

Welcome!

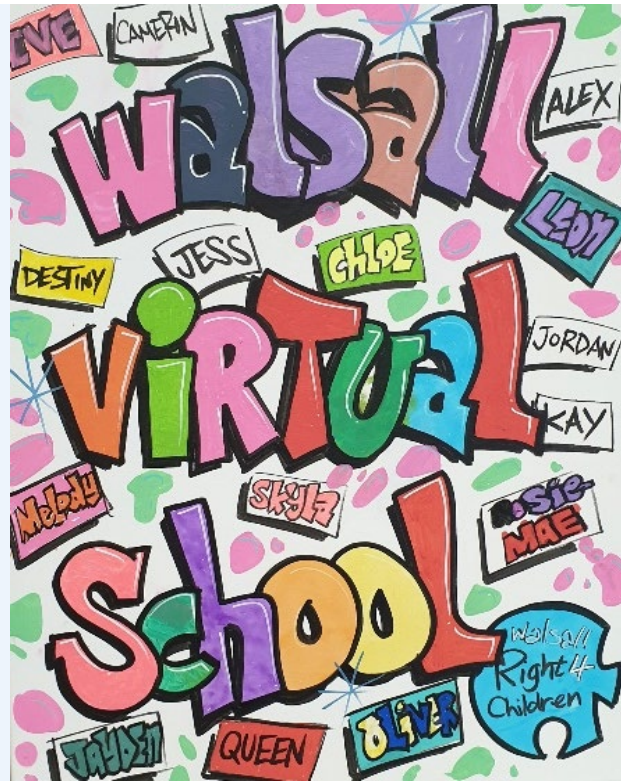
Happy Spring to our Walsall Virtual School community! The Spring Term is now well under way!

We hope this newsletter finds you safe and well and that you have had a good start to the year.

This term may bring additional challenges as young people and staff try to manage ongoing issues with COVID. We hope things are going as smoothly as they can for you, and we are here to support in any way that we can.

As always, don't hesitate to contact us if you have any thoughts, questions or ideas at:

WalsallVirtualSchool@walsall.gov.uk



Virtual School Autumn Term Projects and Updates

October Holiday Scheme

During the October half term 10 students and 1 young leader took part in our holiday activity programme. The activities were run by JP Learning Centre. Students took part in activities such as drama, music production, bush craft, BBQ, den building, and indoor climbing. Feedback from all the students was great and they reported wanting the sessions to continue for the whole holiday. 100% of the students said they would want to come again.



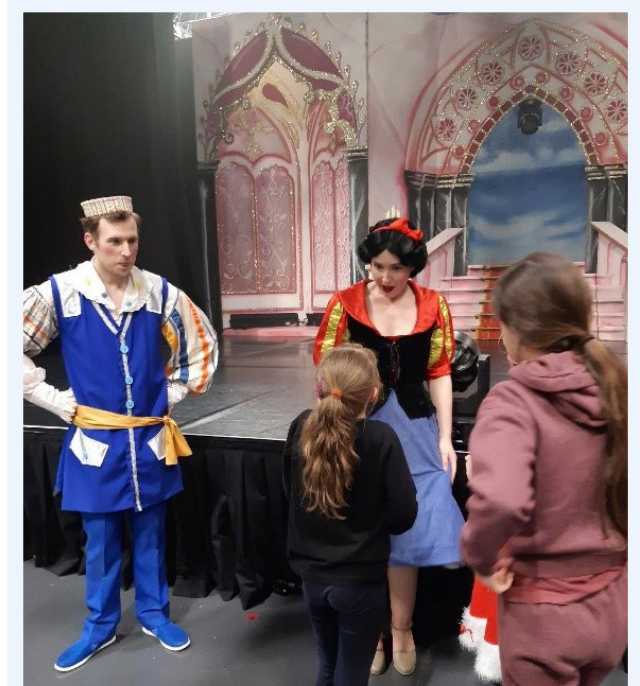
Christmas Pantomime and Workshops

Just before Christmas 30 young people attended our Winter Event at Walsall Arena and Arts Centre to take part in a fabulous drama workshop and watch Snow White the Pantomime.

