

Snowflake News

The Termly Newsletter of Snowflake School

DECEMBER 2015

REMEMBER

- The new Spring Term starts on Wednesday 6th January 2016
- Snowflake is on the web Facebook and Twitter
- The school is closed for the Half term break Monday 15th to Friday 19th February

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Playground Improvements Get the Go Ahead

We are delighted to announce that the HSBC Supporting Our Community Committee have approved the proposal to support Snowflake School's playground re-development with the sum of £11,911.00.

This will enable us to provide a new extended shelter area, new seating, blackboards and a new sandpit. (Please see the artist's impression below). We will be able to use the new covered area as an outdoor classroom and it will also give shelter to parents and those collecting children from

school. The work will be completed in the Spring Term.



The new playground canopy, sandpit and seating.



Visitors are very welcome at Snowflake School and we receive many requests from parents looking for a school for their child and also from a wide range of professionals. We have found that this can

sometimes be quite disruptive to our children's learning as it means having visitors coming into classrooms and walking around the school.

To ensure minimum disruption to our children, we will now hold 'Open afternoons' once every term. We held our first event in December and this was a great success. Our next Open afternoon will be in March.

We have found that Parents afternoons are an ideal way for parents to find out about our school as well as being an opportunity to meet other parents of children looking for an ABA school.



Artpeggios Centre Closure



Keeping the Beat!

It was with great sadness that we heard that the Artpeggios Centre in Earls Court Road is to close. Artpeggio is music, art and performance space and children from Snowflake School have been enjoying attending for music lessons. From professional musicians We have greatly valued this partnership as the facilities and tuition are excellent.

All the children really enjoyed the experience of making music.



“It would be too easy in a school for children with Autism to conclude that this duty does not apply to us”

The Prevent Duty for Schools

The Prevent Duty for Schools Safeguarding Children is of paramount concern for all schools. The Trustees, Headteacher and staff take their safeguarding responsibilities very seriously and all staff and designated leads receive regular training to enable them to carry out their duties effectively.

In June 2015 all schools Safeguarding responsibilities were extended to include the Prevent Duty. This re-

quires schools to be able to identify children who may be vulnerable to radicalisation and know what to do when they are identified. Schools can also build pupils resilience to radicalisation by promoting fundamental British values.

It would be too easy in a school for children with Autism to conclude that this duty does not apply to us however we aim to take our duties seriously and will endeavour to focus our attention on the four main themes of the prevent duty.

These are;

We will carry out a Risk assessment to assess the risk of children at Snowflake being drawn into terrorism and ensure that we have procedures in place for protecting chil-

dren at risk of radicalisation. We are committed to working in partnership with parents and the local safeguarding children board, including assisting and advising families who raise concerns and pointing them to the right support mechanisms. We will ensure that all staff receive Prevent awareness training delivered by the Designated Lead for Safeguarding David Haswell Headteacher. We will ensure that our IT systems and policies are robust and protect children from exposure to extremist material when accessing the internet at school.

If you have a query or concern please contact David Haswell on 02073703232

Home Office Prevent Strategy



Learning through Play is fun



Little Wormwood Scrubs Adventure Playground

exercise, climbing the frames, going down the slides. The sensory room provides an interesting and calming environment to explore light, sound and texture with a variety of equipment that is easy to use by the children with adult supervision.

We often bring music with us and give all the children an opportunity to select their favourite songs and engage all children in singing along and playing together.

This activity provides plenty of opportunities to work on pupils' social and play, language and academic skills.

With our support pupils play and engage with each other, taking turns on the climbing frames, slides, choosing songs, going on the swings ,developing their social skills in appropriate ways, whilst having fun.

We aim to contrive opportunities in fun ways to develop language skills during this visit like creating situations for the pupils to request for access to

items they desire or encourage them to share information with us related to the environment around us. For instance, we encourage the pupils to request for access to their preferred activity or to tell us about what they see in the Playground. This helps develop new language skills and maintain the ones the pupils already have.

We strive to work on academic skills during this visit in an informal way to help generalise the skills we work on formally in school. For instance with our support, we encourage pupils to count steps or reading the signs around the playground.

This visit is always great fun for the pupils as well as the tutors!

“This activity provides plenty of opportunities to work on pupils’ social and play, language and academic skills.”

Amongst the many exciting and fun activities we do with the children is a weekly visit to the Little Wormwoods Scrubs Adventure Playground.

On the bus ride there we often sing along to the songs on the radio or play I spy, using any opportunity to engage the children.

