

Welcome to the final issue of the SENCO Bulletin for this academic year. If you have particular interests that you would like us to feature in next term, please contact the [SENCO Bulletin Team](#).

This week we focus on the following themes:

- Looking after our own well-being
- Essex SEND Reforms Update
- INSET news
- Mindfulness Techniques for children
- Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC)
- Large print books
- Autism accredited training

Looking after our own well-being ...

As we reach the end of another school year, most school staff are eagerly anticipating their well-deserved summer break. At the same time, there will be parents and carers out there who will look at the calendar with trepidation, knowing they have six weeks stretching ahead of them. Bearing both these scenarios in mind, we thought this may be a good point to reflect on last year and plan for the next in terms of promoting the emotional wellbeing and mental health of the adults supporting our children and particularly our most complex young people with high needs SEND.

The Public Health England and Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition 2015 document '[Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing. A whole school and college approach](#)' identifies eight main principles for an effective strategy, including Staff Development and Working with Parents and Carers.



Another useful 2015 resource from the National Children's Bureau (NCB) '[What works in promoting social and emotional well-being and responding to mental health problems in schools](#)' also has a focus on the importance of supporting staff and parents/carers to ensure the wellbeing of our young people.

“Well-being in schools starts with the staff: they are in the front line of this work, and it is hard for them to be genuinely motivated to promote emotional and social well-being in others if they feel uncared for and burnt out themselves.”

“Some well reported sources of staff stress – such as rising expectations, targets, inspections and standards – are externally driven and tend to be associated with a sense of a lack of control. Schools can provide a buffer by helping staff build a greater sense of control through measures such as staff development and counselling to develop key stress reduction skills such as self-efficacy, assertion, resilience, relaxation and mindfulness (which refers to learning in the moment).”

“The school has an important part to play in supporting the kind of parenting and family life that boosts well-being. This can be done informally, through conversation with individual parents and carers, or more formally through presentations at parents' evenings, printed information, parenting education courses, and designated family link workers.”

The Young Minds [website](#) contains a wealth of information for professionals,

Issue:

Monday

13 July 2015

NEWS

Edward Timpson has made an [announcement](#) on 10 July 2015 that time scales for Transfer Reviews will be extended from September 2015. The Local Authority is awaiting governmental advice on this.

QUICK LINKS

[Educational Psychology Service](#)

[Essex Local Offer](#)

[SEND Information Advice & Support Service](#)
(Parent Partnership)

[Provision Guidance](#)
For the most up-to-date version of the Provision Guidance Toolkit and guidance on its use

[SENCO Bulletin Archive](#)
To view previous issues of the SENCO Bulletin

[Specialist Teaching and Preschool Service](#)
The service's 'Request for Support' [form](#) can be found on our Primary Sector page

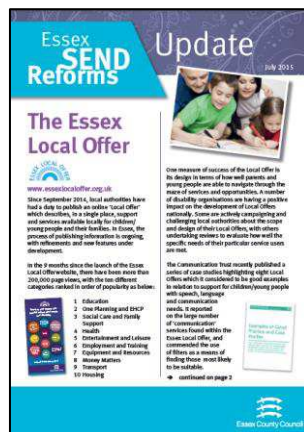
parents/carers and young people, including tips for how we as adults can keep ourselves emotionally healthy. As well as the interactive website, the charity also runs a parent helpline 0808 802 5544.

Kerry Howard

Essex SEND Reforms Update ...

The July 2015 issue of the Essex SEND Reforms Update is now [available](#).

It features updates on the Essex Local Offer, free multi-agency training on person-centred planning by Interact, the SEND Preparation for Employment grant, the East of England SEND Partner Network, EHCP Transfers, joint commissioning, personal budgets, EHC panels, the Essex SEND Information, Advice and Support Service and iEssex.



INSET news ...

'I love SENCO conferences! So beneficial!' At the end of what has been a very challenging year in the world of SEN provision, it was good to get together to think about a key strategic aspect of the role of the SENCO. With classroom based provision for pupils with SEN under increased scrutiny, this year's Primary SENCOs' conference explored ways to maximise the effective use of TAs in the classroom. Led by our key note speaker Dr Paula Bosanquet (Head of Education and Development at the University of East London), we explored the theory and practical implication of three possible pedagogical roles for TAs (repair, support and heuristic).

