

Hilary House Newsletter



Autumn Term 2024

Festive Welcome

As we approach the Christmas season, it's a time to reflect on the incredible journey we've had this term at Hilary House. The children have amazed us with their resilience, creativity, and growth, tackling new challenges with enthusiasm and determination. From the classroom to the sensory room and beyond, their progress has been a joy to witness.

Christmas is a magical time, but we also know it can bring unique challenges for many of our children. This newsletter is filled with updates on their fantastic achievements, festive highlights, tips from therapists and some tips for creating an autism-friendly holiday season.

Thank you for your ongoing support and for being part of the Hilary House community. We wish you all a peaceful and joyful Christmas and look forward to seeing everyone refreshed and ready for a new term on 6th January!

Warmest wishes,
Mr. Hourigan
Head of ASC Base

Blue Class News

What an amazing start to the year we have had! Blue class began the year welcoming Julia, Mahad and Amari. We spent the first few weeks getting back into our school routine and working in our individual targets.

Our **Maths** lessons focused on number where we learned about quantities before moving onto identifying numbers and sets.

We worked on our **Language and Communication** using the theme of 'Animals' which we loved and many of us were able to name different farm and zoo animals. This also formed part of our learning in **Understanding the World**.

We worked on developing our joint and sustained attention through **Attention Autism**, where we had a huge refresh of resources that we have loved.

We love our new outdoor classroom which was built in November and will be finished with fencing in the coming weeks. Sincere thanks to Shirley for all her hard work in making this happen.

Green Class News

Green Class had a super start to the 2024/2025 school year. We welcomed our new Year 2 and Year 3 students and got down to work right away.

English: This term, we have been reading 'Ted Rules the World' by Frank Cottrell-Boyce – the story of a boy who suddenly has the power to steer the decisions of the Prime Minister. We also read the Egyptian Princess. We have used these texts to explore lots of different writing genres, GPS rules and even did some drama along the way.

Maths: Our focus this term has been on place value, addition and subtraction. We used lots of concrete materials to secure our knowledge in each area.

In **Science** we learned about rocks and the different types of rocks that make up our earth. Our **Geography** lessons focused on maps. We looked how to represent landmarks with symbols and created a map of our playground. In **History**, we learned about the stone age.

We enjoyed earned some great class rewards including hot dogs and will hopefully earn our Autumn 2 reward of decorating cookies later next week.

Meet Hilary House

Amin Mohamed

Green Class – Year 6

My favourite thing about school is I get to read Horrid Henry books. I like seeing Roman in school, he is my friend. I like Ms. Lisa.

My favourite memory of this year is going to Sayers Croft. It was the best ever.

If I was the boss, I would have fish and chips every day in school.

Next year, I want to go to Garrett Park. I am going to bring my puppets with me.



Flora Gjoni

TA – Blue Class

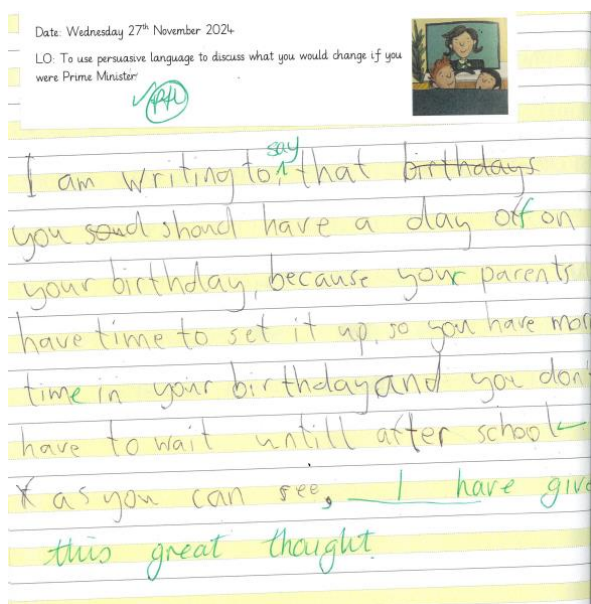
I have been working in Hilary House for 10 years, it is like home now.

I enjoy working with the children. I worked in Green Class for 8 years in both mainstream and in the base. I was involved in settling the children in reception right through to helping them prepare for secondary school. It was a pleasure to see how they progressed and we celebrated together when they achieved their goals. I loved to see them grow and change and learn new skills.

The last two years have been a great change that I have enjoyed as I moved into Blue Class. We get to see the micro-steps of progression and it is a joy to watch. When I'm not working, I love to do crochet puzzles, go for long walks, cook and spend time with my family.