The Playground has climbing frames, swings, a play room with games and toys and a sensory room.

The children have opportunities to play, run around and do some

Travel Training with TfL

This term our children received travel training from Transport for London. The aim of the training was to



Transport for London

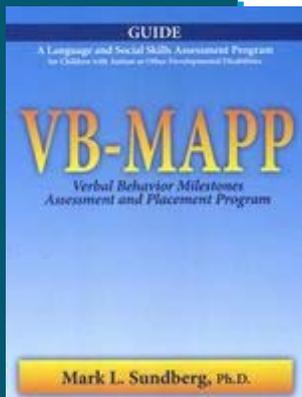
teach our children key aspects of how to use the underground and buses safely.

The children really enjoyed this visit and were able to role-play some scenarios of how to use these services safely.



Sebastian learning how to use the help point in the underground station.

VBMAPP-What's that?



The VBMAPP is Snowflake School's core assessment tool

"I like the way that at Snowflake we have to work as a team, and help each other."

2015/16
Intern
Flavia
Capoano



When a child starts attending Snowflake School we evaluate their existing language, learning and social skills according to the assessment tool *Verbal Behaviour Milestones Assessment and Placement Program* (VB-MAPP) (Sundberg, 2008). The VB-MAPP can help identify student's strengths and weaknesses across a variety of critical skills, as well as behavioural barriers that are interfering with their ability to learn more advanced skills.

VB-MAPP enables us to assess skills as requesting for tangibles and actions, labelling objects, people, and actions, vocal imitation skills, ability to answer questions, ability to follow instruc-

tions, imitation of movements, independent play skills, social, and social play skills, visual perceptual and matching-to-sample skills, existing linguistic structure, group and classroom skills and early academics, in a very structured and representable manner.

During first few days at school while a new student is getting familiar with new environment their tutor pays special attention to child's ability to communicate their needs and interests. Within two weeks tutor also tests other skill areas at relevant level and notes their observations in the VB-MAPP protocol. Such assessment is later carried out on at least yearly basis.

Once testing is completed a child's supervisor looks at the scores and identifies the crucial skills that child has to work on. These are then outlined in child's IEP, which is prepared for the whole year ahead.

Part of the VB-MAPP assessment focuses on child's barriers to learning. These can interfere with child's ability to achieve certain milestones. For this reason the VB-MAPP protocol has a section with all the milestones broken down into easier tasks (task analysis). In case of such barrier identified, the tutor and child will work on achieving the milestone step by step, starting at most appropriate and relevant level.

An Intern's Story

I am an Italian student who studied for five years in Italy, in Rome, at the University "La Sapienza" my degree was developmental psychology. I then specialized for two years in neuroscience and cognitive rehabilitation. For my second degree I did a course for 5 months about ABA with 50 hours of internship and, after that I started to work as an intern for my final thesis. My internship looked at motor and vocal stereotypy in five children.

In Italy, after five years of university, you have to do a years internship, split in two six month internships. For my second six months, I chose Snowflake school because I was interested to see how ABA works outside Italy. I can

say, after four months of work, that ABA in Italy and England is very similar. In England it is more rigid, precise and organized with the work that is done both in ITT and NET. At Snowflake there is a structured timetable that you have to follow, interchanging work at the table and work in NET.

During this period, I have had the opportunity to take part in different situations, for example we have celebrated international week. It was really fun and nice for the children, and tutors as well, and every time that there was a birthday, all the kids were together to celebrate the birthday.

I like the way that at Snowflake we have to work as a team, and help each other. It's a great place where you can develop and grow your skills that you learnt before

and to practice what you have stud-

ied. It's also a kind of school where you can work with different children and you have the possibility to improve yourself and have, every day, a new challenge.

Applied behavior analysis strategies promote higher incidences of appropriate social behaviour and language functioning for children with autism. It's a good way to work with children who have autism, but I think that is something that everyone can use in a day to day life. It is an educational program that, in my opinion, could work in a lot of circumstances.

It has been a really good experience and I am sure that there will be the same for the rest of my time at Snowflake.

