

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we wrap up yet another festive week at Elements, it's time to dive into the learning and achievements from each of our zones. From festive cooking to the complexities of DNA structures, our pupils have been engaged in a wide range of experiences that have sparked their curiosity and creativity. We hope you enjoy reading this week's newsletter.

Zone A - The festive spirit is alive and well in Zone A this week! In Literacy, our pupils have been busy crafting their own Christmas acrostic poems, drawing upon the rich descriptive language they've been exploring. They've also tackled diagraphs and trigraphs in phonics with great enthusiasm. In Numeracy, the focus has been on mastering their times tables, and pupils have had a blast using Times Table Rockstars to enhance their fluency and confidence.

Our theme of festivity has continued into our topic afternoons, where pupils have embraced their creative sides in Art by making delightful salt dough ornaments and festive Christmas cards. In Food Technology, they rolled up their sleeves to create homemade mince pies from scratch, integrating their English and Maths skills along the way. This week in PSHE, we've focused on gratitude, prompting pupils to reflect on what they are thankful for, especially during this special time of year.



Zone B - In Maths, pupils concentrated on rounding numbers to the nearest ten, hundred, or thousand, and estimating to enhance their problem-solving skills. Activities may have included exercises on real-world applications of rounding and estimating, helping them understand the importance of these skills in everyday life. In Wider World, pupils got creative by learning about various cultural traditions related to Christmas decorations. They might have explored how different countries celebrate the holiday with unique practices and crafts, possibly leading to a hands-on project where they designed their own festive decorations.

During food class, pupils had the opportunity to make stained glass window biscuits. They likely learned about mixing ingredients, baking techniques, and the science behind how the crushed candies melt to create a stained-glass effect. This fun project would have emphasized both creativity and culinary skills.

In PSHE, the focus was on goal setting, where pupils discussed the importance of setting personal and academic goals. They may have participated in activities that encourage reflection on their aspirations and created a visual representation of their "path to success," highlighting steps they can take to achieve their dreams.

PARENTS' EVENING & COMMUNICATION

We were thrilled to see the positive engagement from parents and carers during Thursday's parents' evening. With 57% of parents and carers in attendance, your participation and feedback are invaluable in helping us provide the best possible education for our pupils. As part of our ongoing efforts to improve communication, we appreciate those who have taken the time to connect with senior leaders with their questions and concerns. Your input is crucial in shaping the future of our school community.

However, we have noticed a small number of parents expressing their concerns on social media platforms. While we understand the importance of open communication, we kindly ask that any grievances or issues be addressed through the proper complaints procedure as identified in the communication strategy and complaints policy on the website. Our goal is to ensure that all matters are handled efficiently and effectively, and we are always ready to assist in any way we can. Thank you for your cooperation and continued support in making our school a welcoming and inclusive environment for all.



WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING IN ZONE C?

Pupils in Zone C have engaged with various hands-on projects that integrate their learning across subjects. For example, while working on their bake sale project, they not only practiced their writing and communication skills but also incorporated basic principles of budgeting and financial planning, estimating costs for ingredients and setting prices for their baked goods.

In science, the pupils have been engaged in building model DNA structures, allowing them to visualize and understand the double helix and the importance of genetic materials. This has sparked discussions about genetics and inheritance, making connections to real-life applications, such as health and biological diversity.

During their exploration of parliament, pupils learned about its structure and function, identifying key roles such as the Prime Minister, members of Parliament, and various committees. To make learning more impactful, they participated in a mock debate, where they role-played different positions in government, developing their critical thinking and public speaking skills.

The study of 'Of Mice and Men' has provided rich opportunities for pupils to draw personal connections and reflect on themes of friendship, aspiration, and the challenges faced by individuals with additional needs. Through discussions and group activities, pupils have been able to empathize with the characters and explore deeper societal issues.



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Key dates for the diary

Christmas Dinner & Christmas Jumper Day: **Weds 18th December**
Elements closes for Christmas: **Friday 20th December (Normal finish time)**
Elements opens for Spring Term 1: **Monday 6th January**
Trust Inset Day (School closed to pupils): **Mon 27th January**
World Book Day: **Friday 7th March**
Elements closes for half term: **Friday 14th February**
Elements opens for Spring Term 2: **Monday 24th February**
Elements closes for Easter: **Friday 28th March**
Elements opens for Summer Term: **Tuesday 15th April**



WE'RE MAKING THE WORLD BETTER WITH A SWEATER



Get ready to spread some holiday cheer and support a great cause because Christmas Jumper Day is coming up on Wednesday December 18th! Pupils and staff are invited to wear their most festive and fun Christmas jumpers to school on that day.

We will be collecting voluntary donations of £1 to support Save the Children, a charity dedicated to helping children around the world.



