

The Unit Summer Newsletter 2024

Welcome to the Summer Term! We hope you all had a wonderful break and that you are ready for the term ahead. Mr Page completed his teacher training placement at the end of the Spring term. It was wonderful to have him here at Maple and we wish him all the best as he heads into his final term of teacher training.



Last term was full of exciting special events. We cannot wait to welcome you all in for the open evening on 24th April where you will see all of the wonderful work the children have been doing.

The term ahead is full of exciting events, activities and learning. The long awaited Y5 and 6 residential trips will take place this term as will SATs week. For our school leavers, there is an exciting timetable of events which includes a staff vs Y6 rounders match. We have been undefeated for the last few years but know this year we will be up against a very sporty Y6 cohort. There will be a transition day for our Y6 pupils who will visit their new secondary schools and, on this day, the rest of the Unit children will get to meet their new class teachers and spend a day with them in their new classrooms. This is very exciting indeed.

We also have deaf awareness week and mental health awareness week coming up this half term. Both are equally important for our young deaf children. There is a higher percentage of mental health challenges in deaf children – 40% in deaf children compared to 25% for their hearing counterparts. At Maple, we are very lucky that there is a lot being done to support emotional well-being and mental health not only within the school PSHE curriculum but through the school ethos and the many mental health and well-being events and activities held across the school year. We also have a school counselling team and school mental health ambassadors. In the Unit, we promote emotional well-being and positive mindful practices through daily activities in the Unit and through the deaf curriculum delivered in weekly deaf club to our KS2 children. Our KS2 children have learnt a lot about advocacy and the differing deaf based mental health support agencies they can access and the practices to support their own emotional wellbeing and mental health.

The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) previously delivered important social and emotional and mental health programmes for deaf children. They are now focusing on supporting their new Every Moment Counts strategy 2023-2028. As a result, they are collaborating with Sign Health and Sign Health will now be delivering and supporting the Healthy Minds, Peer to Peer mentoring and Youth Advisory Board (YAB) programmes.

Please see the following links for information on these programmes and what Sign Health have to say about their collaboration with the NDCS.

www.signhealth.org.uk/announcement/new-collaboration-with-the-national-deaf-childrens-society

I have also linked the Go for Gold leaflet devised by Dr Helen Willis which includes helpful information, tips and recommendations surrounding the importance of mindful practice for deaf children - www.batod.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Go-for-Gold_CHILDREN.pdf

Dr Helen Willis talks a lot about golden silences and limiting excess noise. We know that screen time is impossible to avoid and can be a source of social interaction and a source of entertainment and be used for educational purposes. Whilst we aren't suggesting a ban on screens, we wanted to share some recommendations regarding screen time and social media sites alongside Dr Helen Willis' advice.

NICE guidelines advise TV free days and if children do use any screens, for this use to be capped at 2 hours.

Age restrictions on websites/ messaging services and social media sites:

- Whatsapp – 13 years +
- Facebook – 13 years +
- Instagram – 13 years +
- Snapchat – 13 years +
- Tik Tok – 13 years +
- Twitter – 13 years +
- Life 360 – 13 years +

Whilst talking about mental health and recommendations, it is important to talk about sleep.

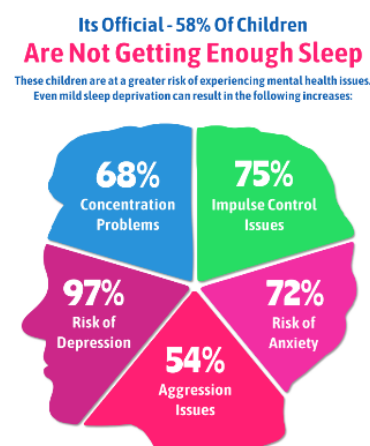
We all know how much a bad night's sleep or a string of broken sleep can affect mental health and well-being. It is hard for adults to function on minimal sleep and it can impair a series of functions for children. It is important, especially for deaf children who do experience listening fatigue and who utilise more cognitive resources daily to develop a consistent bedtime routine and for them to understand how important sleep is overall for their health and well-being.

