



# SEN Department Newsletter

## A Successful Start to the Year!

- Raising awareness about mental health
- 'Active Wednesdays!' introduced to universal acclaim
- Fun times at Breakfast Club and in L5 at lunch!
- Updates on recent SEN initiatives
- Goodbye messages for Mrs Ellis

The SEN Department at Reading School has got off to a brilliant start in the first half of the 2014-15 academic year. We have built on past successes, continuing and developing the schemes which have proven particularly useful for students, and continue to push forwards with new ideas to support the boys in their development. Please read on for a flavour of what we've been up to!



## Mental Health - Raising Awareness

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Recently Reading School has been involved in several initiatives to help raise awareness about mental health. Sam Miller, Year 11, spoke in three house assemblies during the penultimate week of last term. The talks covered a broad range of awareness issues including what mental health is, how common mental illnesses are, and the extent to which mental illness is misunderstood.

The talks are accompanied by a leaflet that Sam produced and a display in the LRC (set up with the help of Mrs Kesteven and Mrs Jackson) which are intended to equip students and staff with information to enable them to talk comfortably about mental health. Importantly, the leaflet

contains information on where to go for help – both within Reading School and externally through the NHS and counselling services.

On the 5th of February the school ran two cake sales (one for students, the other for staff) to raise money for Young Minds - the UK's leading charity committed to improving the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people. The day was a great success with over £250 being raised. More information about the great work that this charity does can be found by visiting their website ([www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)).

# YOUNG MINDS

The voice for young people's mental health and wellbeing

## SEN Review

To ensure the SEN department maintains its effectiveness over time throughout the school, a group of teachers recently took part in a SEN Review. This involved talking to students, teachers and sitting in on different lessons to observe support being given

and the different forms this support takes. The exercise was designed to lead to the development of best practices of support and to encourage their replication across the entire school. It was great to see several examples of excellent support.

## Cinema Trip

The ever-popular cinema trip was back with a vengeance this December. In a cruel case of life imitating art, the boys were given a sense of life under a totalitarian regime when they learnt that there would be no choice of film this year (due to film times, not an evil overlord). The latest installment of The Hunger Games was the only option.



Students demonstrate the Mockingjay Salute

Fortunately, this news was met with unanimous approval and on one fateful afternoon in December the tributes marched into Reading town centre to meet their destiny.

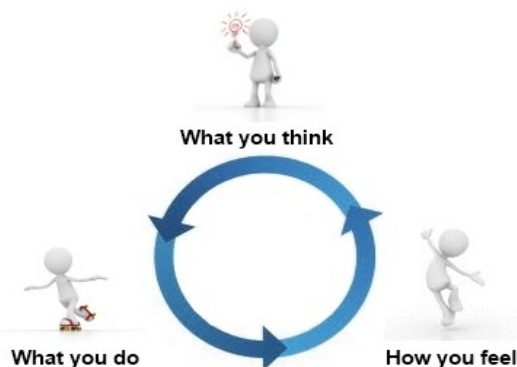
Following their cinematic ordeal, the boys finished their excursion with the traditional trip to McDonalds. After indulging themselves with the treats on offer, the boys parted ways, happy to have been part of another successful cinema trip!

## SEN CPD

### 'Currents from a Hot Cross Bun'

Educational Psychologist Deborah Sander delivered a Continuing Professional Development training session for school staff, in which she discussed the principals of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

The aim of the session was to deliver guidance for staff in identifying and understanding student behaviours. This included awareness of associated mental health conditions.



The event was well-attended: with over twenty-five staff members making use of both the information and the hot-cross buns that were on offer!

One attendee said: "The session was really useful, particularly the hot cross bun explanation of the way thoughts and feelings cause the behaviours we see. It's also useful to consider how our own 'bun' relates to that of the student. I think the session will help me to be more understanding in the face of challenging behaviour. Deborah is a good speaker and has a lot of knowledge to share."

