

SCHOOL NEWSLETTER MARCH 2024



Dyslexia

The 26th March - 2nd April marks neuro diversity celebration week and looking into the dyslexic mind certainly opens our understanding about this. There are, on average 3 dyslexic students in every classroom. If not recognised, children may be deemed as acting up, refusing to participate, being disorganised. This leads to an isolating and negative school experience and outlook on this literacy based society. Although our recognition of dyslexia has come a long way, I believe we still have some way to go.



The annual Dyslexia Show held at the NEC. Birmingham, brings together leading experts in this field delivering the tools and resources to support and promote success for those with dyslexia, dyscalculia and neuro diversity. As a recently qualified Dyslexic Specialist Teacher and educator that works with a range of SEN, I was enthused to attend my first show alongside Rachel Rix our National SENCO.

Our particular focus was on improving assistive technology (AT) in the classroom. I attended a seminar on the 'Power of AT' that looked at a range of low to high tech solutions from using writing slopes, recordable talking whiteboards to diction software. We believe that the use of AT will make a difference and something that we want to introduce into our Cygnet classrooms soon.







Phoenix School (Sheffield), **Excel & Exceed Centre (Bury)** and The Summit (Coventry) are DfE registered special schools, providing education for young people admitted to their co-located hospital services.

Our schools are regulated by OFSTED and were all rated GOOD at their last inspection.

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Excel & Exceed Centre

Phoenix School

Summit School



Welcome to:

Ben Abu who has joined Summit School as Higher Level Teaching Assistant

We both attended a dynamic seminar on magnificent multi-sensory tools since employing our other senses significantly helps to embed learning. Therefore, the use of fun, colourful, kinesthetic and tactile aids cannot be underestimated! For example, making paper chains to show connectives between characters or words. The visual of a happy cat sitting on an ironing board certainly will help me remember the positively charged cations in chemistry (conversely a sad Ann cutting onions for negative anions!).

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Rachel attended an insightful talk on cultural perspective and changing attitudes towards neuro diversity among ethnic minorities. We had the chance to speak to a leading figure and author, Marcia Brisett - Bailey, who has raised awareness about being dyslexic among the black community. Rachel purchased her book, 'Brilliant, Black and Dyslexic' for the library and we would very much like Maria to attend a training day one day in the future.

We came away with a lot of information to digest and look forward to the introduction of some useful resources, namely the AT, in our classroom.

If you are interested to find out more, below are some useful websites for reference: bdadyslexia.org.uk and helenarkell.org.uk

You may find the <u>Dyslexia Style guide</u> produced by the British Dyslexia Association reinforces the simple adaptations for a dyslexia friendly environment and that will further benefit many of our learners.

SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

What we've been up to this month......

World Book Day on 7th March was celebrated at each of our schools.

At Phoenix they really wanted the students to get to know the library and also to see just how much diversity there is in the books we have on offer.

We bought a scratch map and set to finding books from around the world. We placed flags inside each book and on World Book Day itself the young people took part in a book scavenger hunt. When they found a flag inside a book, they scratched the country off the map which we then turned into a display so that

everyone can see how diverse our library is – and pinpoint which books have representation of specific countries and cultures.



Students were also able to point out where we were lacking in literature from countries, helping us to diversify our literary offer even further. We have ordered 33 new books from all over the world as a result – from Antarctica to Zimbabwe. It was great to see the students of Phoenix School working together as a team, getting to grips with the library and looking at books they might never have picked up before.

Students also embarked on a journey around the world of poetry, with an interactive session themed around animal poetry and their native countries. This was a huge hit, possibly as it was delivered by a giant penguin (Julie), and staff and young people alike enjoyed reciting poetry and trying to memorise "The Tyger".



At Summit staff dressed up as Fairy Tale characters as part of our theme of Magic March.

Our Young People were able to match traditional illustrations of the characters to us. They also had the opportunity to use their artistic skills by creating their own illustrations for their favourite book or a Fairy Tale and creating mindfulness book marks. In addition, they also participated in a scavenger hunt in the library similar to Phoenix, developing their exploration of a range of exciting books.

