



VSSS update

As another new academic year has begun, I would like to bring you up to date on how Virtual School Sensory Support is working with children and young people, following the easing of infection control measures. The guidance from the Department for Education is clear that we should continue to support children in whatever way will be effective for them. This can either be remote or face to face, depending on each individual's needs. It is fair to say staff are very pleased to be able to carry out direct work with a wider range of children and hope they are happy to see us too! Of course, we are aware the virus has not gone away so we will continue to use infection control measures, but we are pleased to be seeing a greater number of children and young people.

We were delighted to begin the year with two days at Gressenhall Museum, one for Early Years and Key Stage 1 children, the other for Key Stage 2 children. The informal feedback showed families appreciated the opportunity to meet in a safe, outdoor space so we are grateful to the staff at Gressenhall for welcoming us so warmly.

If you would like to contact me for any reason, I can be contacted via kate.stocks@norfolk.gov.uk. I always appreciate hearing feedback from parents/carers so do contact me if you want to.

Kind regards, Kate



Summer chef school

Over the holidays, the Habilitation Team ran a summer chef school where the participants prepared their lunch and dessert along with a selection of delicious treats to take home! The menu was varied and we all enjoyed making (and eating!) pizzas, chicken goujons, home-made burgers and wedges, mug cakes and chocolate covered fruit kebabs. The children also prepared an afternoon tea for their families on the last day including freshly prepared scones, sandwiches, biscuits and cupcakes. Not only did we have a lot of fun, but the children practiced so many skills; weighing, mixing, kneading, rubbing in, rolling out, spreading, grating, cutting.....and the list goes on! It's fair to say that we had some exhausted children (and staff) at the end of it.

Thank you to Firside Junior School for letting us use their wonderful kitchen and outside area; the table tennis matches were a hit!

We are hoping to organise a Christmas chef school special so watch this space!



VSSS at Gressenhall

Gressenhall 1st and 3rd September 2021

This year's VSSS days at Gressenhall were very special having missed a year through Covid. Families and staff were very excited to be back and Jan and the team at Gressenhall put on some great activities.

On the 1st September Key Stage 2 and Year 7 pupils and their families joined us at Gressenhall, the morning was a little damp but the weather improved as the day sped along. There were 31 families (49 adults and 58 children) and 10 staff from VSSS.

Gressenhall staff kindly organised river dipping and dissecting owl pellets as additional activities during the afternoon and these were very successful.

On a subsequent visit to a school a pupil explained the procedure for dissecting an owl pellet in detail to his new class teacher, he had been amazed by 'the teeny tiny leg bones' of a vole that he had found using tweezers to pull the pellet apart once it had been placed in a bowl of water. There were definitely several budding naturalists taking part in this event.

On the 3rd September it was the turn of families with pre-school children and those in Key Stage 1. There were 29 families (62 children, 50 adults) and 11 staff from VSSS.

Here is some of the feedback from families and staff

“We’ve visited Gressenhall on perhaps 4 occasions, courtesy of VSSS. This time, as with each previous visit, we’ve enjoyed a fantastic day. From engaging activities for the children combined with a relaxing environment for adults is a rare event, but Gressenhall is the ideal location for this. Add to this the opportunity to meet with other families and the wonderful VSSS team and we couldn’t ask for more. Thank you!”

“We have loved every minute of today. The children have benefitted from the freedom of space, the play park and gardens are such an amazing valuable space for our little ones to play and socialise which is so vital to their identity and development. The facilities at Gressenhall were brilliant. We will be returning and recommending to friends and family. Well set out and brilliant staff. Thank you for such a memorable day.”

“It is a great opportunity to network with families, for families to network with each other, for children to feel part of a VI/Deaf community by meeting other children with similar needs and disabilities. It is a great opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors, engage in a range of activities (to suit all ages) to support the social and emotional well-being of children and their families. It is also a great lift financially, as it is a free day out.”

“Thank you for a lovely day. We all enjoyed it and was so lovely seeing other families.”

“Thank you so much for today! We all had a wonderful time and was great for J to see other children with hearing aids so he knows he isn’t the only one!”

“Just wanted to say thank you to the VSSS team for organising a lovely day at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse yesterday. We all enjoyed it very much.”



Deaf Resource Base at Great Yarmouth Primary Academy

Great Yarmouth Primary Academy is the host school for VSSS's newest Deaf Resource Base, which opened its doors to four pupils at the start of this academic year. It is staffed by a full time Teacher of the Deaf and two Specialist Support Assistants. It is a welcomed provision in an area of the county that had a cohort of deaf children starting school in September 2021. The deaf children will learn alongside their mainstream peers, either in their mainstream class, or in a smaller group in Rainbow Room. Rainbow Room is a spacious room which has been allocated for the resource base. It started as a caretaker's store room, and over the summer holidays has undergone a transformation creating an acoustically treated room, full of age appropriate resources.

The staff at GYPA engaged enthusiastically with the Deaf Awareness Training delivered during an Inset Day before the start of term. They are keen to promote BSL within the school, and for deaf awareness to be embedded; allowing the deaf learners to develop their cultural and linguistic identity and removing social barriers.



Vision Norfolk events

28th November – Christmas Train to see Santa

12th December – Christmas Party (at the Bradbury Centre)

19th December – Virtual Christmas Quiz

20th December 11am - 2pm - Christmas Pizza Party with Donnelly's Pizzeria, Timberhill, Norwich. Design, cook and eat pizza with your friends from Vision Norfolk. Suitable for age 10+. To book please e-mail CYPF@visionnorfolk.org.uk

Parent and Carer Vision Impaired Toddler and Baby Group. Meeting on the last Wednesday of every month 10:30am till 12:00pm (at the Bradbury Centre). There is messy play, interactive toys, refreshments, story corner and sing-a-long. Parking available nearby in a pay and display car park. Donations towards refreshments are gratefully received but not expected.

Booking is now available for the 2021/22 Community Sports Foundation Vision Impaired Football and Mini Kickers sessions. Links and details here –

On a Saturday morning between 10-11am there is the Mini Kickers session for 4-6 year olds (<https://www.communitysportsfoundation.org.uk/programmes/disability-soccer-skill-centres/>) and on a Friday evening there is Vision Impaired and Blind Football for age 6-16 year olds (<https://www.communitysportsfoundation.org.uk/programmes/disability-soccer-skill-centres/>). Both these sessions are held at Carrow Park near the football ground. There is the potential to progress if your child is keen so please give it a look. The Saturday sessions cost £1 and the Friday ones are free.

If you want to book on to any events please drop Barbara Dunn an email on barbara.dunn@visionnorfolk.org.uk and she will send you the zoom link or add you to the list.

If there are any activities or events that you would like to see happening please let Barbara Dunn know. She is always open to ideas for new things to book.



Goalball sessions

VSSS have been contacted by colleagues at City College Norwich. The Norfolk and Norwich Goalball Team can resume playing after October half term. #GoalballUK are supporting the return to play and we would like to invite new and former players to join us following the successful Paralympics 2021. Goalball is specifically designed for vision impaired players and it would be great if you (and families, friends) could join us for a taster and introduction. The plan, at the moment, is to play on alternate Thursday evenings 6:30 to 8:00 starting 4th November. Parking is free and plentiful, first session free and a contribution (£5 per family) is requested following this to cover Hall hire. All equipment is provided. It would be great to get as many people there as possible to get the club going again.

If you are interested or would like more details please contact John Rous Milligan on john.milligan@norfolk.gov.uk

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