We had a fabulous time on both days! The children were fully involved in the drama workshop and then loved seeing the show. One of our young people even got called up on stage to be one of Snow White's friends! Then at the end of the show, we got to meet the cast which was a magical experience!

We think we may have some budding actors in our midst!

Thank you so much to all that took part!



Interventions for Schools

Andrea Perry and Lucy Witton from Course We Can visited our team meeting this week. There is further information below on the apps they offer for carers and schools. They demonstrated their Reach2Teach app for us, and we will be trialling it within our teams. It will be used to further advise schools on interventions that can be used to support schools, based on specific behaviours that young people may present. The app is friendly to use and it will enable us to have a more consistent approach with the advice we give.

If you would like any further information on this, please don't hesitate to speak to your Key Worker or visit: <https://courses.coursewedo.com/courses/reach-to-teach>



Training Calendar

Date and Time	Training	Description
26.1.22 9:00 to 11:00am	Parenting Using Emotion Coaching – parents/carers Part 2	This is a follow up from the first session held in autumn term
2.2.22 All day	Trauma, Shame and Empathy	This training is an introduction into trauma and the impact our lived experiences could have on thoughts, feelings behaviours and internal working model. It will also look at what is shame, what shame looks like and how we can be more aware of shame. The final day of training will also look at empathy and how we can show empathy to others.
7.2.22 2:00 to 3:00pm	Induction Training for Designated Teachers	Training for designated teachers who are new to the role. The training will include an overview of our ePEP system and a short session on how to write a good PEP. We will also discuss pupil premium and provide an overview of the role of the DT. This is a drop in session open to designated teachers.
8.2.22 9:00 to 12:00pm	Designated Teacher Briefing – Spring Term	Our termly briefing with DTs.
16.3.22 All day	Assessment and Intervention pathways	This training offers an overview of assessment and types of assessment data. This second session will look at an overview of interventions, rationale and varieties, and the third session will be exploring mapping assessment to intervention using pathways.
30.3.22 9:00 to 12:00pm	Social Emotional Wellbeing Plans – Uncovering Behaviour Part 2	This is the follow on from the first session held in autumn term.

Please find all upcoming training on our website - <https://wvs.sch.life/Page/Calendar>

We will send an invite closer to each event asking people to email WalsallVirtualSchool@walsall.gov.uk if they would like to attend.

Post 16

Our Post 16 PEP training is taking place this term. We have 3 sessions booked for January. The sessions will take P16 Providers through the newly updated PEP, and our expectations for completing it. We have a good number of P16 providers already booked on, but if you think you would benefit from thus training, please let us know.



Anna Freud - Free training for schools on reducing exclusions through parent and carer engagement

We wanted to share with you an amazing opportunity for free training session focused on inclusion and reducing exclusions from The Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families.



“Developed to meet the recommendations of the Timpson Review of School Exclusion, the All on Board training supports staff in developing partnerships with parent and carers.

Our training is designed to support school professionals and to enhance existing quality provision. Our training team is made up of people who have current, on-going experience of working in mainstream and AP schools as well as consultant psychotherapist experience in mental health and systemic family work. We are committed to the view that there are no easy answers when dealing with complex and challenging behaviours; that building relationships at all levels will always be central to good practice; and that there are systems and approaches which we can always learn from to improve outcomes. Our training, based on a model of family intervention with a 30-year track record, has been developed and codified at The Pears Family School over the last 6 years and trialled in local AP and mainstream schools. We have now secured funding to offer the training to mainstream schools nationally.

The All on Board training consists of two twilight sessions (dates as stated) that run from 4pm to 5:30pm, as well as a drop-in consultation calls between sessions. Delegates must attend both twilight sessions.

Please note that spaces are only available for senior staff from mainstream schools and funding is capped at 2 delegates per school attending. This training is free of charge, with the commitment to provide data about your setting regarding exclusions, attendance and current practice in engaging parents and carers.”

For more information and to sign up, please follow this link:

Training in parent and carer engagement to reduce exclusions | Training | Anna Freud Centre

Place2Be's Children's Mental Health Week

Children's Mental Health Week is taking place on 7-13 February 2022. This year's theme is Growing Together.

They will be encouraging children (and adults) to consider how they have grown, and how they can help others to grow.