Some young people also took the opportunity to read for pleasure and discuss their favourite stories.

At Excel and Exceed students participated in drop everything and read sessions throughout the day and engaged in discussing the weekly article - which focussed on the £1 book initiative.

Additionally, students were encouraged to engage with an art session in which they could paint a bookmark with their name on it in the style of the portrait artists that we have been researching this term.

We ended up with some really beautiful pieces which were laminated and returned to the young people for personal use in their future reading ventures.





SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

What we've been up to this month.....

water and light.

This year, the theme for British Science Week (8-17 March) was 'Time' during which each of our schools have embraced the theme in different ways.

Excel & Exceed observed this with a variety of activities and discussions. A daily article was completed by staff in relation to the concept of time and in addition to this an exploration into the history of time was conducted. The use of water clocks and later sundials were researched and considered, however, the turn of the millennium presents us with a new alternative and one student suggested "just check your phone!" In addition, they are investigating the time it takes for plants to grow. This opened the opportunity to discuss the various independent variables that can affect plant growth such as soil quality, amount of

They have been getting their fingers dirty planting spring onions and tomatoes and will be looking at how light affects plant growth over the next few weeks. For those studying biology we will be using this as part of the lessons to explore phototropism (the orientation of plants towards the light) and plotting graphs to represent the growth over the following weeks. Hopefully we will be getting in some yummy spring onions and tomatoes too that can be used for cooking sessions!

At Summit young people got involved in a CSI activity day and made bath bombs.

The CSI activity day was run by Think forensic which included solving a mystery crime in the school. Our young people were able to make copies of their fingerprints using different techniques, make shoe impressions and use all of the techniques discussed throughout the

session to help solve a small crime!

In addition to this, young people got involved in other science activities which involved making bath bombs using their favourite essential oils and designing their own posters for the science week poster competition on their interpretation on 'Time' which was this year's Science theme!

At Phoenix we investigated the time taken for our heart rate to return to resting after completing exercise – some staff were a bit perturbed to see us jumping and skipping up and down the corridor albeit nobody chose to waddle like a duck for a minute however despite us having ducks in the library!

We also tried to predict the time it would take for the tops of carrots to start to grow shoots – in a few days we had green tops which looked like mini-palm trees. The time for an avocado seed to sprout roots or shoots seems to be considerably longer – we're still waiting – will it ever happen? Some YP looked at the length of time it took various radioactive elements to decay by half – known as their half-life. They then attempted to do various activities in a certain

a paper aeroplane in 11 seconds? Our YP can and they can stand on one leg for 123 seconds – this was more challenging for some than others but they were determined to do it.

length of time (which corresponded to the mass number of the elements). Could you make

British Science week is a good time to introduce the CREST Awards. Four of our YP have decided to take up the challenge of gaining a Bronze CREST Award. CREST is the British Science Association's flagship education programme for young people, providing science enrichment activities to inspire and engage 3-to-19-year-olds.

Engineering: Our young people at Sheffield were set a challenge to see who could build the tallest tower out of dried spaghetti and marshmallows; not as easy as it sounds! The spaghetti was very fragile and kept breaking, whilst the marshmallows were (unsurprisingly) very sticky. Despite all these issues, our young people rose to the challenge with one person creat ing a structure over one metre high!

Living Eggs Project: As part of our celebration of British Science Week, the Phoenix School incubated and hatched ducklings. Our eggs came from the Incredible Eggs Company who pride themselves on providing high welfare, ethical hatching kits to schools, nurseries and care homes. Incredible Eggs describe ducklings as "A real 'confidence giver' to those unused to handling and caring for animals" and this could not have turned out to be truer! Some of our students expressed a love for animals, but a fear of accidentally hurting them. With a window of 10 days to build up their confidence, we saw these once wary young people become

comfortable around holding and looking after the ducklings. The most wonderful part of the ten days was seeing the joy and serenity that nurturing the young ducks brought to our young people.