KEEP
CALM
AND
USE THE
VB-MAPP

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Learning in the Community



dislikes, healthy and unhealthy food, and learning about different cultures and communities. In order to obtain the qualification each section requires specific activities to be completed. Two of our learners, Nathan and Sebastian, who are working on this qualification, completed the section about places in their local community and London. Nathan and Sebastian worked

together to make a poster about different places in London such as the Science Museum, the Tower of London, Big Ben and Buckingham Palace. It is of great importance for our students to get as many opportunities to explore the local community as possible. For this reason Sebastian and Nathan went on a special trip to visit Buckingham Palace. They were both very excited about this. This also allowed Nathan and Sebastian to practice going on public transport, a very important skill. The two boys counted how many stops it was from Earls Court to Hyde Park and kept an eye out for when it was time to get off the tube. On the way to the

Palace, they went for a walk through Hyde Park. Sebastian loved walking through the park before seeing the palace. "I had fun walking in the park" said Sebastian. Once we reached the Palace, both Nathan and Sebastian were taking in the beautiful views and enjoyed filling in a booklet which involved counting the number of windows they observed in the Palace. They also wrote down the colour of the uniform the guards were wearing. "We saw the statues and the guards in the red uniform" said Sebastian. Nathan stated "I learnt the Queen was at home if the royal standard is flying. When we went to Buckingham Palace she wasn't home". We went for a stroll up to the fountain where they enjoyed looking at the Palace and were taking pictures together. Afterwards, we walked back to the park and had a mini picnic where both Sebastian and Nathan were colouring in pictures of the Queen's crown and the Palace. Sebastian stated, "I saw the Queen and I had a snack"!

Nathan and Sebastian at Buckingham Palace

"I saw the Queen and I had a snack"

Educational visits are a vital part of the Snowflake Curriculum. At Snowflake School some of the children complete a qualification called New Horizons: Challenges in Personal and Social Skills awarded by ASDAN. ASDAN is a curriculum development organisation and awarding body, offering programmes and qualifications that explicitly grow skills for learning, employment, and for life. The ASDAN qualification is a booklet split up into five sections; person, social, health, relationships and citizenship. This qualification covers a wide range of topics including personal information, likes and



ASDAN Qualifications

Snowflake School is an accredited centre to provide ASDAN qualifications. ASDAN is nationally recognised and work towards these qualifications plays an important part of the curriculum for many of the pupils at Snowflake School. During ASDAN lessons, Nathan and Sebastian have been learning about Mini Beasts living in their environment. Here they are at Nevern Gardens on a 'Mini Beast hunt'.



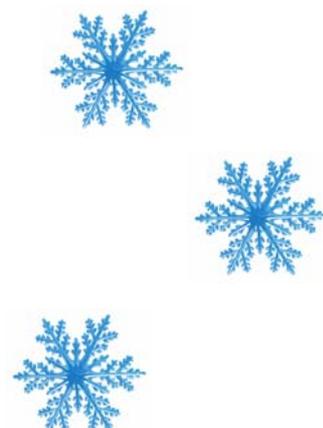
Our new staff



Introducing you to the new colleagues who have joined the Snowflake Team this term.

Helena, Karman, Kate, Liliana, Serife and Zaynab have joined as Tutors. Sarah is our new Teacher. All have settled in well and it seems as if they have been here for years.

Ann Marie -Tutor has been with us for one term but is now moving on to new horizons and we wish her well and hope that she will keep in touch.



Supporting Staff Development



**Tom Dibb
Snowflake Tutor
aiming to be-
come BCBA**

“Fulfilling the requirements for the exam takes years of study and professional dedication”

At Snowflake School we use a scientifically verified approach to teaching, known as Applied Behaviour Analysis (“ABA” for short). We apply the principles of ABA to all aspects of the children’s curricula, to effectively teach them the skills they need to increase their independence and lead happy, full lives.

Assistant Head Jamey Henderson and Supervisors Karen Talty and Sam Sullivan are being sponsored by Snowflake School towards gaining professional qualifications in the field of ABA, and will hopefully qualify as either Board Certified Behaviour Analysts (“BCBA”s) or Board Certified Assistant Behaviour Analysts (BCaBA) once they have passed their final exam. Tom Dibb (tutor) will also complete supervision hours while working at Snowflake and Tara Morgan our new Supervisor will be supported to commence her studies later this year.

There are 3 requirements to meet before they can take the exam: a graduate-level degree from an accredited university in a field related to ABA, the completion of coursework covering the theoretical information and scientific research underpinning the field, and 1500 hours of independent work in the field under the supervision of a BCBA.