Their free resources will help you take part in the week. All of the ideas can be adapted for use in school, for home-schooling, online lessons or independent learning. Explore their site for inspiration and easy ideas to help your school celebrate the week – and you can share what you are doing on their interactive map to inspire others too.



Children's Mental Health Week (childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk)

A useful resource

The language we use with each other and with our young people has a massive impact on our and their responses. Our young people have faced a lot of trauma which had led to them being looked after.

Unfortunately, as a Virtual School, we still hear the language outlined in this poster at times. There is always a reason behind the behaviours we see, and we can have the biggest positive impact on our young people, when we view their behaviour as the way they are trying to communicate their trauma to us, and survive; rather than as a negative trait.

For more information see: [ACF615-Words-Matter-Resource-Portrait-v6.pdf](#) (childhood.org.au)




Words Matter

WORDS MATTER

TRAUMA SENSITIVE LANGUAGE WITH CHILDREN

Behaviour is often an expression of the way that children and young people have experienced their past relationships. They show their hurt and pain through what they do. The way that the behaviour is described can shape the way they see themselves and the way that others interact with them.

It is important that we do not use words that further alienate or disadvantage children and young people. Negative and unhelpful words can serve to blame children for their past experiences of trauma. It can lead to harmful labels being ascribed to children that they can never be rid of. We should use language that positively interprets their needs and suggest ways that children and young people can be better connect to the important people in their lives. Preferable language holds the expectations of adults to understand and react to children's needs rather than placing the responsibility for change with the child.

 NEGATIVELY CHARGED LANGUAGE	 WHAT MIGHT BE HAPPENING IN THE MOMENT	 PREFERABLE LANGUAGE
<p>DISRESPECTFUL AND RUDE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urge to push bad feelings away • Testing strength of connection • Seeking belonging with peers • Sense of shame • Sense of danger 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distressed • Afraid • Frustrated • Uncertain • Threatened
<p>DEFIANT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fearing separation from caregiver • Fearing change or transitions • Attempting to establish predictability • Trying to predict the level of safety of adult behaviours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afraid • Anxious • Shutdown • Feeling out of control • Needing distance
<p>MANIPULATIVE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using early survival patterns that previously kept them safe • Imitating early adult role models • Difficulty articulating feelings • Attempting to keep adults at a distance • Seeking support when they feel endangered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needing safety • Resourceful • Self-soothing • Trying to engage • Expressing uncertainty • Feeling overwhelmed
<p>DISRUPTIVE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling unworthy of connection • Avoiding feeling of shame • Feeling anxiety • Attempting to regain mastery over a situation • Attempting to compensate for poor social or learning skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distressed • Ashamed • Lacking confidence • Threatened • Anxious • Unhappy • Worried

Book Trust – Time to Read – Reception Children

Just in case this has passed you by in a very busy year, Book Trust have launched their Time to Read campaign for Reception children



“As children start school, life at home can become hectic and it can be hard to balance homework with reading for fun. We know that reading together has a positive impact on children’s imagination, language, and emotional wellbeing. Reading together regularly as a family will also create a fun, safe space for children to express themselves.

Which is why we’re sending free Time to Read packs with copies of I Am a Tiger to reception classes throughout England and Northern Ireland. Each pack contains top tips for sharing stories as a family, as well as some creative materials to enable children to explore the story beyond the book.

Packs will be arriving at schools from November 2021. We hope that every new school starter will love adventuring with the characters in this story, at school and at home.”

You can find a link to order your packs on the Book Trust website:

Time to Read | BookTrust



Carers' Corner

If you have a young person in year 11, you should be thinking about what they will be doing when they leave school and start year 12. They may have already seen our careers advisor, but they will also have one within their school. If you are worried that they don't know what they want to, you can contact their school and ask for them to see the school careers advisor. By the end of May we would hope that all our year 11 students have applied to a school/college/apprenticeship/training provider and been offered a conditional place. We have a booklet to help to information and guidance during this important time, so get in touch if you would like a copy. It is important that you support your young person to visit colleges, find out about courses, and apply for their next educational step. If you have a young person with an EHCP, this process needs to be completed by March.

