

MEADOWPARK – NEWSLETTER – WEEK 28 – 22.02.19

Pupils have returned after a refreshing February break aided by the unseasonably warm weather, and there is a sense of busyness across Meadowpark as we settle back into routines, plan ahead for visits and engage with partner providers to develop and enhance learning experiences.

I was delighted to catch sight of a Twitter feed on my phone last night stating that Haddington Area Partnership have approved funding for Meadowpark and Knox Academy request for an Art Therapist. I have just received the final details of this and am overwhelmed with relief that we can offer this significant service to an increased number of pupils in Meadowpark and Knox Academy. Having previously received funding from Dunbar and East Linton AP, Preston Seton and Gosford AP and Fa'Side AP we can fully concentrate on creating a bespoke provision with high quality resources.

Having seen the positive impact of Art Therapy for several of our pupils I am thrilled that we are able to offer this service across a broad range of need and I am happy to share the experience of one pupil again:

Pupil 1: (P1)

At point of referral P1 was 16 years old. They were referred for 1:1 Art Therapy sessions by class teacher to help develop expression of emotions through Art Therapy.

P1 has a diagnosis of ASD, dyspraxia and sensory processing difficulties. Communication aids are an AAC device and App on iPad. During the course of art therapy P1 introduced music and books to their sessions which would be read together followed by art-making or they would paint whilst listening to music they had chosen.

Initially wary and appearing apprehensive in the first session P1 smoothed their hair and would not settle in the room, aimlessly pacing around. Once reassured that this was a safe environment with dedicated time they quickly became familiar with the materials and settled excitedly into choosing paints, paper, palette and brush and engaged in art making once the paper was taped to the table. Securing the paper in this way signifies holding and attachment.

Over the weeks that followed P1 keenly came to the sessions and chose how they were going to engage, taping the paper to the table and collecting the materials required.

Through art making P1 has experienced choice, autonomy and control. Joint attention during the process has led to moments of experiencing and expressing joy. This progressed over time from brief moments to increased periods during the art making process where P1 was enabled to open up without using words.

P1 experiences a safe space where they are engaging therapeutically with the art materials, and shows signs of enjoying the art making process, often laughing and smiling.

During the creating process P1 also responds positively when their particular style of art making technique is acknowledged and awareness shown that they have a 'lot to say' while being carefully and empathetically listened to. When being acknowledged and validated P1 will stop painting, look into the eyes of the therapist, their eyes will brighten and the corners of their mouth turn up into a knowing smile.

Value is not placed on a completed picture but by staying close throughout the process of the art making, and acknowledgement that there was a more important goal in mind which was facilitating an opportunity, the freedom to be themselves and fully express their emotions.

From the words of Therapist, LS: "Through P1's communication with more than just words I am able to listen with more than just my ears."

Since the beginning of January, I have had a sense that 2019 heralds a year of long held hopes, aspirations and goals coming to fruition and maybe it is because I am attuned to it that I am able to grasp them as they appear. The phrase "Whit's fur ye'll no go past ye" slightly springs to mind with the caveat that I firmly believe if you are not looking and willing to reach out then opportunities will fast disappear down the plughole of forgotten dreams.

I have high hopes that for Meadowpark pupils and staff we are on the brink of exciting and rejuvenating opportunities for personal and professional development to further enhance the experiences we are able to offer.

Have a peaceful weekend. C Prime 22.02.19