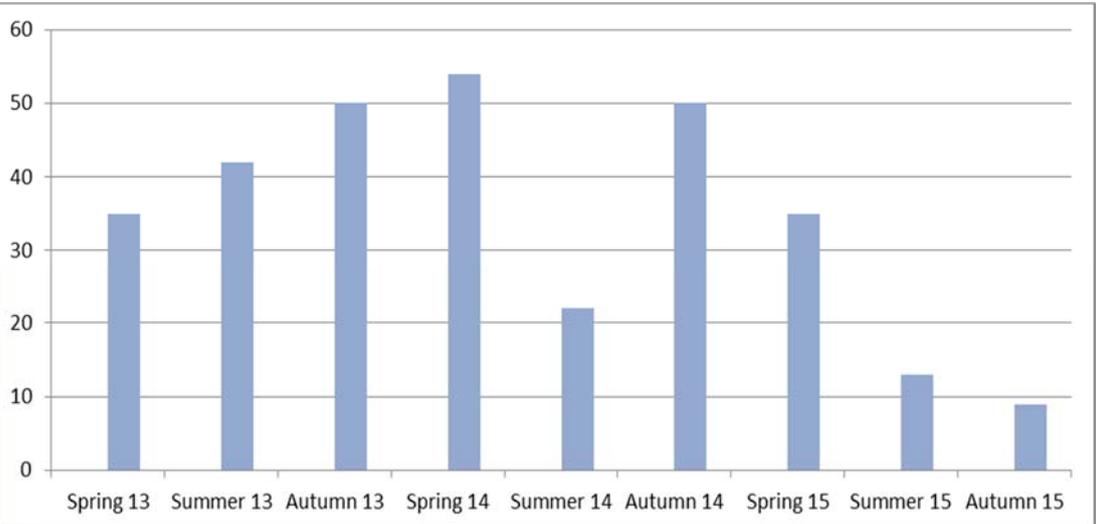
Fulfilling the requirements for the exam takes years of study and professional dedication. Some of our staff have earned Master’s degrees in ABA, while others have completed a long-distance postgraduate course offered by the Florida Institute of Technology. At Snowflake we are proud that these individuals have recognised our school as an environment in which they can continue to work towards their certification, and can apply all that they learn to helping our students achieve meaningful outcomes.

Carole Roxburgh is an experienced BCBA, and in addition to being the school’s consultant she is also supervising several of our staff as they fulfil their fieldwork requirements. Supervision is conducted long-distance and within school; staff send videos of their work and evidence of their further reading to Carole so she can review their work and give feedback in online meetings held every two weeks. The hours that staff record towards their total 1500 hours



Sickness Absence has Reduced

Staff Sickness Absence
Cumulative number of days sick per term
Autumn 15 (10 weeks until 20/11/15)



At Snowflake we have worked hard to reduce our levels of sickness absence. Managers have worked hard to establish and maintain supportive performance management and supervision processes. This chart shows just how much we have been able to reduce this in the last two years.

Beginnings and Endings



Ania Hagel

This term we will be saying goodbye to Ania Hagel and Isma Khan. We wish them all the very best. It is always an emotional time when staff leave and at Snowflake we believe that it is vitally important to acknowledge the tremendous work that all our staff do in helping the children progress at school and have a safe and happy learning experience.



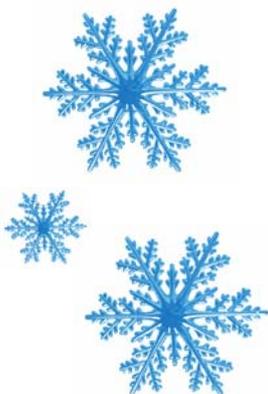
Isma Khan

4 New Snowflakes



This term we have welcomed a number of new students.

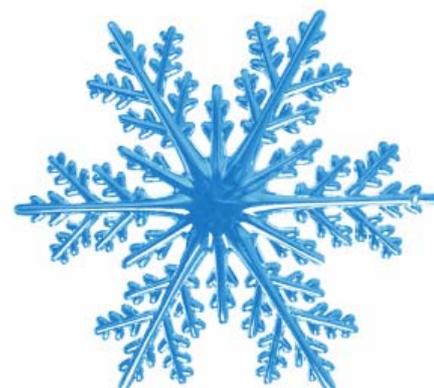
Hassan, Husayn, Sulayman and Taylor are all doing really well and have settled in fantastically.



Do Svidaniya Lenny!

We will be saying goodbye to Lenny at the end of this term. We wish him every success in the future and hope he enjoys his new school.

We will all miss him lots.



Signalong at Snowflake

Snowflake School is a Signing Community. At Snowflake we use Signalong. Signalong is based on British Sign Language, using unaltered BSL signs wherever possible. The difference between Signalong and other sources of signs, apart from the much wider range, is the way that they are presented. Tom Dibb Tutor has led an initiative this term to promote the use of Signalong amongst staff and children. He has produced a Signalong board and has updated it on a daily basis, awarding prizes to those to the top signing pupils and staff.