We know how much we valued updating our own knowledge in this area whilst working with Paula to prepare the day and, if your evaluations are anything to go by, we were not alone. For many in the room, this material was unfamiliar:

- **'an excellent new approach'**
- **'inspirational'**
- **(I've learned) 'how much more there is to teaching and learning'**
- **'Very useful and thought provoking'**
- **(I've learned) 'the importance of clearly defined roles and responsibilities'**

For others, it was the opportunity to develop their emergent thinking:

- **'Has given me the confidence to forge ahead with some of the changes to teacher/LSA practice'**
- **'I have had the pleasure of hearing Paula speak before but today has added a lot more to my understanding of the complex factors influencing learning.'**
- **'This was a 'grey area' for our school and this has cleared up the uncertainty'**
- **'Always get something to reflect on/act upon from SENCO conference'.**

Interspersed with the theory, (we are glad that we have been able to finally unpack the mysteries of ZPD for some of you!), were plenty of opportunities for networking and liaison. As always, SENCOs were masters of peer-to-peer support:

- **'Lots of ideas from networking (about) what other schools do'**
- **'The conferences are great opportunities to liaise with other SENCOs!'**

Whilst there was no denying the levels of exhaustion evident in the room, it was inspiring to hear (and later to read), your plans for implementing this material back at school. If your evaluations are anything to go by, numerous head-teachers will be having additions made to their school action plans and TAs will be returning to skills-audits in September. We are pleased to note that many of you will be using the practical activities from the day as part of your school-

INSET

[SEN Training Programme 2014-15](#)

[Bookings](#) for the advertised SEN Training Programme

[Enquiries](#) about the SEN Training Programme

[Training requests for schools](#) should be made on using the School Request for Support [form](#), and emailed to the appropriate area team:

[Mid](#) Braintree

[North-East](#) Colchester

[South](#) Basildon

[West](#) Harlow

based training. Particular good wishes to the SENCO who is substituting the conference material for her planned TA training day this week – let us know how it goes!

For those SENCOs for whom the work on scaffolding for independence was unfamiliar, these [slides](#) may prove useful.

If you were unable to attend the conference and are wondering what you missed, you may like to know that Paula's book is due for publication in August: [Bosanquet, P, Radford, J and Webster, R *The teaching assistant's guide to effective interaction: How to maximise your impact.* Oxon: Routledge](#)

Whilst many delegates took the opportunity to attend the workshop on writing person-centred outcomes which formed the final session of the conference, we are pleased to be able to announce that there will be a range of opportunities available through September and early October. Dates and timings are currently being confirmed but we can announce that there will be sessions hosted at the schools listed (right).

We hope to be able to announce additional venues in the new term. **Full details, including how to book places will appear in the first SENCO bulletin of the new term. These sessions will NOT be advertised on the CPD portal.**

And that brings us to the end of quite a year. We have been constantly reminded of the value of good communication and team work as specialist teachers and SENCOs have worked together to produce working solutions to overcome barriers facing children and young people, and our staff. Thank you for your enthusiasm and proactive approach to the challenges of the past ten months. We are very much looking forward to our summer break. Hope yours is relaxing, refreshing ... and fun!

The INSET team

Mindfulness Techniques for children ...

We often **tell** children to "pay attention", but how often do we **teach** children to do this? Mindfulness is a way of teaching children how to pay attention, in a way which improves their social, emotional and academic learning. Through applying mindfulness, children can learn to focus their attention, be more compassionate with them self and other people, and become less reactive. Mindfulness has been found to aid emotional regulation and the development of impulse control, as well as enhance executive functioning.

Research has indicated that the more mindful a child is, the less likely they are to see a situation as threatening or stressful. Research has also suggested that mindfulness can lower social anxiety and help children to better manage feelings of anger, for example. For children the focus is on helping them to learn to see more clearly in the moment, what is happening, without becoming too emotionally heightened. This means learning to stop themselves from reacting to a situation and taking some time to reflect on it before responding. This can be achieved by taking a breath and using calming skills to help the mind to settle so that it can see things more clearly.