The booklet can be found on our website: <https://wvs.sch.uk>

It gives a checklist on what students and carers need to do during years 9, 10 and 11, to make sure they are fully prepared for their P16 education.

Secondary Transition: Year 6 - Year 7

If your young person is in Year 6, they will be moving to Year 7 and their next adventure in secondary school in September. We are aware that this transition and change of environment can be unsettling and challenging for some of our young people, so Emma Jones and Beth McGarrie (our primary Key Workers) will continue to attend Year 6 PEPs to ensure a clear transition plan is in place. If you feel your child will need a more intensive transition package, please don't hesitate to say as Beth and Emma are on hand to offer direct work with the young people on top of the schools' offers.

Introducing a new web-based App for adoptive parents and foster carers

The Reach4CARE Awareness & Behaviour web-based App from CourseWeDo gives adoptive parents, foster carers and guardians of children

and adolescents an Attachment Aware, Trauma Informed approach to some of the behavioural challenges which may arise at home, out and about, and at school. Behaviour communicates something...but what?

This easy-to-use App helps you think about the needs which might lie behind your child's behaviour and ways of relating to people, activities and tasks. It gives you insight into their potential pattern of attachment and relationship, and helps you think about how to help them feel safe at home and at school. It provides a wide-range of instantly usable, highly practical ideas and approaches to try out, all building on your relationship with your child and practical, well-evidenced principles.

We all need secure attachment relationships to thrive. Children need our responsiveness to help them feel safe: and empathy, for children, other adults and ourselves, is key. So some of the suggestions may help you as your child's parent or carer think about the kind of support you might need, and where to find it. You'll also find lots of interesting ideas to share with your child's school, helping you build an effective home-school partnership, which helps create stability and mutual confidence.

Reach4CARE draws on Worth Publishing's unique reputation for practical books on understanding relationships and behaviour. All the suggestions/actions proposed are attachment aware and trauma informed, an approach underpinned by the Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) research project published in the USA in 2014 and generally accepted as a sound evidence base in the UK.

If you are interested in this app please see here for more information <https://courses.coursewedo.com/courses/reach4care>, and do let Walsall Virtual School know and we can address it at a PEP.

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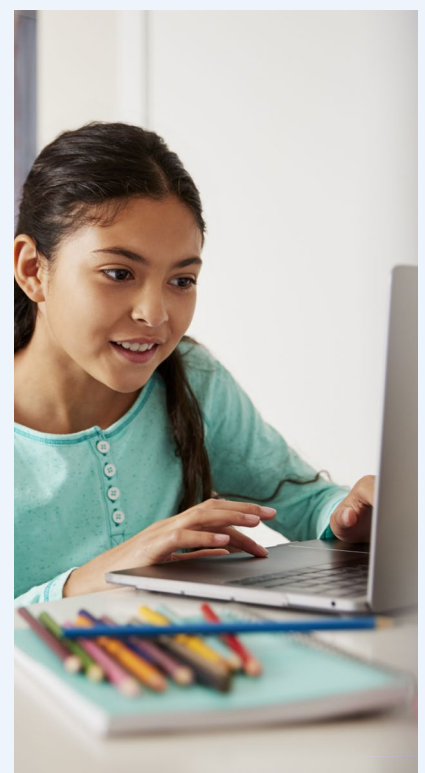
Animation Event

Next month we will be starting the animation project for children aged 7 to 11, which is being brought to us by Let's Animate.