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Christmas tips for SEND families!

- ✓ **Put presents in one big box** and let your child open them at their own pace over the following days
- ✓ **Avoid surprises** by picking gifts from their list and wrapping them in clear cellophane (or not at all)
- ✓ **Add batteries** to toys before wrapping
- ✓ **No food rules.** Who says pizza and pot noodles can't be Christmas dinner?
- ✓ **You do you!** Don't feel guilty telling friends or relatives if something doesn't work for you
- ✓ **Don't put unrealistic pressures on yourself.** The holidays can be overwhelming for everyone, so stick to your regular routine if you want to

contact: _____

REMINDER

Don't forget the **Wednesday 18th December** is Christmas dinner day at Elements! Remember to bring your appetite and your holiday spirit.

SUPPORTING TRAUMATISED CHILDREN THROUGH THE CHRISTMAS STORM

Based on ideas from Dan Hughes, with thanks to Helen Cruthers

Christmas is coming and we each bring our own sledge load of past experiences, expectations, internal and external pressures. Here are some top tips for how to survive and thrive in the Christmas Storm:



Beacon House
Therapeutic Services and Trauma Team

Your OWN big feelings: It is ok to prioritise your own regulation. If you feel broken, rage or despair then your child will feel it too. The first Christmas job is to regulate yourself.

OWNING your feelings: By acknowledging your own feelings towards Christmas, you can start to see how they might impact your empathy and connection with others.



CO-CREATING your own Christmas: Christmas brings huge changes in routine and expectation. It is ok if you avoid or adapt certain Christmassy rituals. By doing this you are supporting your child to feel successful by not having the experience of 'failing at Christmas'.



Invite your SUPPORT NETWORK to help: It's okay to know that you can't do it all alone. Ask your supportive friends, family or colleagues to help co-create a Christmas that is right you and your child.



EXCITEMENT is just the other side of the coin: Anticipate that excitement can often feel the same as stress for traumatised children. It's okay to keep things low key and by reducing excitement you are reducing stress



KNOWLEDGE is empowerment: Making the Christmas schedule explicit and predictable lowers stress for all. Draw it out, write it out, repeat it lots, keep as much as you can the same as usual.

DO MORE of what works (rather than less): Your child needs more of your presence, more supervision, more scaffolding and more support than usual. How can time for this be built in?
How can you build up your emotional reserves to give you the energy you need?



DO ACTIVITIES together: Create a Christmas culture of connecting, playing, making, baking. Consider what would be 'just the right' level of connection.

EXPLORE the anticipation of Christmas: "Christmas is coming, what's that like for you?" "Everyone experiences Christmas differently, from being happy and excited through to finding it really difficult. Where do you think you are today?"



UNDERSTAND their Christmas past: Be curious – "What did you used to do at Christmas that you enjoyed? What would you like to keep doing each Christmas? What would you like to lose? What would make it just right for you?"



LETTING go of 'should' s': Let go of expectations for yourself or your child about what Christmas should be like or feel like. It is what it is for you and your child in that moment. That is more than okay.

DISCOVERING the worries: Be curious and empathic towards your child's memories, questions, feelings, guilt or shame about their birth family. Explore – "how does it feel for you to enjoy Christmas? Is there a part of you that feels bad? How does it feel to know that this is so normal and you can both feel bad and enjoy it?"



GIVING AND RECEIVING AT CHRISTMAS



The **DILEMMA** of presents: Past deprivation may make both giving and receiving presents a trigger for shame, guilt or fear. Be a model for your child: help them see the joy people experience from the thinking, planning, making, giving and receiving of presents.



FORGET THE NAUGHTY OR NICE LIST! Help your child to know that giving and receiving presents is not dependant on them being good. They are loved and worthy of gifts in your family regardless of their behaviour.

Keep presents **LOW KEY**: Too many or very expensive gifts can be overwhelming and 'too much', leaving your child with an urge to reject or break things to regulate their feelings. Titrate your gifts, make them bite-size, tolerable, acceptable.



PARENT / CARER

"I should have known better"

"That was a waste of time and money"



"I didn't get it right, I'm dreading next year"

WATCH OUT FOR THE POST-CHRISTMAS BLUES

CHILD

"It's my fault I didn't enjoy it"

"IT WILL NEVER BE THAT FUN AGAIN"

"I feel so guilty because I should have enjoyed it but I didn't"

WHY NOT TRY...



INCREASING familiar structure and supervision: Helping them get back into the momentum of 'normal' life by increasing structure and supervision. Use your presence to help them get back to previous habits and predictable routines.

CONNECT then reflect: "I can have a hard time when Christmas is over too - especially when I was a kid...here's what we could do together to get back into a routine we enjoy"