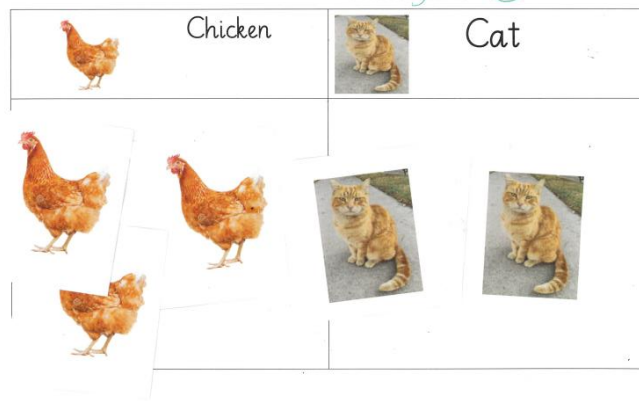
Writing Heroes



Congratulations **Martell** in Green Class who is this term's writing hero. He practiced writing a persuasive argument based on this term's text "Ted Rules The World."

Wall of Fame

LO: To use initial sounds. 12/11/24 Name Lenny ① S H/H



Lenny in Blue Class has been working on identifying initial sounds in words, as well as developing his fine motor skills by cutting, sticking and sorting.

Congratulations!

Congratulations to Green Class who won first place at the Primary Panathlon at Southfields Academy on October 23rd.

Congratulations to Madyson who won a prize for her Simone Biles project for Black History Month!

Dates for your Diary

16th December – KS2 Advent Service.
19th December - Christmas Parties
20th December – School closes at 13.30 for Christmas Holidays
6th January – School re-opens
21st January – Speech & Language Therapist Meeting
29th January – OT Training in HH
5th Feb – OT Online Meetings

Next year - Homework

Children receive their homework on a Friday and it is due the following Thursday.

Spellings are given on a Monday with spelling test on a Friday.

Children who do not complete homework stay in at play time to complete on Friday.

Meet our Speech & Language Therapist



Hello! My name is Cecilia Meyer, and I am a Greek South African Speech and Language Therapist, newly arrived in London. I graduated with an Honours degree in Speech-Language Pathology from the University of Cape Town (Cum Laude).

In addition to my clinical training, I am a Certified South African Lactation Consultant and am currently completing a Master's of Science in Neonatal Dysphagia — feeding and swallowing difficulties of newborn babies. I have also recently completed training in Gestalt Language Processing (GLP) and am currently working in the field of ASC! GLP is an approach that focuses on how individuals, especially those with ASC, process language in chunks or phrases, rather than single words, to build understanding and communication skills. Below are some strategies that may help your children understand and use language by focusing on whole phrases/chunks of language, rather than individual words.

Gestalt Language Processing (GLP) Strategies for Home

1. Acknowledge Communication

Respond to your child using simple words like "yeah" or by repeating what they have said. This helps them process language and reinforces their communication.

2. Use Self & Parallel Talk

Narrate your actions as you go about tasks. For example, "I'm washing the dishes," or "You're playing with the car." This helps the child connect language to everyday activities.

3. Create a Language-Rich Environment

Surround your child with language throughout the day. Describe what you are doing and what is happening in the environment, even during routine activities.

4. Narrate Your Actions

Similar to Self & Parallel Talk, narrate what you are doing during daily routines. For example, "Now we're putting on your shoes," or "We're having lunch."

5. Use Pronouns That the GLP Would Use

Use simple pronouns like "I'm," "they're," "it's," and "let's." This is easier for the child to understand and helps them follow along.

6. Use Songs & Intonation

Incorporate songs or different tones of voice when giving instructions or interacting. This can make it easier for the child to process what you're saying and keep them engaged.

7. Offer Non-Verbal Responses

Encourage your child to express themselves in different ways, not always through words. They could show their understanding by nodding, pointing, or using gestures

Ice-Skating at Battersea Power Station

Thank you for all of your support at ice-skating this year, we hope you had an enjoyable day and that found our coffee morning talk informative and helpful. The children really loved the day; it is sure to be one of their special memories from this year at Hilary House.



Christmas for our Children

The holiday season can be magical but also overwhelming for children with autism. The sensory overload, changes in routine, and social demands can be challenging. With a few thoughtful strategies, you can help make Christmas an enjoyable and manageable time for your child and the whole family.

1. Prepare in Advance



Preparation reduces anxiety and helps your child know what to expect.

Practical Tip: Create a visual schedule showing what you have planned over Christmas.