**Our Signalong
notice board**

Signalong Instructions

1. Working and supporting hands are chosen. Some signs only require one hand, and in others one hand takes the lead. Signalong says that it doesn't matter which hand you choose, but you must be consistent. The people who need sign support for their communication may have difficulty in concentrating. If you keep swapping hands they may become confused, and communication breaks down.
 2. The handshape will be given. Signalong has identified 26 ways in which a handshape can be described. The British Deaf Association Dictionary has a highly technical way of labelling the handshapes, but we use ordinary terminology (e.g. "flat hand", "bunched hand", "C hand" etc.).
 3. The orientation of the hand will be given. Signalong users are asked to remember that palms face, and hands point. The instruction will be given in that order. It doesn't matter what the handshape is, if the book says "working closed hand, palm forward, pointing in", it means that the palm is facing away from the body towards the front (even though you can't see the palm) and if the hand were flat the fingers would point across the body, even though the fingers are curled over in the closed handshape.
 4. Any movement will be described. This could be a direct movement, a broken movement, a movement which changes direction, or circling. The diagrams which accompany the signs are very useful here - please remember that you should read the instructions and look at the diagram.
 5. The placement of the sign will be given. When signing, you should perform nearly all of the signs within an imaginary frame, which extends from the waist to just above the head and across the width of the shoulders. This enables the watcher to concentrate not only on the hands, but also on the other vital clues - facial expression, body language, tone of voice. Some signs may go outside the frame, often for emphasis.
 6. Sometimes both hands will be brought together to form a combined shape, called a "formation" in the instructions. These will then move together to perform the sign.
 7. Once the description has been formulated, a line drawing will be produced. We use line drawings because they can be produced without clutter, unlike photographs and more elaborate drawings. The artist focuses on the essentials of the sign - including facial expression and body posture where relevant. Our artists depict the signs with a variety of characters showing different ethnic types, ages and genders so nobody need feel left out.
- Once you have mastered the descriptions and the drawings, you can then select the signs that you need from whichever manuals they appear in (find them using the Global Index).
- Please remember that Signalong is a sign-supporting system, which requires you to speak as you sign. Use simplified language, but speak in grammatical language. Signalong is not intended to replace speech! Short sentences are much more easily understood than long and complex ones.
- Please remember also that Signalong is a total communication system, in which you give every clue to meaning which is relevant in the situation. While signing, always remember to use body language, facial expression and voice tone to reinforce the message.
- Don't forget that you are using Signalong because the person you are communicating with has difficulties. Don't flood them with language, whether in speech or in sign. Give them time to process the thought, and time to respond. Very few of us are signing experts. Try to produce signs as accurately as you can, but accept whatever efforts are made to communicate with you. Don't demotivate the other person by insisting on a correct performance. In the end, it doesn't matter if the signs aren't perfect - effective communication is what we want.

Sharing Good Practice



There are very few schools like Snowflake, our Applied Behaviour Analysis/Verbal Behaviour programme is becoming more widely known as a successful approach to teaching and learning for children with Autism.

One of snowflakes guiding principles is to share our practice with others and to establish an educational culture of 'open classrooms' as a basis for sharing best practice within and between schools. We are committed therefore to establish links with external agencies and schools in order to do this.

Over the course of the last two years our senior staff have visited schools to make observations and we have reciprocated by enabling colleagues from other settings to visit us. We have also engaged with groups of parents hoping to establish new schools. We have had visits and consultations from parents from Wales, Scotland, London, Leeds, Berkshire and Wolverhampton.

In the New Year we are looking for-

ward to taking part in the Erasmus Project which is a European Community funded project to enable colleagues from schools in Slovenia to spend two weeks at snowflake learning from our practice.

In this Autumn Term we were delighted to welcome Christine Brown who is the Regional Education Officer of the US State department. Christine was able to signpost us to The Lighthouse School in the Netherlands, a source of good practice in Information Technology.

It is important that a small special school like ours does not become an 'island' and we are mindful of the need to create and maintain links with mainstream schools. We are fortunate to have a link with St Barnabus School locally and this has enabled one or two of our pupils to experience attending sessions in a mainstream school.

We have also enthusiastically accepted Flavia Capoano from an Italian University on a 6 month internship; you can read more about Flavia elsewhere in

this newsletter. In January we will begin a partnership with London South Bank University in which we will provide placements to two psychology students who are Registered Behaviour Technicians.

