

Welcome to our  
 Mayfield SEND  
 & Well-Being

**M** NEWSLETTER!



## Talk to yourself kindly



And so, December already! The first term of this academic year is, somehow, already behind us, and 2023 lies just around the January corner. It's been an incredibly busy and productive time. Mr Howard, our new head teacher, has now completed his first Mayfield term, and our students who were new in September are now well-equipped to navigate both their timetables and the school building. Our school production, *The Addams Family*, was a resounding triumph, and

our Year 11 Class of 2022 returned for Presentation Evening to collect their GCSE certificates. It was a pleasure to see them all and to wish them well, embarking on their journeys to adulthood and all that the future holds. In primary, the children have had several exciting activities. Not only did a dinosaur come to visit, but the children also went global in their Go Global week – this included indulging in some food-tasting when comparing the UK to Australia – and sampling the delights of Vegemite!

Within the next week or so, we shall finish for Christmas and, as the year grows old, our thoughts often turn to nostalgia – we reflect on the year that's been and the times to come. Just like Charles Dickens and his ghosts of Christmases Past, Present and Future, we carry the ghosts of our own memories with us. Much as Christmas can spark joy, it can also spark melancholy and a certain thoughtfulness that is unique to the season. Perhaps it is the indulgence of our five senses at this time of year; the smells, sights, sounds, tastes and sensations of Christmas, that make it so evocative. Cinnamon and woodsmoke, dark mornings and darker nights, the gleam of lights in the midst of darkness, and the ritual of family, food and the festive edition of the Radio Times.

Christmas can lead us to remember those we have lost, and those that we miss. It can evoke heady emotions or provoke anxiety, as well as being one of the most busy times of year as we rush to live up to the pressure of the 'perfect' Christmas. Well, 'perfect' is different for everyone. With this in mind, this edition of the newsletter is about looking after yourself, talking kindly to yourself, and also how to keep an eye out for others who may need us. You'll also find some inspirational people, some information about neuro-diversity support in the city, and some ideas of how people from different cultures let some light into their homes during the darkest times of the year. We wish a peaceful Christmas to all of our Mayfield family, and urge you to reach out to us, should you need to.

For any queries, comments or suggestions regarding the newsletter, please feel free to contact Verity Howard at:  
[howard-verity@mayfield.portsmouth.sch.uk](mailto:howard-verity@mayfield.portsmouth.sch.uk)

Last month in Mayfield, we had some staff wellbeing sessions facilitated by our local Mental Health Support Team. These went far beyond the usual remit of 'have a nice bath' and instead, staff were advised to speak kindly to themselves and to set their own boundaries.

How often have you found yourself speaking negatively to you? If a friend was exhausted, stressed from a hard week or having a tough time, and said they were going to head home and just sit down to relax, how would you reply? Most likely, you'd tell them that yes, they absolutely should do that. They should take the time for themselves and be a bit selfish for once, head home and relax. However, if you were to head home from work, drained and tired, and were to then just sit down on the sofa, chances are you'd begin engaging in negative self-talk. Perhaps telling yourself not to be 'lazy', thinking of how if you don't get things done, nobody else will do them for you, and pushing yourself to just keep going. Self-compassion is when we try to change our mindset and speak to ourself as a friend would – allow ourselves to be a bit selfish sometimes, accept that we might need to stop and have a break. It may well be the case that nobody else will do the washing, but it's probably okay waiting in the linen basket until you can face it!

Setting your own boundaries is also important. We often find ourselves doing a favour for a friend or giving someone a lift somewhere that's miles out of our way or agreeing to collect all of our friends' children from a party and looking after them until their parents can get away from work and so on. This is how we get through life – favours for one another, relying on our friendship groups – but sometimes, you will feel too drained or tired, or too stressed, poorly, perhaps anxious or depressed, to want to help, or to feel physically able to. This is the time to draw a line, to set the boundary, and to feel ok in saying that, actually, just this once you're not able to do the favour, or you don't have capacity to help out, or that you need some time for you. Do not feel guilty about this! We spend a lot of life helping others, but we often neglect ourselves. Set your boundaries, speak kindly to yourself, and exercise some self-compassion. Make it your Christmas gift to you!