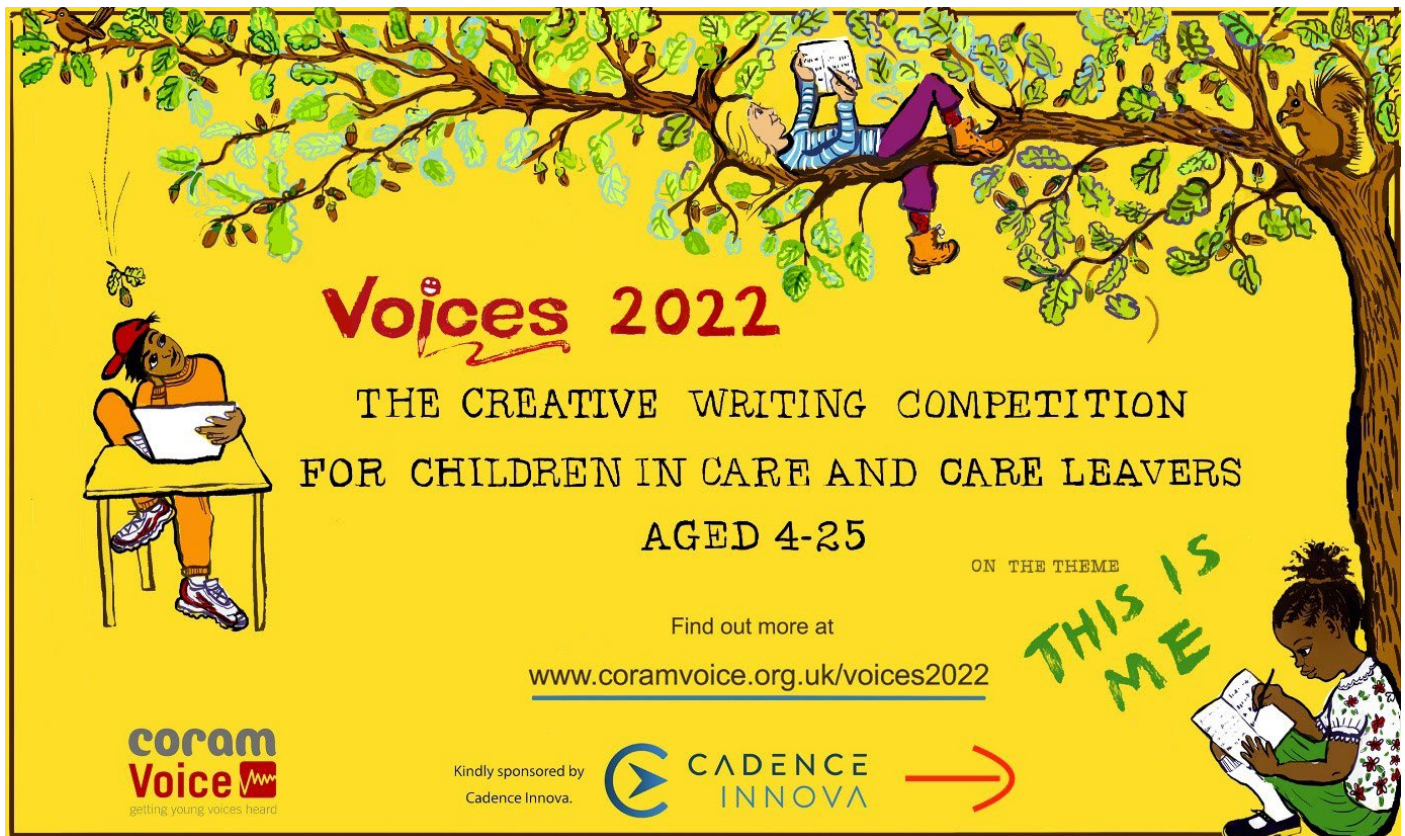
The animation project will run online for 7 weeks and there will be an in-person workshop on 2 April in Birmingham city centre. The overall theme will be based on under the water and workshops will entail:

- Story development
- Creating an underwater background, characters & props
- Creating a storyboard and looking at camera angles
- Scripting

If this is something your young person may be interested in please get in touch ASAP as spaces are very limited.



Voices 2022

A vibrant yellow background featuring a large tree with green leaves and brown branches. A child with blonde hair is lying on a branch, reading a book. A squirrel is perched on the right side of the tree. On the left, a child wearing a red cap and orange shirt sits at a small table, also reading. In the bottom right corner, a girl with dark skin and braided hair is sitting on the ground, writing in a notebook. The text 'Voices 2022' is written in a stylized red font. Below it, the text 'THE CREATIVE WRITING COMPETITION FOR CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS AGED 4-25' is written in a simple black font. To the right of this text, it says 'ON THE THEME' followed by 'THIS IS ME' in large, green, hand-drawn letters. At the bottom, there are logos for 'coram Voice' (with the tagline 'getting young voices heard'), 'Cadence Innova' (with the text 'Kindly sponsored by Cadence Innova.'), and a red arrow pointing right.

