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**Northern Counties News!!**

**October 2018**

Wow! What a productive and exciting half term for everyone in school!

We have had a busy, but fun half term! Our new school council was elected at the beginning of September. They have met on two occasions and were introduced to everyone in school during an assembly. They organised a Halloween fun day to raise some more money for our wheelchair accessible roundabout! Pupils wore costumes to school and there was a surprise event planned for all pupils.

The pupils within our hearing impaired cohort have been working well within their class groups. Penny’s class have been studying the story of ‘The Very Hungry Caterpillar’ and have created caterpillar pictures, sequenced the story and learnt lots of new and wonderful signs! Helen’s group have been developing their knowledge around a range of inventions. They thoroughly enjoyed an educational visit to Cragside and had the opportunity to participate in an interactive activity where they had to locate a variety of inventions in different rooms of the house. This led onto some comparison work based the differences between old and new items. Mairead’s class have developed their functional communication by deciding that they would like to develop their skills around ordering pizza and they ordered their individual pizza’s from a pizza shop last week! Our older pupils have continued with their accreditation work, work experience placements and visits to Newcastle College.

We have also celebrated World Mental Health Day where everyone came to school dressed in yellow, some pupils have participated in a workshop organised by Beamish museum. A selection of pupils worked with others from Hillcrest, to participate in a film workshop, which is to be premiered in Whitley Bay on 17th November. The signing choir performed at St James’ Park recently to support the Hate Campaign.

Last week the HI pupils were invited to the cinema to watch the film the ‘House with the clock in the wall’ in order to trial some new technology which supported the children to have better access to sound and therefore enhance their cinema experience. All pupils had a great time and gave positive feedback about the equipment they had used. We have been invited back again in December!

Pupils in the Hillcrest centre have been learning about ‘Fantastical Forests’. This topic has complemented the opening of our new Forest school facility. Every class has a timetabled lesson in the wonderful new learning area. The benefit of learning outside has had an impact upon most pupils. We will also be offering a lunchtime Forest School club, which pupils may choose to access after half term. Some of our younger pupils have also had the opportunity to access a lunchtime swimming club. Developing pupil choice and access to lunchtime clubs is a big focus for next half term.

A highlight from Hillcrest; has been the employability sessions for Post 16 students. One of our Post 16 students accompanied staff to St James’ Park, where he assisted with a training session on Autism Awareness.

All three classes within the PMLD cohort have now settled in their classrooms and have experienced a range of new activities based around their topic areas. It has been lovely to see all the pupils in Rachel’s class forming new relationships with each other and staff have witnessed some lovely interactions between some of the pupils. They have all responded positively to their new surroundings, some different staff and new exciting rooms that have been completed over the summer break.

The new Rebound therapy room is now fully furnished with the addition of a new carpet and heavy thick curtains to ensure a low stimulation learning environment. The room has been time tabled for the three PMLD classes with a range of flexibility for additional use at other times. Some classes are using a set of disco lights in the darkened room allowing some visual tracking to take place. Pam and Rachel’s classes have been accessing the Independent Living Skills kitchen which has a range of adaptable equipment therefore catering for the individual needs of the pupils.

From all of us here at Northern Counties - have a fantastic half term!

**Save the date!**

Saturday 1st December: School Christmas Fair

Thursday 20th December: Christmas Performance