## Dark Nights but Bright Lights!



With the change of the clocks occurring back before Halloween and the shortest day of the year soon approaching with the winter solstice on 21st December, it is easy to see why human beings use light as a source of hope, of celebration, and as a symbol of things that are special. The traditions of bringing greenery indoors and lighting up the midwinter hark back to Roman times when people would mark the winter solstice with a feast called Saturnalia, in honour of their god of agriculture, Saturn. The Romans knew that winter would soon be upon them and so they gathered up and decorated their homes and temples with evergreen boughs.

Different faiths around the world also use light frequently. The Hindu festival of Diwali fell on 24th October this year. Diwali is also known as the 'festival of light' and is sometimes celebrated by Sikhs and Jains, too. The word Diwali comes from the Sanskrit, Deepavali, which translates as 'rows of lighted lamps.' It is a festival of new beginnings and celebrates the triumph of light over darkness and good over evil. It often incorporates sweets and fireworks, so children especially enjoy it!



Hanukkah is a Jewish festival, and like Diwali it is also known as a festival of lights, again taking place in Autumn or Winter. This year, it falls between 18th and 26th December. Hanukkah celebrates the recovery of Jerusalem and each night, the menorah is lit. This is a six or eight-branched candelabra with a central branch in the middle, and is highly symbolic. Light is often used in the world to represent joy, hope, or to remember loved ones. We use light to celebrate, whether it's the candles on a birthday cake, to the fairy lights on a tree, or the sparkling fireworks of Diwali.

Bringing some light into our lives during the dark winter months can provide a cosy sense of cheer, cutting through the gloom, and boosting our mood when we need it most



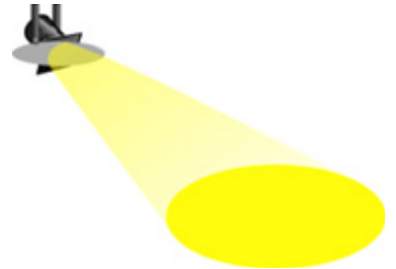
## Making Christmas Brighter for the Elderly



Age UK state on their website that almost 1.5 million older people feel more lonely at this time of the year than at any other. We can all make a difference to this and impact positively on the lives of older neighbours and relatives. The thought of being lonely at any stage in our lives is incredibly sad, and even more so when we may be very vulnerable and more in need of company and care than ever. You can invite an elderly neighbour or relative to a meal at Christmas time (or indeed at any time of the year!), or deliver a home-cooked meal to them, or buy them a gift – perhaps some special foods for Christmas, a book to read, and even a copy of the festive TV guide; anything to help provide time-fillers and the knowledge that people are thinking of them. This needn't be time-consuming and do be mindful of making sure you're in a position yourself to help – a bit like when you're told by cabin staff on an aeroplane to put your own oxygen mask on first, so that you're well set to help others. Small gestures can make a big impact.

## SEND Spotlight

Neuro-diversity and neuro-differences are something we've written about recently in the newsletter, for example, dyslexia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), or Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC). You may have a child who has had, or is waiting to have, a neuro-diversity profile completed and, if so, then the following website will be super useful for you. The city have launched a new online platform which can be found at the link below. Here, you'll be able to find all manner of support – you don't need a referral, your child does not need to have had a neuro-diversity profile completed, and you can speak to professionals who can offer advice, signposting, and avenues of direct support for you and your family: [www.solent-family-assist.custhelp.com](http://www.solent-family-assist.custhelp.com)



SEND @HIVE

PPV Portsmouth Parent Voice

**ND PROFILING TOOLKIT SUPPORT GROUP**

*Is your child or young person using the ND Toolkit?*

PPV is hosting a support group for families to meet and speak with professionals and other families using the toolkit

**EVERY 3RD WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH AT 10AM - 12PM**

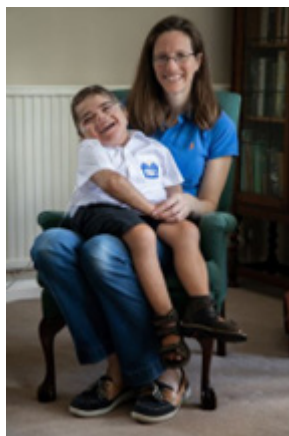
PPV, HIVE Portsmouth, Lower Ground Floor,  
Central Library, Guildhall Square, Portsmouth PO1 2DX

Enquiries: [ppvadmin@hiveportsmouth.org.uk](mailto:ppvadmin@hiveportsmouth.org.uk)

HIVE FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP

## Inspirational! - Jonathan Bryan

Jonathan Bryan finished his GCSEs last summer. He is a published author and poet, who can be found on Twitter (@eyecantalk) and who was diagnosed, almost from birth, with PMLD – Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties. Jonathan's mum was in a car accident when heavily pregnant with him, and before he'd had a chance to begin life, he had this 'label' to live with. Mrs Howard, our SEND teacher, was lucky enough to speak with Jonathan and his mum, Chantal, earlier this year, and was struck by their story.