Voices 2022

THE CREATIVE WRITING COMPETITION
FOR CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS
AGED 4-25

ON THE THEME
THIS IS ME

Find out more at
www.coramvoice.org.uk/voices2022

coram
Voice
getting young voices heard

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Voices 2022: The national writing competition for children in and leaving care

We are excited to share the news that Voices 2022 creative writing competition is now open!

In the last six years over 1000 care experienced children and young people have entered Voices. So if you are a budding writer, poet or have got something you would like to write then get involved.

Not only will all finalists be published in an anthology, but there is the chance to win winners and runners up prizes – more info to come on those soon.

This years theme was selected by care experienced children and young people through online votes and was chosen to be –‘**This is Me**’. You can interpret that however you want and they welcome you to be as creative as you like!

Your entries can be up to (but no more than) 500 words long and can be a **story, poem, rap, article or anything else** that fits the theme.

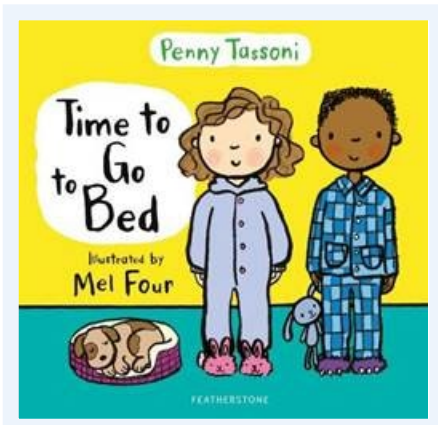
The competition is open for entries from now until 28 February 2022.

So if you are a child or young person in or leaving care aged 25 or under they would love to hear from you.

If you, your child/ young person would like to enter but would like support from the Virtual School, just let us know by emailing WalsallVirtualSchool@walsall.gov.uk

<https://coramvoice.org.uk/get-involved/voices-writing-competition/voices-2021-the-national-writing-competition-for-children-in-and-leaving-care/>

Literacy Lounge- Books of the Term



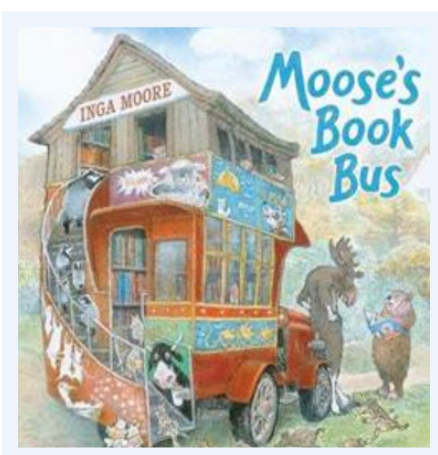
Book of the Month for EYFS – Time to Go to Bed

Author: Penny Tassoni

Bedtime is an important part of the day which all children will recognise, and this lovely little picture book uses simple language to explore why sleep is essential to help stay healthy and happy. It suggests occasions when children may need more sleep, for example, when they are poorly, or dealing with new experiences, and highlights some typical signs of tiredness, such as feeling drowsy or being silly.

Ideal to share with toddlers at bedtime as part of a positive sleep routine, the book encourages interaction by asking questions, including 'where do you sleep?' and 'what do you wear to go to bed?'. The simple illustrations are bold and bright, and feature children from a range of ethnicities.

A useful section for parents and carers at the end provides information about the importance of sleep for a child's development. As well as tips to help develop a good bedtime schedule, there is advice on where to seek help if sleep is an issue. Part of a series that includes Time to Care and Time to Go to Nursery, these books are created by an Early Years expert to help young children develop key life skills.



Book of the Month for Key Stage 1 – Moose's Book Bus

Author: Alexandra Strick and Steve Antony

Author: Inga Moore

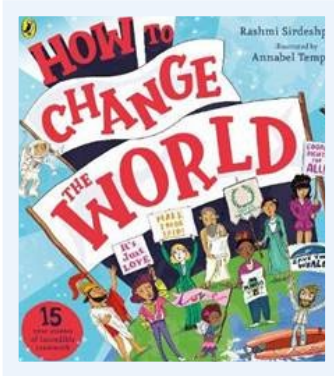
Moose loves telling stories to his family, but when he runs out of ideas, Mrs Moose suggests he reads to them instead. They don't have any books in the house, and neither do their neighbours, so Moose visits the town library for inspiration.

