

## SEN Newsletter

Welcome back, everyone, to our newsletter. We can't believe how quickly this half-term has flown by. The cold, grey days of winter are finally behind us, and now the lighter, warmer days are beginning to arrive. Flowers are blooming, spring is in the air, and hopefully we'll all see a little more sunshine.

In this issue, we'd love for you to get to know us better — who we are, what we enjoy, and what inspires us. We're also sharing some SEN-friendly Easter activities, along with helpful tips to support your children through the clock change and the upcoming Easter holidays.

### *Who are we?*

After working together for a few months, we would like you to get to know us a bit more.

#### HELEN

I've been a teacher for 35 years, and for the last 20 of those I've been lucky enough to call Lanterns my home. Over the years I've worked in a variety of roles, but my heart has always belonged to supporting children with special educational needs. I absolutely love my job—spending time with the children, playing, laughing, and sharing in the joy they bring is the best part of every day. I'm constantly learning, and I gain so much from the children and their families; it truly is a privilege to get to know you all. After a busy day, you'll usually find me unwinding in a relaxing bath with a good book. In my spare time I enjoy running (I would love to complete a half marathon), watching musicals, and baking—but most of all, I love spending time with my husband and our two daughters.

#### RAQUEL

Hi! I'm originally from a small city in Spain called Soria — and like any proud "Soriana," I can talk about my beautiful hometown for hours (and I usually do). When I was three, a dog bit me, and I spent years being absolutely terrified of them. Fast-forward to now, and I'm a fully converted dog lover with a yellow lab called Sira. She's four, she's adorable, and she makes my whole day better just by existing. I love acting and theatre, and I even performed in a Pantomime — which was as chaotic and wonderful as it sounds. I can't wait to get involved again. "Hamilton" and "Come From Away" are two of my all-time favourite musicals, and yes, I will sing along. I'm a big foodie and will happily try almost anything... as long as it's not too spicy. I'm also getting back into reading, so if you have any book recommendations, I'm all ears.

#### ANGELA

I'm Angela - I joined Lanterns in November 2025 to do administration for the SEND team. I've previously worked in European affairs for local government, managing finances for small arts organisations and running my own business repairing sewing machines! My two children are now in secondary school and, when I'm not being their taxi service, I spend my spare time sewing clothes and knitting.

## *How can I help my child regulate their emotions?*



At Lanterns we've been talking a lot about co-regulation and strategies to support children when they are feeling very big emotions. Supporting them can feel tricky, especially during busy times like Easter.

Here are some simple, effective strategies you can use at home:

### **Co-regulation**

Children learn to regulate by borrowing our calm. When they're overwhelmed, your steady presence helps their nervous system settle. Think of it as: "I'm calm, so you can be calm too." Before we intervene, we might need to step out, as long as your child is safe, for a minute to breathe and put ourselves together.

### **Get down to their level**

Physically lowering yourself helps your child feel safe and connected. Eye-level communication reduces pressure and makes it easier for them to tune in to you.

### **Name and validate their feelings**

Children often don't have the words for what's happening inside. You can help by gently naming it and saying: "I can see you're feeling frustrated." or "That was unexpected, it's ok to be upset."

Validation doesn't mean you agree with the behaviour; it simply tells them their feelings make sense.

### **Keep your language simple**

When emotions are high, the brain struggles to process lots of words. Short, calm phrases work best: "You're safe." "I'm here." "Let's breathe together."

Some children like you to hum or sing a song quietly.

### **Offer a simple next step**

Once they're calmer, guide them toward something regulating: A drink of water, cuddle, a sensory tool or a quiet space

Small steps help them move from "fight-or-flight" back into feeling grounded.

## *Breathing exercises*

We'd like to take a moment to talk about breathing, and how powerful deep breathing can be when we feel overwhelmed. Life gets so busy and full that we often rush from one task to the next without pausing to breathe deeply or give ourselves a moment of calm.

With that in mind, we want to share a few simple breathing ideas you can learn and practise with your children. If a child has never tried breathing exercises before, they're unlikely to follow your lead when they're upset. But when you introduce these techniques during calm, happy moments, they become familiar and comforting. The more you practise together when things are going well, the more likely your child will be able to use these skills when they really need them.

### **Blowing candles**

Hold up your hand and pretend your fingers are candles. Encourage your child to take a slow breath in and blow out ONE candle (finger) at a time, until you have folded down all five fingers. If they like it, you can repeat with the other hand.

### **Star Breathing**

Similar to "Blowing candles". First spread your fingers like a star, then trace up a finger encouraging your child to breathe in, and trace down the finger while breathing out. Repeat for all five points of your "star".

You might feel that some of these strategies are challenging, especially for younger children or for children with more complex needs. If that's the case, you can start by teaching them to breathe in through simple sensory cues. Encourage them to "smell" something pleasant — a real flower, a scented fake flower, some spices, or even a familiar toy with a gentle fragrance added.

To help them breathe out, you can use playful activities like blowing bubbles or blowing feathers into the air. These turn breathing practice into something fun and engaging, while still building the skills they need.



March 26

## *SEN-Friendly Easter Activities 2026*

We know two weeks off from school and nursery is going to be challenging for some of you, but here are some lovely activities you might be able to do.

Finkley Down Farm (Andover): SEND Early Bird Access Wed 8th April

<https://www.finkleydownfarm.co.uk/event/send-early-bird-access/>

Winchester Science Centre: Fully interactive, with sensory backpacks, ear defenders, and accessible exhibits, including the 'Let's Go Bunny Hunt' (March 14 - April 19). Quiet hours (13th April) sessions are designed as a sensory friendly time for families who need a quieter and calmer visit to the Science Centre.

<https://www.winchestersciencecentre.org/whats-on/quiet-hours-april>

Marwell Zoo: Offers expansive, quiet outdoor spaces and a "detective" egg trail to find the Easter thief.

Mary Rose Museum (Portsmouth): Relaxed Open Morning on March 26, 2026, with reduced noise and increased lighting. Thursday 26th Mar 2026, from 10:00 to 12:00

<https://maryrose.org/events/relaxed-opening-morning/>

Army Flying Museum: "Noise Off Mornings" on the last Monday of the month.

<https://armyflying.com/what-s-on/events/noise-off-morning/>

Thrive and wild: New soft play in Winchester also hosts "Calm sessions" On Wednesdays from 17:00.

<https://www.thriveandwild.co.uk/soft-play>

## *Dates for your diary*

Soon we will be sharing dates with you for our SOS Workshop and Makaton for parents. Just watch the space

## *Feedback*

We'd love to hear from you! If you have any questions, thoughts, or suggestions for future editions of this newsletter, please get in touch with Raquel at [r.andresgarcia@lanterns.hants.sch.uk](mailto:r.andresgarcia@lanterns.hants.sch.uk)

Your feedback helps us make each issue more useful and enjoyable for everyone.