These initiatives are all aimed at improving our practice and enabling our staff to improve their knowledge, skills and experience. We do this in the confidence that enabling staff to do well leads on to children doing well and continuing to make outstanding progress; our ultimate goal!



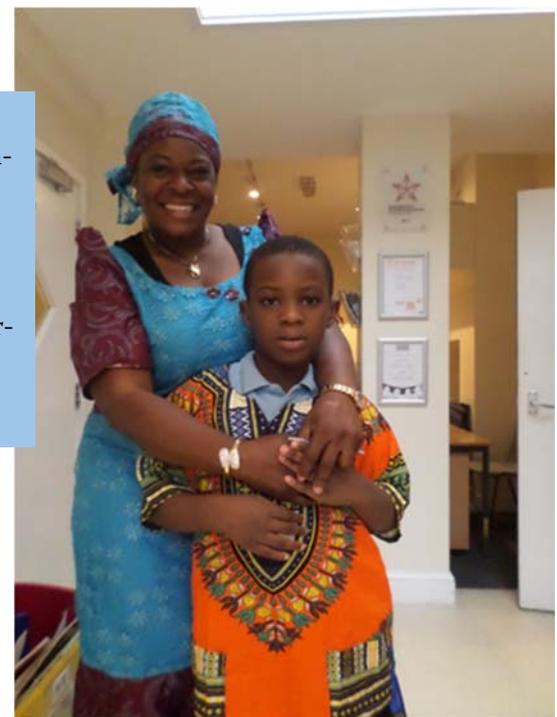
The children all made decorations for our Christmas Tree
Here is Husayn showing them off

International Week

Snowflake School celebrated international week between 30th November and 4th December. This was a great week as it allowed our staff and children to learn about different

cultures and countries. We dressed up, did lots of activities such as dance, cooking and tried lots of delicious food.

Mayowa and his mum Kemi in traditional dress
Kemi and other parents sent in food to enjoy during International Week



Find more photos in our International week colour supplement

From the Headteacher



We are reaching the end of the 2015 academic year and Snowflake School continues to thrive. Children are continuing to make outstanding progress and the staff team are constantly building their knowledge and skills.

We have been accepted onto the Secretary of State for Education's Section 41 list of approved Independent schools. This gives us a legal status which compels local authorities to place children at our school if our school is named on an Education Health and Care Plan by parents and there is space available. We predicted that inclusion on the Section 41 list was likely to lead to an increased demand for placements and we are beginning to see this. We have a distinct ABA/VB curriculum which is proven to enable children to make progress. More and more parents are expressing their intent to choose Snowflake with a large proportion of these being parents of children aged 4 to 6. In recent weeks we have received referrals from 3 local authorities, that have never placed children with us before.

Over the coming months we will hopefully secure suitable premises that will allow us to provide an improved learning environment and extend the number of places that we can offer to meet anticipated demand. We are working very hard to achieve this.

I am delighted to inform you that Jamey Henderson has been promoted to the position of Assistant Head. A key role of the new Assistant Head of School post will be to work alongside me to focus upon meeting regulatory standards and achieving the criteria for outstanding in the new Ofsted inspection framework. The Assistant Head will also play a key role in further developing greater challenge for our advanced learners.

It has been an enjoyable Autumn Term and some highlights that I would like to pick out are; Pupils attending an Autism friendly screening at Clapham Picture House, Transport for London leading training for pupils in how to safely access public transport; Karen Talty qualifying as a Team Teach Trainer; Tara Morgan being promoted to Supervisor; Parents joining us to celebrate Eid, Diwali and Thanksgiving; and International week – one whole week celebrating the diversity of the staff and children at Snowflake.

We are very fortunate as we are certainly are a League of Nations all working together with one aim – helping the children reach their full potential and hopefully improving the quality of family life. Thanks to all parents for your incredible support.

Wishing you all an enjoyable holiday

David

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Snowflake School for Children with Autism is administered and managed by the Board of Trustees.

- Faryaneh Akhavan
- Shahrokh Bagerzadeh
- Simon Cheetham
- Ardavan Farmanfarmaian
- Mahnaz Kamel



Next term we will be welcoming a new member to our leadership team. Tara Morgan will be working as an ABA/VB Supervisor. We look forward to her beginning this new post.

Another very exciting change will be to welcome Jamey Henderson to her new role of 'Assistant Head' we are all looking forward to the change in the roles and are confident that these are going to be fantastic changes for Snowflake School.