When Bear sees all the lovely books Moose has borrowed, she brings her cubs round to listen to the tales. As word spreads, more of the woodland animals pile into Moose's house for story time, until there is simply no more room. Realising that something needs to change, Moose engineers a mobile library that brings the joy of reading to the heart of the community.

Exquisite pencil, ink and watercolour illustrations contain a wealth of intricate detail and feature a charming cast of characters, including Badger, Fox and the Wild Pigs, as well as their numerous offspring. From atmospheric woodland scenes to Moose's cosy living room with a roaring fire, every page is infused with warmth and gentle humour.

This delightful picture book, which celebrates the pleasure of sharing books, reading aloud and the importance of libraries, is sure to inspire young children to embark on their own reading journey.

Literacy Lounge- Books of the Term



Book of the Month for Key Stage 2 – How to Change the World

Author: Rashmi Sirdeshpande

This fascinating picture book presents a selection of true stories about incredible people from around the globe and throughout history, exploring how they have challenged injustice and worked together to make the world a better place.

Readers will learn about the birth of democracy in Ancient Greece, the development of the global fair trade movement, and environmental campaigns, such as saving the whales and repairing the ozone layer. Momentous civil rights victories include the abolition of slavery across the former British Empire, securing equal rights for the indigenous people of Australia, and legalising same-sex marriage in many countries across the globe. Also celebrated is the creation of the International Space Station, which relied on successful collaboration between five international space agencies, and the skillful building of the Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt, without the aid of modern machinery.

The busy, colourful illustrations are packed with humorous detail and provide a superb visual accompaniment to the fact-filled text. These remarkable achievements are sure to inspire a new generation of young people to stand up for what is right and unite with others to evoke positive change. A wonderful companion book to How to Be Extraordinary.



Book of the Month for Key Stage 3 – Not If I Can Help It

Author: Carolyn Mackler

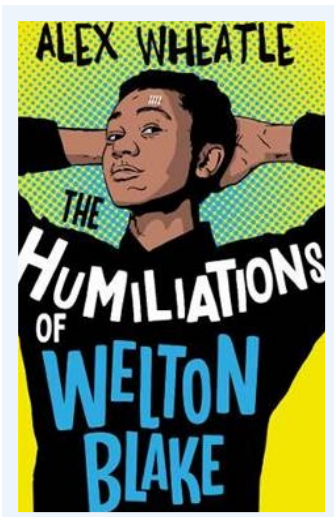
There are certain things you cannot tell anyone, even your closest friends. At least that is the way 11-year-old Willa feels. For one thing, there is the fact that she lives with a sensory processing disorder. She has coping strategies and occupational therapy sessions that she would rather even her trusted best friend Ruby never knew about, let alone anyone else at school. However, she can manage all this just fine, so long as she is in control.

Things shift dramatically when Willa's dad drops a major bombshell. He's been secretly seeing Ruby's mum and now they want to get married. Willa is devastated – what would people think? And how would she manage to keep her sensory processing issues a secret if they all moved in together?

In reality, of course, most people have something that they feel embarrassed about. And Willa eventually recognises that even Ruby (the enchanting, reliable, football-loving, Indian-American best friend that all of us would love) has her own difficulties. Plus blending families can bring some great benefits, along with the challenges.

The insight in this book into sensory disorders is fascinating and authentic (Mackler's own son shared his lived experience), and the result is truthful, natural and very readable about accepting difference, understanding others' perspectives and embracing change.

An accessible, well-paced and highly engaging coming-of-age story with a casually inclusive cast and a perfectly loveable and perfectly flawed young protagonist.



Book of the month for Key stage 4 – The Humiliations of Welton Blake

Author: Alex Wheatle

Welton Blake has finally plucked up the courage to ask Carmella, the most gorgeous girl in school, on a date - and miraculously, she's said yes! But no sooner has the best thing ever happened to him, everything else starts to go terribly wrong. From a broken phone that his mum can't replace, to dealing with bullies, a girl ready to beat him up and a dad making a total fool of himself trying (and failing) to get back with his mum - things just get worse and worse. Welton will have to use all his wits to stop things going totally to pot.