## Introducing Active Wednesdays!

On Wednesday lunchtimes the L5 crowd move across to the gym for an active session led by Mr Beckey. Active Wednesdays offers the students a great opportunity to be active during lunchtime and has proved very popular so far. Mr Beckey has kept the group on its toes by giving students the chance to try out parkour during the sessions.

Active Wednesdays provide a great opportunity to consolidate the boys' intellectual pursuits, and stimulate them in a different environment. During the sessions students are given the space to build their confidence and develop teamwork skills, all whilst trying out a fun new activity!



## Reminders About Other Ongoing SEN

**Sensory Circuits** – every Tuesday morning from 8.10 am in the gym – a good place to learn new skills and make new friends!  
Great for:

- Improving motor skills
- Practicing working as part of team
- Making friends



**Breakfast Club (KS3)** every Friday morning from 8.20 am in L5 – come and join for fun and games ranging from UNO to Penguin Pile-Up!

- Relaxed environment
- Fun games
- Inclusive atmosphere

### L5 - Available at break and lunch times!

If students are at a loose end during lunch and break times, they should head over to L5 and enjoy the friendly atmosphere! There are a range of activities on offer including trying your skills at chess, Uno, playing 'Magic the Gathering', or even just reading in the comfy chair.

We will soon be running an Uno Tournament. If students are interested in taking part they should contact Mrs Gwyther to find out more, and make sure to stop by L5 to get in some practice!





## Reading School

# Mrs Ellis Retires

It is with both regret and warm wishes that we announce Mrs Ellis's retirement. Mrs Ellis worked with Reading School for 13 years, providing a tremendous amount of support to students during her time. This support has been truly invaluable, and has helped make the time spent at Reading School special for a huge number of boys. She will be sorely missed by both staff and students, and we wish her the best of luck in all her future endeavours. Her tears on her

last day were a testament to how strongly she felt about the school, and those feelings are undoubtedly reciprocated by students and staff, both past and present. Her UNO-playing skills and supply of cakes will not be easily replaced!

Below is a small selection of messages written for Mrs Ellis by the boys on her departure.

*"Thanks for all your help and support, be it in waiting for nose-bleeds to stop, picking me up and setting me in the right direction or looking after me at times of stress or injury. You have touched the lives of so many people of the school in this way and shall be*



*"Goodbye, good luck in your retirement and thanks for everything!"*

*"Thank you for all your help. I'll be sad to see you go. I'll have difficulty getting to lessons on time now."*

*"Thank you for everything you have done for us and me personally. I wish you all the best in your retirement. We'll miss you."*

*"Thank you so much for brightening up my day every break and lunchtime over the past term and a half, and the many, many visits to you in the years before. Good luck in your future endeavours."*

*"Thank you for making L5 a wonderful experience for us and I wish you the best of happiness in the future."*

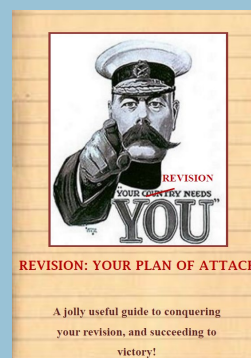
*"Word has passed on that you're retiring very shortly, and I doubt I'd be the first to say it's well deserved! You've put in so much effort into Reading School in the past however many years it's been, always been there for every single student and somehow manage to remember every single name.*

*I'm sure I speak for myself, the rest of the study room and the rest of the school when I say we'll all be really sad to see go. Thank you for everything you've done for us."*

## The SEN Department can help with revision!

Visit the Student Support section on Sharepoint, Student area, to print off this revision leaflet and access other information.

If Year 11, 12, or 13 students would like more specific help and advice, please email a member of the SEN team.



If you need support of any kind please contact Mrs Gwyther [sgwyther@reading-school.co.uk](mailto:sgwyther@reading-school.co.uk) or Miss Rogers [rogers@reading-school.co.uk](mailto:rogers@reading-school.co.uk) or come along to L5.