Below is the NHS recommended amount of sleep based on age:

Children 3-5	10-13 hours
Children 6- 12 years old	9 – 12 hours

And here is a link to some useful relaxation tips which may promote better sleep:

- <https://thesleepcharity.org.uk/information-support/children/relaxation-tips/>



Promoting better mental health and something which will also promote well-being and improve understanding of deaf identity and deaf culture is getting involved in deaf events including sporting clubs and events.

The children heard all about Mr Page's involvement with the Deaf national rugby team. He will be competing for the UK in South Africa this summer. My own sisters competed for the Deaflympic women's football team and competed at the Deaflympics in Australia and Taipei.

Involvement in deaf sporting teams can support deaf identity and provide the children with access to the 'deaf world' as well as improve their sporting skills and experiences. They may even get to compete nationally and internationally for their country one day. Please see the following website for information on deaf sporting clubs and events - <https://ukdeafsport.org.uk/> Here is a link with all the international deaf sporting events happening over the next few years including the deaflympics in 2025 in Tokyo - <http://www.ciss.org/events>

To mark deaf awareness week and to bring more awareness about deaf culture, we will be looking at sign names. The staff in the Unit have been assigned sign names and the children (who didn't have existing sign names) have been coming up with their own. On Open evening, we will have a sign name station so please do come along and we can help you to create your own sign name or if you have one already, please do share these with us. Sign names are similar to nicknames and they can be linked to a particular interest or hobby you have, a personality trait or a physical feature or be linked to the position you hold.

There is a deaf flag which was created by French deafblind artist Arnaud Balard World and can be found on the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) website - <https://wfdeaf.org/deaf-flag/>



I wanted to share the flag and what the WFD say about it and what it represents—

Turquoise Blue represents the deaf community and Sign Language, pride and unity.

Yellow represents the colour of light, an enlightened spirit, life and "thriving in unison".

Dark Blue represents the earth, humanity and living in accordance with the planet. It is also the colour of the WFD, our logo is blue, we wear blue ribbons in support of deaf people, and deaf cultures all over the world recognize blue as representing deaf people. On the International Day of Sign Languages, we even celebrate by shining a blue light! Blue is deeply connected to the roots of the deaf community.

All of these colours together represent an awareness of humanity as inherently diverse, a diversity of peoples and languages on Earth. This flag shows that we are here, we belong to this world, we are a part of humanity. Deaf people are a part of a rich diversity that makes humanity better.

Important term date information will have been sent out by the main office. Please do look through this and make a note of the relevant activities and events. We will be holding a Unit trip again this summer term and will send out the details shortly.

Events and Extracurricular Clubs

Please make sure to register with the Phoenix group if you have not already - <https://www.phoenixgroup.org.uk/registration>. Keep an eye out for their May half-term and summer events as they are very popular and do book up very quickly. They are often subsidised and siblings (whether deaf or hearing) can join in also. Please do register and check out the events. Many of the Unit children who attend already really enjoy the exciting activities and events they organise - <https://www.phoenixgroup.org.uk>

Please see the following website link for information about events in Hertfordshire over the next few months.

<https://www.primarytimes.co.uk/hertfordshire/listings/>

Remark! hold a playscheme in the school holidays for deaf children and it is well attended. They have two sites – Laycock primary school (which also has a deaf unit with 70 deaf children) in North London and Catford Wanderers Sports Club in Beckenham. The playschemes are on 10am-4pm daily and there is a suggested donation of £2 per day. They have a lot of well-planned activities and outings. This includes museum trips and workshops, theatre and cinema trips, football tournaments, art projects and trips to adventure playgrounds. The playscheme is for 6–11-year-old children and there is a separate 11-16 group also.

They also have a fortnightly Saturday club 11am-3pm for 6-14 year old children and this is held at Coram Fields Youth Club which is a short walk from St Pancras and Kings Cross station - <https://www.remarkcommunity.org/our-clubs#satclub>. Again, there is a suggested donation of £2. Events include trampolining, arts and crafts, tournament games etc.

Please see the following website for more information about other clubs for deaf children that Remark has - <https://www.remarkcommunity.org/our-clubs>

Wishing you all a wonderful summer term and hopefully one with less hailstones and more sunshine.

From the Unit