

Hilary House Newsletter

Spring Term 2025



Happy Easter!

As the Spring Term comes to a close and the stretch in the evenings is getting a little longer, it's the perfect time to look back at what has been another truly inspiring few months here at Hilary House. Our children continue to amaze us with their resilience, creativity, and enthusiasm for learning. From exploring new topics in class to developing social skills, trying out new therapies and smashing their personal targets—every single pupil has made meaningful progress in their own way.

This newsletter is a celebration of those big moments and small victories—from excellent writing, to sensory play and quiet breakthroughs. You'll also find some practical advice from our therapy team, a few dates to pop in your diary as we head into summer and some information that I thought you might find useful on autism research. Thank you, as always, for your support and for being part of the Hilary House community. We hope you all enjoy a restful Easter break and look forward to another joyful term together in the summer.

Warmest wishes,
Mr. Hourigan
Head of ASC Base



Blue Class News

What a busy and brilliant Spring Term we've had in Blue Class! From blossoming plants to hungry caterpillars and our very own butterflies, we've been exploring the world around us in all sorts of exciting ways. In Science, we've been learning all about plants—naming them, spotting them in our environment, and even growing a few ourselves! The children especially enjoyed getting their hands dirty while planting seeds and watching them sprout on the windowsill. Our English lessons were brought to life through the story of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. We used props and sensory trays to bring the book off the page, helping us sequence the story and explore food, days of the week, and growth—all through play. We then adopted our own hungry caterpillars and watched every day as they transformed into beautiful butterflies!

Maths this term focused on shape and space. We've been sorting shapes, building with blocks, and exploring the classroom environment to find different forms and patterns in everyday objects.

Sensory group has been a real hit, with new textures and smells introduced each week. The children have shown great curiosity and bravery—especially when trying unfamiliar materials (coffee beans were surprisingly popular!).

In RE, our theme of celebration helped us explore the many different ways people mark special moments. We used role-play and crafts to look at birthdays, weddings, and seasonal festivals, and even created our own celebration wall in class.

We're incredibly proud of the progress each child has made—whether that's trying a new activity, joining Circle Time more independently, or communicating more confidently. We can't wait to see what the summer term brings!



Green Class News

Green Class have thrown themselves into a wonderfully varied Spring Term full of learning, creativity, and reflection.

In English, we tackled the novel *Holes* by Louis Sachar in UKS2—a story packed with mystery, friendship, and perseverance. The children engaged brilliantly with the characters and plot twists, using the story as a springboard for their own writing and discussion. We also loved dressing up for World Book Day and showing off our literary interests. LKS2 worked on two books – *How to Wash a Woolly Mammoth* and *All or Nothing*, and we used these to learn about writing alternative narrative endings and instructions.

One of our most powerful projects came from reading *The Reason I Jump*, a first-person account of life with autism. It opened the door to honest and insightful conversations, and each child created their own personal memoir, sharing their experiences in their own words. We are incredibly proud of their courage and maturity in telling their stories.

In Maths, our focus has been on length, shape, and space. From measuring classroom objects to identifying shapes in real-world settings, we've been making learning hands-on and meaningful.

Our History and Geography lessons had a local twist this term, as we explored the transformation of Battersea Power Station—from a working power plant to a modern London landmark. The children loved learning about its past and seeing how places can evolve over time. We even built our own replica of the Power Station!

In Computing, we explored stop motion animation and had a blast creating our own short clips. From Lego characters to paper cut-outs, the creativity on display was fantastic!

As always, Green Class have impressed us with their focus, curiosity and kindness. It's been a pleasure to learn alongside them this term.



Quotes from Green Class “The Reason I ...” Books.

On lining toys up:

“Because it’s pure fun! We line things up often because we like to do it.”

On seeming like we’re not listening:

“Well, sometimes we switch our brains off and don’t want to talk to you.”

On big emotions:

“If something is stressing you out, you can remember something even sadder and that makes me even sadder again.”

On special interests:

“I always sneak off to get books and hide in a corner. I do this because it makes me happy and keeps me calm.”

On speaking late:

“Words were hard to get out. Never using them before was tricky. I felt annoyed when people didn’t know what I wanted.”

The “Double Empathy” Problem

When we talk about autism and communication, the focus is often on helping autistic children understand the world around them—teaching them to read facial expressions, follow social rules, or respond in “expected” ways. But what if we flipped the lens for a moment?