Through mindfulness, we also encourage children to be curious and interested! *"With a sense of adventure and curiosity, we can learn and experience more, moment by moment"* - Patricia Collard (2014)

Some Mindfulness activities to try with children:

1. Mindful Listening

This is an easy activity to begin with. You can make a sound with a bell or chimes, for example, and ask the children to listen really carefully to the sound

Schools hosting sessions on developing person-centred outcomes (Sept/Oct)

- Downhall Primary (Rochford)
- Cold Norton Primary
- St Helens RC Junior (Brentwood)
- Ivy Chimneys (Epping)
- Takeley Primary
- Brisco Primary (Pitsea)
- St Katherine's Primary (Canvey Island)
- Joyce Frankland Academy (Newport)
- Notley Green Primary

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

[Educational Psychology Service Maths Intervention](#)

SEND Drop-in sessions

MID

[Braintree](#)

Tuesday 3 November 2015

and signal when they can no longer hear it. Alternatively, ask them to close their eyes and notice the sounds in their environment, drawing their attention to those far away and those close by. First, ask them to listen to the sounds farthest away for a moment. Then, draw them to listen to the sounds in the room. Don't name any sounds for them, just invite them to see what they can hear. Change the focus again and ask them to listen to the sounds of their body – their breathing, their heartbeat, etc. Then ask them to listen just to their breathing. Then gradually draw their attention out again, listen to the sounds in the room again and finally listening to the sounds furthest away once more.

2. Focusing on the breath

Children can be helped to self-calm through focusing on their breathing. Their attention can be drawn to their breathing through an exercise in which you help them to notice their breathing at different places in their body. First, ask them to breathe holding their palm in front of their nose and mouth. Draw their attention to how their breath makes their hand feel cool when they breathe in and warm when they breathe out. Ask them to move their hands down to their chest and then their tummy to notice their breathing there too. Ask them to notice the rise and fall or in and out. You can repeat these words for them or invite them to say them in their head as they do it. For young children, they can lay with a teddy on their tummy and "rock teddy to sleep" by making them gently rise and fall with their breathing.

3. Mindful Walks

Take the child on a walk in which the aim is to notice things in the environment, using various senses. Ask them to notice and point out things that they haven't seen before. Be completely silent for a minute as you walk and focus on the sounds that can be heard. Focus can also be drawn to the sensations on their skin, such as the warmth of the sun or the cooling of the wind. Smells in the environment can also be a focus.

4. Mindful Eating

This can be done with a raisin or chocolate button, for example. The idea is to draw the child into using all of their senses in the eating of the food and to really notice every little thing about it, such as the smell, texture, appearance, as well as taste of the food. The food is first smelt and explored visually, then felt with their fingers to determine the texture. It is then placed in their mouth and explored with their tongue before finally and slowly biting into it.

5. Mindful Minutes

These can be introduced and filtered throughout the day, by focusing on the breath, a sound or sounds, for example. This could initially be a mindful minute, building up to 3 mindful minutes and perhaps longer.

6. Snow Globe

A Snow globe is a great way to demonstrate how active and frantic our minds can be, but if we sit for a while or mindfully walk (mindful minutes) we can settle and become calmer and see things more clearly. Snow globes can be made with a glass jar, glitter and water. First the child can choose a small object/toy and stick it into the inside of the jar lid. The jar then needs to be filled with water and about 1-2 teaspoons of glitter added. The lid is then screwed or glued onto the jar and turned upside down. Talk to the child about how frantic our minds can be, with many thoughts flying constantly around, especially when we are upset, angry, worried or agitated about something. Demonstrate this by shaking the jar to show the swirling glitter which obscures the figure. This is what our thoughts can be like, preventing us from seeing clearly. However, if we take some time to be still (mindful minutes), our thoughts settle down, we become calmer and we can then see more clearly. It is then that we can make better decisions! The Snow globe is then left still to demonstrate this, with the glitter gradually settling to reveal the figure once more.

