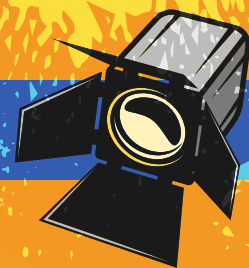




Spotlight on SEND



‘Hello everyone!’

Welcome to our first Spotlight on SEND newsletter. I hope you and your family are keeping well and are in good health. You will receive this newsletter every half term. I will focus on the areas of support we can give our children, whether they have additional needs or not. Yes, we will look at specific needs like dyslexia, autism, and ADHD but I find that strategies to support neurodiversity* benefit all our children and help them to learn, thrive and achieve.

**Neurodiversity describes the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many ways; there is no one ‘right’ way of thinking, learning, and behaving, and differences are not viewed as deficits.*

Westhoughton High has lots to celebrate. I am proud of the determination and resilience shown by our learners with Special Educational Needs, and I would like to start by thanking our staff who make a difference to the school experiences of our most vulnerable children. This includes our teachers, our Learning Support Assistants, the Behaviour Support Team, our School Counsellor, the Every Child Hub team, our Bullying Ambassadors, SSLs and the Safeguarding Team who work tirelessly to ensure our learners feel safe in school and get the right support at the right time. It is good to know that our children, who may struggle with difficulties in their daily lives, have someone at school who genuinely cares for and wants the best for every child whilst they are in our school.

The Spring term brought with it the understanding of becoming independent and taking responsibility for our learners, which can be daunting, particularly for those with additional needs. At Westhoughton we want to support you in supporting your child to make positive choices and steps towards their future after school. Recently, key decisions and events have taken place, from the Year 9 Options Information Evening, Year 10 considering their Work Experience placements to updating applications for post 16 placements. Support for our learners with SEND though these important steps forward have ranged from: Wigan and Leigh College interviewing our children here at Westhoughton (they were impressed with how our learners conducted themselves); 1:1 interviews with our onsite Connexions Officer; LSA’s supporting learners in finding appropriate work experience placements and assisting Year 11 to make sure all steps for applying to post 16 placements are completed. This has helped to ensure all our learners have places on appropriate courses for the fast-approaching next academic year.

Communication is vital so if you have any concerns about your child’s development towards adulthood, have a conversation with your child and share any worries you may have with your child’s SSL or a member of the Every Child Hub team. We are always happy to offer advice, support, and plan next steps with you and your child.

Autism Acceptance

This half term’s SEND area of need focus is autism. Autism Acceptance Week was acknowledged in school during the last week of the Spring Term. Learners took part in a ‘Famous people with autism’ quiz and listened well to Mr. Figgins who delivered an assembly to all children. The assembly raised awareness but really focused on acceptance – we have all heard of Autism, we know what it is, now we all need to accept that it is just another way of thinking,

Autism Acceptance Conference:
10th May 2023



learning, and seeing the world. During the week, the SENCo was approached by our Head Girl, who is keen to make a difference and is herself an aspiring SENCo. Alisha, along with Senior Prefect, Eashani wanted to educate our school community on autism. We quickly came up with a plan to ensure this could happen. We will be hosting Westhoughton’s first Autism Acceptance Conference on Wednesday 10th May. This will be a full day event and will be open to all our learners.

The conference will have several aims:

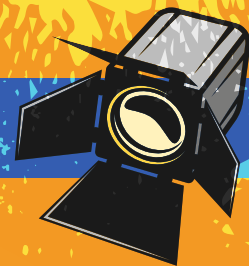
- To raise awareness of autism and improve understanding amongst learners in our school.
- To encourage all members of our school community to work together to improve experiences for everyone in our school.
- To celebrate diversity and accept that autism is not a disability, it is a different ability.

Throughout the day learners will participate in several workshops to meet the aims of the conference. If your child would like to take part, please ask them to complete the Microsoft Form via this QR Code.





Spotlight on SEND



As autism is our focus this half term, we want to share some further understanding.

What is autism?

Autistic people may act in a different way to other people

Autistic people may:

- find it hard to communicate and interact with other people
- find it hard to understand how other people think or feel
- find things like bright lights or loud noises overwhelming, stressful or uncomfortable
- get anxious or upset about unfamiliar situations and social events
- take longer to understand information
- do or think the same things over and over

Autism is not an illness

It is something you are born with. Signs of autism might be noticed when you are young, or not until you are older. If you are autistic, you are autistic your whole life. Autism is not a medical condition with treatments or a “cure”. But some people need support to help them with certain things.

Autism is different for everyone

Autism is a spectrum. This means everybody with autism is different.

Some autistic people need little or no support. Others may need help from a parent or carer every day.

It is not clear what causes autism

Nobody knows what causes autism, or if it has a cause. It can affect people in the same family. So, it may sometimes be passed on to a child by their parents. Autism is not caused by bad parenting, vaccines, such as the MMR vaccine, diet, or an infection you can spread to other people

Autistic people can have any level of intelligence

Some autistic people have average or above average intelligence.

Some autistic people have a learning disability. This means they may find it hard to look after themselves and need help with daily life.

Autistic people may have other conditions

Autistic people often have other conditions, such as: attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, anxiety, depression, or epilepsy.

To find out more, visit these websites:



**Ambitious
about Autism**



**autism
speaks**



**Autism
Education
Trust**

**autismuk
INDEPENDENT**

There are also several TV programmes that are worth a watch: Inside Our Autistic Minds, Christine McGuinness: Unmasking My Autism and Paddy and Christine McGuinness: Our Family and Autism (all can be found on BBC iplayer).

Our Bolton Local Offer

The Local Offer is Bolton's central information point and offers advice for families with children and young people up to the age of 25 years with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

You can contact the team by email: www.bolton.gov.uk/sendlocaloffer/

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter and for your continued support. Our vision is that this newsletter will become a collaborative way for us all to explore and celebrate neurodiversity. If you have any suggestions for future publications, please email us. Equally if you have any further questions or concerns, please contact me at

jparadine@westhoughton-high.org or our Learning Support Lead at ***jtaylor@westhoughton-high.org***

I have a date for your diary. The next Parent Forum will be on Monday 15th May at 5pm, it would be great if parents/carers of children with additional needs could attend.

With thanks 'The Every Child Hub Team'