This book is laugh out loud funny with perfect comic timing - masterfully written by Alex Wheatle, it manages to combine hilarious slapstick with a moving story about the trials of navigating teen life. Barrington Stoke's dyslexic friendly font makes this book suitable for young teens who may not have previously been attracted to reading a whole book for pleasure. Great for readers who might have loved Liz Pichon's Tom Gates, and hopefully a gateway to Alex Wheatle's brilliant Crongton series.

Imagination Library

The Walsall Virtual School are registered with the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. A book gifting programme devoted to inspiring a love of reading in the hearts of children everywhere.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library works with over 200 affiliate partners and delivers more than 40,000 books every month to children in the UK. Each month children from birth to age five, receive an age appropriate book in the post, free of charge. Idea sheets to accompany the books are emailed out to parents and carers where email addresses have been provided.

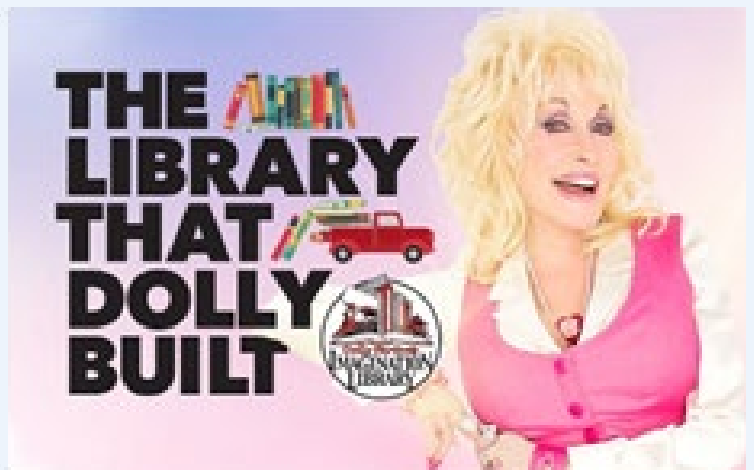
Further details of the scheme can be found at:

<https://imaginationlibrary.com/uk/>

If you have any questions about the book programme please contact us at:

WalsallVirtualSchool@walsall.gov.uk

We hope you enjoy reading these books together.



Our Learning Platforms

Just a quick reminder that as part of our Virtual School Offer, children have access to the following learning platforms. We are more than happy for these to be used in school and at home.

Reading Eggs / Doodle Maths – Years 1 – 6

We have purchased subscriptions for Reading Eggs for all children in Year 1 to 6 so you have these to access thousands of reading books, activities and games!

We have also purchased subscriptions for Doodle Maths for all children in Year 1 to 6. Doodle Maths is a digital learning platform which creates individual work plans for children from Reception to Year 6, with curriculum-aligned questions delivered in short, fun and snappy exercises on computer, tablet or phone. Little and often works best – just 10 minutes a day is all you need to boost your child's confidence and ability in maths.

- <https://readingeggs.co.uk/>
- <https://www.doodlemaths.com/>

Please do log in to these platforms and explore them with your children. Your children's schools have also been given the login details!



The login details for the children are below, should you also wish to use them with the children in school:

Username:

All children's usernames have been changed so that they are their First names, followed by the first letter of their second names, followed by Walsall.

So a child called Joe Bloggs would have the username JoeBWalsall.

Password:

The password has been set as WalsallVirtualSchool

Secondary Learning Platform:

Mathletics - Years 7 to 11

For young people in years 7 – 11, you have access to Mathletics.

Support your students' mathematics learning at home! The best learning is enjoyable learning. Mathletics blends rewards with creative adventures to create captivating experiences that will test learners' knowledge and abilities. Built on a foundation of solid curriculum-led content and designed by a team of veteran educators, Mathletics complements and reinforces schoolwork and classroom learning.

So do remember to use your Mathletics Username and Password to log in!

The Mathletics logo consists of the word 'Mathletics' in a white, sans-serif font, centered within a blue, rounded rectangular shape that has a slight gradient and a shadow effect.