The Snow globe can also be used as a focus for mindful minutes, with the child

CONTACT DETAILS Specialist Teaching and Preschool Service

MID (Braintree)

[Enquiries mailbox](#)

Mid Team [direct dial and
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NE Team [direct dial and
mobile telephone numbers](#)

SOUTH (Basildon)

[Enquiries mailbox](#)

South Team [direct dial
and mobile telephone
numbers](#)

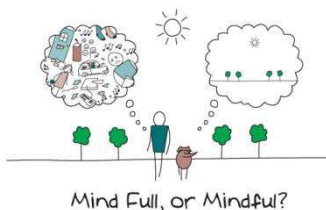
WEST (Harlow)

[Enquiries mailbox](#)

West Team [direct dial and
mobile telephone numbers](#)

shaking the globe and then focusing on it until it settles and is completely still once more.

Mindfulness is achieved through slowing our mind down and observing our train of thoughts and training our mind to bring our focus back to the present moment when it has drifted, to approach situations in a calm and peaceful way.



Want to know more?

www.stressfreekids.com/12363/anxious-child

www.childmind.org/en/posts/articles/2012-4-9-power-of-mindfulness

www.breathingspacelondon.org.uk

www.mindfulnessinschools.org

Debbie Pritchard

Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) ...

Imagine you have no voice and no way of communicating your opinions and preferences; you cannot share your weekend news with your friends or tell anyone how you are feeling ... Pretty frustrating, isn't it? Yet this is situation that a small but significant number of pupils with physical or neurological impairment are facing every day in some of our mainstream schools.

Some of these children find coping strategies by disengaging completely, some get so frustrated they can lash out at others or even hurt themselves; some default to other ways of gaining positive attention, for example by relying on their appealing personality traits to win others over.

So, how do we help such children develop a means of communicating with a wide range of peers and adults, and to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in ways that can be interpreted by others?

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems can be of real benefit in these circumstances. AAC covers a huge range of techniques which support or replace spoken communication. These include gesture, signing, symbols, communication boards and books, as well as powered and computerised devices such as voice output communication aids (VOCAs).

Some tips on using different types of AAC for pupils who are unable to express themselves through speech are available here:

[Using Alternative and Augmentative Communication \(AAC\) in mainstream schools](#)

[Inclusive Communication Essex](#) (ICE) provides a loan library of communication support devices, available through Essex Libraries.

Jo Lambert

Large print books ...

Do you need books in large print size to support pupils with visual impairment? Specialist teachers and specialist support staff enlarge print to an appropriate size for pupils in school, where a suitable resource may not be readily available, and actively work with local and national organisations to adapt and produce suitable reading resources for visually impaired children. A recent example of this is described here: [VI - Early years books \(Large print and braille\)](#)

You can access books via Essex Libraries, as they purchase almost every title published in large print (text of point size 16), including a wide choice of fiction, children's books and non-fiction such as biographies and travel. For pupils who need giant print (text of point size 24 or above), Essex Libraries have a small collection, mainly of classics. Search for 'extra large print' on the catalogue. A

**Autism Education Trust
Training**



[Bookings](#) for in-school
Autism Education Trust
training (Level 1 and 2)

[Information](#) on Autism
Education Trust training
for Essex schools

wider selection is available free by post from the [RNIB National Library Service](#) which includes a [children's library service](#).

[Access2Books](#) is a Community Interest Project which produces and publishes high quality early years' books in dual format - giant print (75 pt) and braille - with illustrations. The design enables braille or large print readers to read without obscuring the text or illustrations; and therefore gives children and adults the opportunity to read together.

If any of your pupils use computer or hand-held devices, you can also download books in electronic format from the Essex Libraries website, resizing text to an appropriate size.

Kay Leeser

Autism accredited training ...

Congratulations to the 'Class of 2015' for successfully completing the recent [accredited training](#) in autism.



Maggie Butler

If you have any enquiries, comments or suggestions for inclusion in the SENCO Bulletin, please contact the [SENCO Bulletin Team](#).

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On behalf of the SENCO Bulletin Team

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