



# Harrow Virtual School Newsletter

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Harrow Virtual School

Autumn 2021

## Letter from the Virtual School Headteacher



Dear Colleague,

Welcome to our Autumn Term Newsletter,

In this edition you will hear from one of our out-of-borough schools, Benwick Primary in Cambridgeshire. The headteacher, Clare Talbot, shares best practice regarding the education of our CLA. You will also find the range of enrichment activities our students took part in over the Summer and Autumn Terms.

As you are aware, from September the role of the Virtual School has been extended to promote the education of children with a social worker. Our newly appointed AHT, Lisa Bogle, is leading on this initiative. I know that many of you have already been in contact with her regarding how she can assist you in this very important work.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome Karen Bancharan who is our new VS administrator. Karen is presently registering delegates for our Virtual School Conference taking place on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> December. This is a virtual meeting. There is still time to join us! Please see Page 6 for further details.

Our wonderful students have again done us proud in terms of their exams and end of Key Stage Assessments. One Year 11 student achieved 11 GCSEs (grades 4-8), 2 students are going to university this year and one student is taking a gap year. We thank all our partners in supporting our children's education.

I do hope that you enjoy reading our newsletter and if you have any suggestions or would like your school to be featured, please let me know.

Best wishes

Mellina Williamson-Taylor  
Headteacher Harrow Virtual School

## Reading Club

*“We really enjoyed reading the book together (Atticus Claws breaks the law) she scored it 10/10” (Foster Carer)*

*“Every time she sees a Magpie, she thinks it might be Jimmy and his gang!” (Foster Carer)*

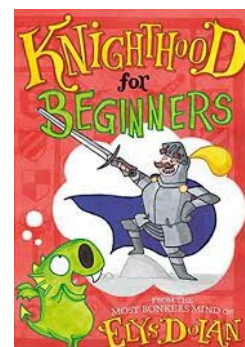
The Reading Club is open for children aged 7 –13 and began last February. It takes place once a month and recommenced in October. The children are sent their books and a 'goody' parcel of stationary in advance of the sessions. Our carers are always on hand to support our less confident readers by either reading to them or with them.

Our 'Ravenous Readers' group is lead by Kathryn, Joanne and Michelle . The

session provides thought provoking discussions, quizzes, riddles, games and images

The children had a special treat when the author Elys Dolan: “Knighthood for Beginners”, and the poet Adisa the Verbaliser joined a reading session. Adisa sent the children a signed copy of his book: “Lip Hopping with the Fundi-Fu”. The children were fascinated with the context to his po-

ems. They continue engage well in the club and have all developed a thirst for reading.



## Philosophy Club

*“..nothing to improve all sessions were run professionally..” (Pupil)*

*“...the classes are fantastic and it is fun to play games.” (Pupil)*

*“..kids were involved a lot...they were happy, and learned a lot..” (Pupil)*

We commissioned [The Philosophy Foundation](#) to run an after school club targeting children in Key Stage 2.

Our objective is to develop children’s critical thinking skills which in turn will help them to build an understanding of themselves, each other and the world.

The children were presented with a stimulus i.e a story, a poem or a short film and to initiate dialogue. Some examples of questions posed to the children were:

- What constitutes freedom?
- Is there such a thing as infinity?
- Would it be better to be a unhappy prince/ princess or a happy pig?

This club is one of our newer initiatives and we are pleased that, even some of our reticent children made every effort to participate.



The Philosophy  
Foundation  
THINKING CHANGES

## Chelsea Physic Garden

We were especially pleased to have a project targeted at our younger students. Pupils in EYFS and Key Stage 1 from Harrow, Ealing and Brent Virtual Schools and their families were invited to a day at [Chelsea Physic Garden](#). Our youngest student was 4 years old and was accompanied by his teenage mother and his grandmother.

Activities included a tour of the garden, which dates back to 1673. There were numerous medicinal plants and fragrant herbs. The children selected the ingredients to make their own herbal teabags. The families were also gifted a muslin cloth with herbs to support sleep by putting it under their pillows. The group were also shown how to make a terrarium using a glass

bottle with layers of grit, charcoal, soil, a few small plants and mini plastic toys.

The children expressed that they enjoyed their visit and that they learned something new. All the adults said the visit had met their expectations including one who added that it was their first time visiting a private garden.

