touch at the beginning of next term.

Best wishes,

Mrs Laura Ives
(Head of School)