There is no doubt that Jonathan has faced significant hurdles, yet he is inspirational with the way in which he overcomes them – and went on to prove medics wrong by actually having no difficulty with learning itself whatsoever. In fact, Jonathan is remarkable. He can only communicate with the movement of his eyes, using a special board to do so, but with this board he has written not only poems but even a book. He has completed schooling and is on a mission to educate people to never underestimate anyone who has additional needs. Jonathan maintains that because some people look at him and see that his body does not work well, they often think that his mind doesn't – but they are clearly wrong! Jonathan's mum says that when he was younger, they became acutely aware that people were talking to him differently: "Jonathan describes being talked to in "special"; a mixture of the voice reserved for a baby mixed with how you talk to a foreigner with little understanding: slow, loud and clear with short sentences," she said.

People often assumed that he would not understand if they talked to him normally and at first his school didn't teach him literacy. However, when he was seven, his mum decided to keep him at home for a few hours every day to teach him to read and write. It soon became apparent that Jonathan is talented, excellent with words, and a keen learner.

Negative discrimination, and making judgments about people with additional needs or disabilities before we even know them, happens too often, and Jonathan's poem - that we have printed here - is a powerful voice against this. It's a 'reverse poem' – read it through to the end, then follow the instructions for a whole different meaning.

We hope that you find this poem as powerful as we did – you can find more of Jonathan's work at [www.eyecantalk.net](http://www.eyecantalk.net)

## PMLD

We are not capable of learning  
 So do not tell me  
 There's something going on behind the disability.  
 Treated as useless handicaps  
 Minds with nothing in there, tragically  
 Stuck in a wheelchair,  
 Disabilities visibly crippling –  
 Just incontinent and dribbling,  
 We are not  
 Academically able.  
 You should make our minds  
 Stagnate in special education!  
 We cannot  
 Learn to read,  
 Learn to spell,  
 Learn to write,  
 Instead let us  
 Be constrained by a sensory curriculum.  
 It is not acceptable to say  
 We have the capacity to learn.  
 School should occupy us, entertain us; but never teach us  
 You are deluded to believe that  
 Our education can be looked at another way!

**NOW READ IT AGAIN but from the bottom line up** (By Jonathan Bryan.)



## Not a Christmas Tree but a Worry Tree ...

This was developed by [www.solentmind.org.uk](http://www.solentmind.org.uk) and might be something that is helpful for you, your child, or a family member over the Christmas holidays.

### Take control with The Worry Tree

We often have worries that seem to pull focus away from our day to day life. You may feel out of control, or feel like you need to keep worrying because it feels useful – or that bad things might happen if you stop.

There are always practical steps we can take that will make us feel more in control of our worries. This worry tree may help you get to the bottom of those intrusive thoughts that pull focus away from day to day life.

It's helpful to think about the kind of worry you have, as they can normally be separated into two categories: hypothetical situations and current problems.

Hypothetical situations are those "what if...?" thoughts about some terrible event that might happen. "My partner is late home from work - what if they've had an accident?" or "The ozone layer has holes - what if the end of the world happens soon?". These thoughts are usually followed by imagining what would happen in those worst-case scenarios. These kind of worries can cause us a lot of anxiety, when there is perhaps little or nothing we can do about that situation.

Current problems are those worries that relate to a real situation, that we CAN do something about. In which case, we can decide what to do, when and how - which will be much more helpful than just continually worrying about it. After using the tree, try writing down the worry and its outcome. If you feel the worry creeping back in, you can remind yourself of the decision you made, and bring your focus back to the present.



## Key Contacts

If you wish to contact us about this newsletter – or even to make a contribution, then please contact Mrs Verity Howard, at: [howard-verity@mayfield.portsmouth.sch.uk](mailto:howard-verity@mayfield.portsmouth.sch.uk)

## Learning Support Department

Should you have any concerns regarding your child, then do please contact us. The folk below can help!

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