*"...it is important to speak to your plants and tell them "I love you" when you water them!" (Pupil)*



*"I enjoyed it because I could do fun activities." (Pupil)*

*"I loved it so much!" (Pupil)*

## Opera Holland Park

The [Opera Holland Park](#) Project was a 5 day Summer Holiday programme for children in Key Stage 2. It was based on the staging of Janacek's "Cunning Little Vixen", a story based on the circle of life. The sessions were run on a hybrid basis with online sessions starting in June and face-to-face meetings during the summer holidays.

The children engaged in singing lessons from their resident music teacher who was also a profession-

al baritone. They also enjoyed drama games, story-boarding, improvisation of parts of the story and Origami.

As the play was set in woodlands and had characters that depicted various animals. The organiser was keen to link the learning by inviting a local ecologist. The ecologist brought a number of stuffed woodland animals that were cast-offs from the National History Museum. The children were not very impressed by the practice of stuffing animals but were able to identify the fox, badger and rab-

bit as well as the giant plastic insects, all of whom appear in the opera.

The ecologist also led the children on a trail around Holland Park and to the Ecology Centre; they were taught how to identify trees, flowers, insects and other wildlife. They also collected flora which they used to create interesting and exotic fox masks.

After the final performance, cast members and the play's Director came to meet the children to discuss the play and to answer their questions.



## Arvon Lumb Bank Residential



*“I enjoyed my downtime, it was peaceful and calm” (Pupil)*



Arvon’s Lumb Bank Centre is an old mill house set in the stunning hills of West Yorkshire once owned by Ted Hughes. This was a residential trip poetry writing trip for students in Key Stages 4 and 5. It was targeted for young people with English as an additional language.

Throughout the week, the young people participated in poetry writing workshops. They were supported by resident tutors and Kat. The organisers invited Testament who is a professional poet and dramatist. He gave a performance and worked with the group on

developing their poetry writing skills. During the visit Kat facilitated 2 of our young people in attending a Mosque in Halifax to celebrate Eid. The students were pleased that they could attend.

There was a group rota system for cooking the evening meals and for clearing up. The students could cook their own breakfast if they wished to. One morning a student made pancakes for everyone. The students brought cards and board games from home which they enjoyed playing in the evenings.

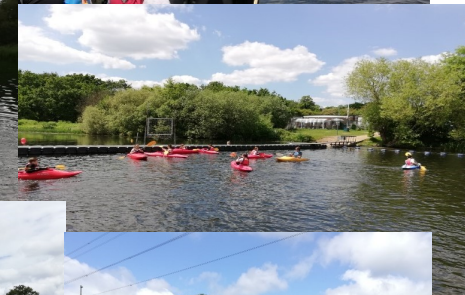
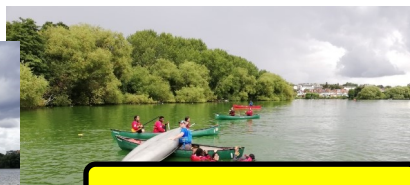
Across the week the young people grew in

confidence and on the final evening they read their poems to the group.

The young people felt that the week has been very positive. They made new friends and commented that the atmosphere was relaxed. Knowing that they were all in care meant that they could talk openly about their experiences which is often not possible in school.

The students also participated in a post-Arvon workshop last month. They were happy to see the tutors and fellow students again. Their poems are being collated into a book and they will receive their copy soon!

## A Collage of our Summer Activities



**Strength in Horses**

## Benwick Primary School, Cambridgeshire

Clare Talbot, Head teacher at Benwick Primary School in Cambridgeshire has been teaching for 25 years in 5 counties across the UK in 10 mainstream schools of sizes varying from 45 on roll to 400 on roll. This is her second Headship after 15 years in Leadership roles. She is also the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After and attends the PEP meetings and CLA Reviews.

Benwick is a small rural primary school with 4 mixed age classes in Fenland Cambridgeshire. This is a low social mobility area with high deprivation. 41% Pupil Premium and 25% SEND (25% of this with EHCPs).

In order to support vulnerable groups, the school has put into place the following practices:

- Step-On - a therapeutic approach to behaviour
- whole school trained and behaviour policy built on this principle;
- Support from local SEND Services - vital in a whole team approach - observations and strategies recommended by specialist teachers and EP team;

- Close liaison with Carers;
- 1:1 support for pupils are required;
- Attachment and SEMH training for staff;
- [ELSA/ELKLAN](#) training for staff;
- Updated Step-On training for Staff;
- Roots & Fruits Anxiety Mapping used for vulnerable pupils to put pupils at the centre of the support in place
- Risk reduction plans used by all staff to support behaviour and learning needs;
- SMART targets regularly reviewed;
- Trusted adult & safe space strategies used to support individuals;
- Forest Schools activities.