Practical Tip: Walk through any events or changes to the house (like putting up a tree) before they happen. Google social stories online and read these together.

2. Manage Sensory Overload



Christmas lights, loud music, and crowded gatherings can be overwhelming.

Practical Tip: Designate a quiet space in your home where your child can retreat if they feel overstimulated.

Practical Tip: Use noise-cancelling headphones, loop earbuds or sunglasses to reduce sensory input during outings.

3. Stick to Familiar Routines



As much as possible, maintain your child's regular routine during the holidays.

Practical Tip: Plan meals, bedtime, and sensory breaks at the usual times to create a sense of stability.

Practical Tip: If attending a family gathering, arrive early or late to avoid peak crowds, and plan for a shorter visit.

4. Adapt Gift-Giving



The surprise element of gifts can cause stress for some autistic children.

Practical Tip: Allow your child to help choose or wrap gifts, explaining who they are for and who should open them.

Practical Tip: If wrapping paper is overwhelming, use gift bags or skip wrapping altogether. Equally, sometimes the wrapping paper can be more fun than the gift itself!

5. Set Realistic Expectations



Not all traditions will suit every child. It's okay to change or skip anything that won't work for you.

Practical Tip: If visiting Santa or attending a big event feels too much, create your own quiet holiday traditions, like a family movie night or a small, calm gift exchange – there's no right way of doing these things.

6. Prepare for Social Interactions

Meeting extended family or friends can be overwhelming.

Practical Tip: Role-play common greetings and responses in advance to help your child feel more confident.



7. Be flexible with Meals



Christmas dinner can be strange and be a change from the norm which can be unsettling.

Practical Tip: Serve familiar, preferred foods alongside traditional dishes to reduce stress.

Practical Tip: Allow your child to eat in a quieter space if the dinner table is too noisy/overstimulating.

8. Focus on Enjoyable Traditions

Choose activities your child enjoys and skip those that don't work for your family.

Practical Tip: If your child loves crafts, spend time making decorations together. If they love routines, create a daily countdown to Christmas.



9. Give Permission to Opt-Out



Not every holiday moment needs to be shared. Allow your child to take breaks as needed.

Practical Tip: Use a signal (like a card or a hand gesture) that your child can use to indicate when they need a break.

10. Prioritize Connection Over Perfection



The most important part of Christmas is spending quality time together. Focus on creating moments that feel calm, joyful, and meaningful for your family.

Meet our Occupational Therapist



Nadia Francis is a Paediatric Occupational Therapist with an Honours degree in Occupational Therapy from Stellenbosch University, South Africa. She is currently advancing her expertise by pursuing a postgraduate qualification in Sensory Integration through Ayes' Sensory Integration WISE. Nadia is deeply committed to providing holistic, client-centred Occupational Therapy interventions designed to help each child reach their full potential.

Outside of her professional life, Nadia enjoys hiking, discovering new places, and spending quality time with her loved ones.

PLAY is the most important occupation for children. We have the wonderful opportunity to facilitate an environment for them to access play in different ways, shapes and forms. Here are just a few simple activities we can all do with the children in our lives that will have great impact on their development:

Gross motor:

Animal movements: Have the child mimic different animals. For example, "hop like a frog," "waddle like a penguin," or "slither like a snake." This helps with balance and motor coordination.

Obstacle Course: Set up a simple obstacle course using pillows, chairs, and blankets. The child can crawl under tables, jump over pillows, or walk around obstacles. This is a great way to practice balance and body awareness.

Balloon Volleyball: Use a balloon and create a mini volleyball game by trying to hit the balloon over a string or soft object (like a couch). This is great for hand-eye coordination, and the lightness of the balloon makes it less intimidating.

Dance Party: Put on some fun music and have a dance party. Encourage jumping, spinning, or stomping to the beat. This is excellent for coordination, rhythm, and self-expression.

Bubble Popping: Blow bubbles and encourage the child to chase and pop them. This activity is not only fun but also helps with hand-eye coordination and physical movement.

Fine motor:

Sticker Art: Provide sheets of stickers and let the child decorate a piece of paper or a notebook. Peeling and sticking stickers helps with finger dexterity and hand strength.

Puzzle Play: Working on simple jigsaw puzzles or shape sorting activities can improve fine motor skills while also encouraging problem-solving and cognitive development.

Building with Blocks: Use small building blocks like LEGO or wooden blocks to create structures. This activity fosters hand control, spatial awareness, and problem-solving.