The Double Empathy Problem, first introduced by autistic researcher Damian Milton, states that the difficulty in communication between autistic and non-autistic people isn’t a one-sided issue. It’s not just that autistic people struggle to understand neurotypical communication—it’s that both sides may struggle to understand each other’s ways of expressing, thinking, and connecting. An autistic person can understand another autistic person much more than they can with a neurotypical peer.

This idea shifts the conversation from “fixing” autistic communication to building bridges of understanding in both directions.

Why does this matter?

Autistic communication is often more direct, more honest, and sometimes more emotionally intense than what many of us are used to. Eye contact might be minimal. Gestures might be different. A child may express joy through jumping or flapping rather than words. These behaviours can be misread as “disinterest” or “inappropriate,” when in fact they are authentic, meaningful forms of communication.

Likewise, non-autistic people often rely on social subtleties, small talk, or implied meaning—which can feel confusing, overwhelming, or even pointless from an autistic perspective. Understanding the double empathy gap reminds us that both sides have work to do. It asks us to be open, curious, and willing to meet in the middle.

What does this look like for parents and teachers?

You might notice your child:

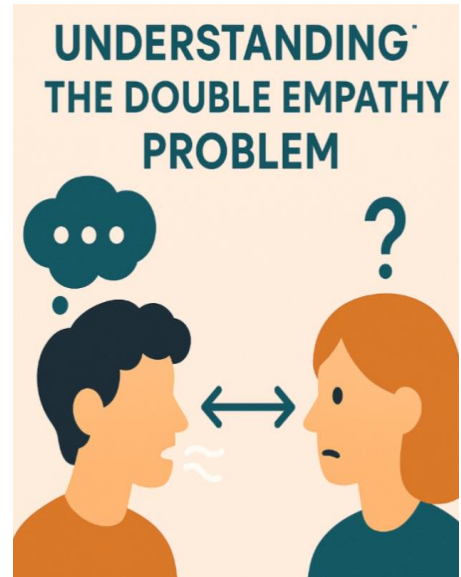
- Not responding to a question right away—but then repeating it back later when they’ve had time to process.
- Laughing at a moment others don’t find funny, because their emotional experience is running on a different rhythm.
- Wanting to talk deeply about a favourite topic, while struggling with what others call “small talk.”

These aren’t deficits. They’re differences.

And just as we work to teach our children about the social world, we can also educate ourselves about theirs—by slowing down, asking questions, and resisting the urge to interpret everything through a neurotypical lens.

How we can support connection:

- Reflect their communication style. If your child prefers visual choices, gestures, or scripts, meet them there. The goal is understanding, not forcing change.
- Validate their world. Even if you don’t share your child’s perspective, acknowledging that it is real and important to them goes a long way.
- Remember: just because communication looks different doesn’t mean it’s broken.



Meet Hilary House

Martell Ryan

Green Class – Year 5



I am 10 years old. I have autism. It means my brain works a little bit differently. My favourite things to do are playing video games like Minecraft.

I like that we have goals in Hilary House. When we work on our goals, we earn a treat. This time, we are going to Battersea Power Station.

Hilary House is a good place. It's not as noisy and it is easier to learn. My favourite subjects are science, computing and maths and my best memory of this year was our trip to McDonalds.

Judith Coley

TA – Shared – Blue & Green Class



I have worked in Sacred Heart for 5 years in total, and spent in 3 in Hilary House.

My job is challenging but very rewarding. I love to see the little changes in the children over time and seeing them grow. Little changes become big changes and that is very rewarding.

Outside of work, I like to cook, do some baking and take myself out for a meal, anything relaxing after a long day of work. I spend a lot of time with my Mum as well.

Writing Heroes

Pierin

ASSESSMENT

Date: Friday 7th March 2025

LO: To recall a set of steps and write them in order using appropriate punctuation

Pierin was able to say each sentence. He had to write each sentence with picture prompts.

1	Put the book
2	add labels
3	add mammoth
4	Step 1: Scissors
5	Step 2
6	Step 3
7	Step 4
8	Step 5

Congratulations to our writing hero, **Pierin**, in Green Class. He wrote a set of instructions following his learning from "How to wash a Woolly Mammoth"

Wall of Fame

Name: *Mahad* Date: *19/3/25*

Science

My Flowering Plant



Mahad in Blue Class has had his work added to the HH Hall of Fame! He has been working on naming and identifying parts of a plant.