The school have had to adapt their curriculum and teaching approaches to meet the needs of vulnerable groups. Some children need a bespoke timetable as their readiness for learning is not yet fully developed. They use 'now and next' boards and 5 point scales charts to promote independence and self-regulation. They also have a bespoke curriculum involving forest schools and activities following individual interests and needs developed

alongside the class curriculum.

To support children who have experience trauma, Benwick Primary taps into Blue Smile counselling, liaises with social workers, carers, health and other professionals forming a team around the child approach which includes the strategies already mentioned in this article.

Benwick has many CLA under the care of many local authorities and Clare's regular feedback on pupils' ePEP online secure platform has been its ease of use, easily saved, accessible remotely, accessible by delegated team members supporting the child and helps promote a whole child development ethic. It can be added to when relevant which ensures the information is always up to date and the most recent information is available.

Thank you to Clare for sharing how her school supports vulnerable groups. Clare is happy for schools to contact her about any of these practices via [head@benwick.cambs.sch.uk](mailto:head@benwick.cambs.sch.uk)

*We will continue to approach schools to discuss sharing their models of good practice in supporting vulnerable groups in future newsletters. However, do feel free to get in touch with [virtualschool@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:virtualschool@harrow.gov.uk) if you would like to be featured.*



**Clare Talbot,  
Headteacher**



**[Click on logo above to go to school website](#)**



Civic Centre  
Station Road  
Harrow

virtualschool@harrow.gov.uk

**We are on the web:**  
[www.harrow.gov.uk/virtualschool](http://www.harrow.gov.uk/virtualschool)

### \*Acronyms used in this edition:

**HVS:** Harrow Virtual School

**VSH:** Virtual School Head

**VS:** Virtual School

**CLA:** Children Looked

After  
**CWS:** Children with a Social Worker

**DT:** Designated Teacher

**DSL:** Designated

Safeguarding Lead

**ePEP:** electronic Personal Education Plan

## Achieving Excellence Together

## Meet The Team

**Headteacher: Mellina Williamson-Taylor** E: [Mellina.Williamson-Taylor@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:Mellina.Williamson-Taylor@harrow.gov.uk)

**Senior Education Officer: Joanne Tortipidis** E: [Joanne.Tortipidis@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:Joanne.Tortipidis@harrow.gov.uk)

**AHT: Anu Jain** E: [Anupameya.Jain@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:Anupameya.Jain@harrow.gov.uk)

**AHT (Post-16): Kat Robinson** E: [Kathryn.Robinson@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:Kathryn.Robinson@harrow.gov.uk)

**AHT (Children with a Social Worker): Lisa Bogle** E: [Lisa.Bogle@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:Lisa.Bogle@harrow.gov.uk)

**Clinical Psychologist: Sara Dawson** E: [Sara.Dawson@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:Sara.Dawson@harrow.gov.uk)

**Education Support Officer: Michelle Tyson** E: [Michelle.Tyson@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:Michelle.Tyson@harrow.gov.uk)

**Virtual School Admin Officer: Karen Bancharan** E: [Karen.Bancharan@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:Karen.Bancharan@harrow.gov.uk)

## AC Education Online Training

HVS continues to offer AC Education's Online Training modules for free to schools. For the latest available courses, click [here](#) to take you to their website list of courses.

To register please email Karen Bancharan at [virtualschool@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:virtualschool@harrow.gov.uk)

## Dates for Termly DT & DSL Seminars

The Spring and Summer Term Safeguarding in Education Seminars for Designated Teachers and Designated Safeguarding Leads will continue to take place via MS Teams. Please save these dates:

**Tues 1st March 2022**

**Tues 7th June 2022**

**SAVE THE DATES!**

## Harrow Virtual School Conference

Supporting the Educational Outcomes of Children with a Social Worker

**DATE:** Tuesday 7 December 2021  
**TIME:** 9.30-3.30pm  
**VENUE:** Virtual Conference

### TARGET GROUPS:

School Staff Supporting Vulnerable Groups and Social Workers

**Hear** from the Director of Education and the Virtual School Headteacher.  
**Keynote Speech:** What do we know about CIN and Supporting their Educational Outcomes?  
**Hear** presentations from Care Experienced Young People

**A Selection of Afternoon Education Themed Workshops:**  
Mental Health | Adoption | CLA and Previously Looked After Children | Children with a Social Worker



Michelle Tyson or Karen Bancharan at [virtualschool@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:virtualschool@harrow.gov.uk) to book your place and afternoon workshops. Please respond by 5.00 pm on Monday 29th November