Drawing in Sand or Shaving Cream (Use non-toxic foam): Spread a thin layer of sand or shaving cream on a flat surface and let the child practice drawing letters, shapes, or lines with their fingers. This provides sensory input and fine motor practice.

Sensory Regulation Activities

Sensory regulation activities are vital for helping autistic children manage how they experience and respond to the world around them. Many autistic children can become overwhelmed by sensory input—like bright lights, loud noises, or unexpected touches—which can impact their ability to focus, communicate, and feel safe. Engaging in sensory activities, such as using weighted blankets, playing with sensory toys, or practicing calming movements, helps children regulate their responses and feel more in control. These activities are not just calming; they also build essential skills like self-awareness and emotional resilience, empowering children to better navigate everyday challenges. Supporting sensory regulation creates a foundation for their overall well-being and success in learning and relationships.



Sensory Bottles

Create sensory bottles by filling clear bottles with various materials like glitter, beads, or coloured water. The child can shake or watch the items move inside the bottle. This is calming and provides visual and tactile input.

Shaving Cream Play

Spread shaving cream on a table or tray and let the child explore with their hands. They can squish, spread, or draw shapes in the foam. This activity provides both tactile and proprioceptive input, which can be calming and engaging.

Bubble Play

Blow bubbles and encourage the child to chase, pop, or watch the bubbles float. The light, floating movement of the bubbles provides visual, tactile, and sometimes even proprioceptive input (as the child moves around to pop them).

Weighted Blanket or Lap Pad

Use a weighted blanket or lap pad to provide deep touch pressure. The gentle weight can have a calming effect, helping the child regulate their sensory system. You can use it while reading, watching TV, or relaxing.

Sensory-Friendly Music

Play calming or rhythmic music to help regulate auditory input. Let the child listen to the music while relaxing or dancing around. Music can help soothe or energize, depending on the rhythm and volume.

Texture Exploration Bin

Create a sensory bin filled with a variety of textures like rice, beans, fabric swatches, foam, or pasta. Have the child dig, pour, and explore the different materials. This promotes tactile exploration and sensory regulation.

Calming Light Play

Use soft, calming lighting, such as a lava lamp or light projectors. Gentle light patterns can be soothing and provide visual input. Some children may enjoy watching lights slowly change colours or patterns in a dark room.

Foot or Hand Massages

Give the child a gentle foot or hand massage. This offers calming tactile input and helps the child become more aware of their body in space. You can use a soft lotion or gently rub their hands or feet for relaxation.

DIY Fidget Tools

Create simple fidget toys using household items (like a rubber band ball, stress ball, or textured fabric). Fidgeting helps with concentration and can provide proprioceptive input, which is calming for some children.

Water Play

Fill a basin or sink with water and provide cups, spoons, and small toys. The child can pour, scoop, and play in the water. The cool temperature and tactile sensations can be calming and soothing.

Animal Walks

Encourage the child to walk like different animals (e.g., hopping like a frog, waddling like a penguin, or slithering like a snake). This provides both movement and tactile feedback, which helps with self-regulation.

Autism and Anxiety

Anxiety is a common companion to autism and can make everyday challenges, like communication or changes in routine, feel even harder for your child. The good news? There are lots of simple, practical tools you can use to help. Visual schedules, for example, can create a sense of predictability. Sensory tools, such as weighted blankets or fidget items, can provide a calming effect; check out Sensory Direct for ideas and then see if you can find similar ones on amazon or other websites. Social stories are another fantastic way to prepare your child for new experiences—Carol Gray’s Social Stories is a great resource.

If anxiety is a big concern, apps like Calm or Headspace offer mindfulness exercises designed for kids. Don't forget the power of movement—physical activities like stretching or even jumping on a trampoline can work wonders. With the right tools and resources, you can help your child navigate their world with more confidence and calm.

Building a toolkit for managing autism and anxiety isn't just about what you use—it's also about how you use it. Consistency is key, so try to integrate calming strategies into your daily routine. For example, start the day with a quick breathing exercise or mindfulness session, which can help set a positive tone. During transitions, use clear, gentle language and give your child extra time to process changes. Have a bag with ear defenders and sunglasses on hand should you need them, along with putty or playdough.

Creating a “calm corner” at home with favourite sensory items can also provide a safe space for them to retreat when feeling overwhelmed. Remember, every child is different, so don’t be afraid to experiment with what works best for your family. With patience and persistence, you’ll discover the right tools to support your child’s growth and well-being.

This term at Hilary House

We bring our learning to life in lots of different ways, whether it's through a dramatic exploration of Howard Carter's journey in English reading or following the instructions we wrote in procedural writing.