Donations

All donations of toys, dress up clothing, sensory equipment etc are welcomed at HH.

If you are doing a clear out and have anything to donate, please speak to Mr. Hourigan or your child's teacher who are best placed to advise.

Dates for your Diary

- 22nd April – School Re-opens.
- 30th April – Parents Evening (3.30 finish as normal for HH).
- 23rd May – Summer Half Term.
- 3rd June – School Re-opens.
- 15th July – Leavers Mass & Y6 Party
- 16th July – KS2 Sports Day
- 17th July – HH End of Year Show
- 18th July – Y6 Clap Out

Homework

Homework is given on a Friday and due the following Thursday.

Green Class run a homework club on Thursday evenings (except for the first/last week of term). Please speak to Ms. Mersin or Mr. Hourigan for more information on this.

Focus on Speech, Language and Communication

Supporting a Gestalt Language Processor at Home

Some children, especially those with autism, learn language in chunks or “scripts”—this is called Gestalt Language Processing (GLP). You might hear them repeat lines from favourite shows or books. While it may sound random, these phrases are meaningful to them and are their way of communicating.

Here’s how you can support a GLP child at home:

- Listen for the meaning. - Scripts often carry emotional intent. “To infinity and beyond!” might really mean “I’m excited!” or “Let’s go!” Model natural phrases.
- Use short, useful sentences like “All done now” or “Let’s go play.” These become building blocks for communication.
- Don’t over-correct - Instead of correcting scripts, repeat them with gentle variation. This validates their message and shows a simpler way to say it.
- Use rhythm and songs - Many GLP children learn best through music or rhythm. Try using sing-song tones for routines: “Shoes on, let’s go!”
- Be patient - Language will evolve as your child breaks down and re-combines their favourite phrases. It’s a journey—celebrate every step.

Want tailored advice? Our Speech & Language Therapist, **Lia**, can help identify your child’s stage and offer strategies to support at home.

Focus on Regulation

At Hilary House, we use the Zones of Regulation to help children understand and manage their feelings. It’s a simple colour-based system that supports emotional awareness and regulation skills.

Here’s a quick guide to how it works—and how you can use it at home too:

• Blue Zone

How it feels: Low energy, sad, tired, bored.

How to regulate at home: cuddles, music, stretching, a sensory toy.

• Green Zone

How it feels: Calm, focused, ready to learn.

How to regulate at home: a calm space, praise, quiet activities to stay here.

• Yellow Zone

How it feels: Wiggly, frustrated, silly, worried.

How to regulate at home: breathing exercises, jumping, talking it out, sensory play.

• Red Zone

How it feels: Angry, out of control, panicked, overwhelmed.

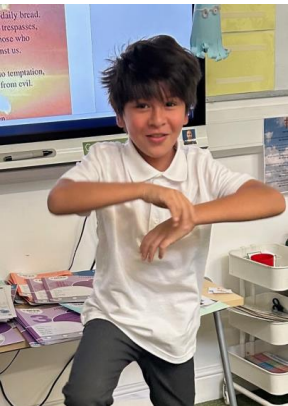
How to regulate at home: space to calm, deep pressure (like a weighted blanket), reduced demands.



Top Tips for Home:

- Name the Zone. Help your child identify how they’re feeling: “It looks like you’re in the Yellow Zone—let’s take a break together.”
- Create a toolbox. Make a mini ‘regulation station’ with headphones, fidget toys, a blanket, bubbles, or visual timers.
- Model it. Share your own zones! “I feel Red—I need a moment to breathe.”
- Regulation takes practice, but with the Zones, children learn that all feelings are okay—and that they can learn ways to move through them safely and confidently.

Green Class Memories



Autism Cultural Experience Fayre

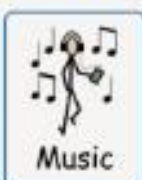
Workshops . Music . Arts . Dance . Networking



Food on sale

Saturday 5th April 2025
2.30 - 6pm

Celebrating World Autism Acceptance Week
supported by Wandsworth Black History 365



Visit from The Worshipful the Mayor of
the London Borough of Wandsworth,
Councillor Sana Jafri



Sports Hall
Tooting Leisure Centre
Greaves Place, London
SW17 ONE

www.a2ndvoicecic.co.uk

www.autismfayre.co.uk

Blue Class Memories

