

Sensory Inclusion Service Visual Impairment Newsletter

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Sensory Inclusion Service, Floor 6b, Darby House, Lawn Central, Telford, TF3 4JA

Zak Mason

Zakariah (Zak) Mason is a budding actor. Here he is in full costume with his parents when they all performed in 'A Christmas Carol' over six consecutive nights in December at the Attfield Theatre in Oswestry.

Zak played Tiny Tim in the family show, his dad played Bob Cratchit and mum played Belle.

The NODA (The National Operatic and Dramatic Association) representative who was present for the Thursday evening performance, gave an excellent review of the play, and further commented:

"The star of the evening however, has to go to 9-year-old Zakariah Mason for his cheeky portrayal of Tiny Tim and his confidence on stage as an actor."

Zak really loved the experience and is keen to do more.

Zak has a severe vision loss that affects his access to the curriculum and creates barriers to learning and social inclusion; however, he does not let this stand in the way of following his interests and dreams. He is a budding actor and apparently very talented. He recently undertook a LAMDA (London Academy of Music & Dramatic Art) Entry Level Award in Performance – Solo and achieved a Distinction with 90 out of 100 marks awarded.

He was also in the school Christmas play, taking a lead role as King Herod.

Zak has made a lot of progress in class this year; he is more engaged in lessons and uses his technology and equipment well. He is taking touch-typing lessons and is improving constantly.

We are bound to see more of Zak in the future. Everyone at SIS wishes him well in his ventures academically and with his amateur dramatics. Zak hopes to be an actor in future. Keep an eye out for him!



Living Skills Tip:

We will share a new tip every newsletter, today's tip is: How to use a simple device to help you pour hot or cold drinks. [Using a liquid level indicator](#)

Spec-tacular!



Like many of the children and young people we work with, Charlotte has nystagmus – her eyes can “wobble”, making things blurrier and harder to see.

Despite this, Charlotte is a very determined young lady and has always successfully taken part in all the activities in nursery. However, sometimes having to work so much harder than the other children to keep up because of her nystagmus could be frustrating for her.

Following a recent visit to the eye clinic, Charlotte was prescribed a pair of glasses and since then, as the saying goes, she hasn't looked back! Staff at nursery have noticed how much easier or quicker she is able to do some of the activities and she can sustain her play and exploration for longer.

Although glasses can't improve or cure nystagmus or many of the other visual conditions we see in children on our caseloads, children who have visual impairment may also have other eye conditions that glasses or sometimes contact lenses can help with. These include:

- seeing things close to better than far away, often called short sighted (myopic),
- seeing things far away better than close to, often called long sighted (hypermetropic)
- having astigmatism, where the shape of the eye is not an even, round surface like a soccer ball but more rugby ball shaped.

Any improvement in vision is worth pursuing so if your child has been prescribed glasses but is a reluctant wearer, please persevere. Contact your Teacher of the Visually Impaired for ideas on how to encourage glasses wear.

Happily, Charlotte didn't need any encouragement to wear hers and when I assessed her vision with her new glasses on, she could see a whole line better on the distance chart than before!



ICT Tip – Accessibility Settings on Apple Devices

Did you know you can change the size of text on your Apple device and also use a setting called “zoom” to further enlarge what is on your screen? You can turn the zoom accessibility feature by double tapping your screen with three fingers.

Check out Apple's website for more information:

[Zoom in on the iPhone screen – Apple Support \(UK\)](#)

Quick Easter Activity Tips:

If you are stuck for ideas for an Easter egg hunt for a child who has a visual impairment, have a look at this video from Guide Dogs UK:

[Easter Games & Activities for Parents of Visually Impaired Children](#)

Does your child like colouring but finds it hard to see or stay in the lines?

You can go over the lines in a colouring book with a black felt-tip pen so that they stand out more or there are specially made raised line colouring books that help keep the crayon inside the line like this one:

[Raised line colouring book](#)

Why not try using a scented marker so that they can smell each colour as they use it?

[Examples of scented markers](#)

Use Wiki-Stix (wax craft sticks) to create a shape to colour in:

[WikkiStix](#)

Want to bake a cake but don't have the time? Try Microwave Mug Cakes:

[Microwave Mug Cakes](#)

Messy play for children with low vision, how it helps and how to make your own salt dough (play-doh)

[Royal Blind Society Messy Play](#)



ICT Tip – Magnifier app on Windows Devices

Windows accessibility settings will allow you to change the size of text within all apps. Did you know you can use an app called “Magnifier” on your Windows device to further enlarge what is on your screen?



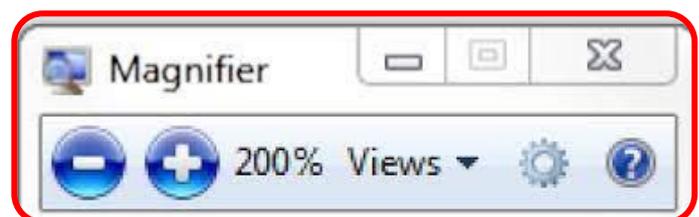
- This is the Windows button on your keyboard

Two shortcuts for Magnifier are

- Windows button and + turns it on
- Windows button and Esc turns it off

Check out Microsoft's website for more information on how to set it up:

[Use Magnifier to make things on the screen easier to see - Microsoft Support](#)



Kyle Thomas

This article is written by an inspirational young man called Kyle who is 14 years old. Kyle has cerebral palsy and a moderate vision impairment.

I attend Lakelands Academy, and am well supported by school who follow advice from the Sensory Inclusion Service. I enjoy school and have a lot of good friends. I am studying Drama, Music and Geography for my GCSEs. I am hoping for good grades because I am working hard.

My school enlarge my work to the correct font style and size. I have some support from a teaching assistant, although I am very independent. I had touch typing lessons when I was younger which I find very helpful to record my work.

In my spare time, I like singing. I also like swimming and I swam a mile in 2019.

I enjoy amateur dramatics too. Recently I had a speaking part in a school production 'Back to the 80's'. I was excited to be in the production, I like being an actor. The best part of the play was the fight scene where my character used karate to protect himself against the school bully. This scene was choreographed a few days before the first performance. We only had one rehearsal of the fight scene before opening night.

There were three showings of the play, which people paid to watch. It was a full house every night. Mum and dad went on the Friday night and they thought it was really good and they are proud of me.

At the beginning of March, I was involved in the Oswestry Youth Music Festival. I sang in three categories.

I sang 'The Impossible Dream' for the Musical Theatre category.

Fair sweet cruel for Own Choice and for the Easy Listening/Pop category I sang 'Cry me a River' – by Justin Timberlake. I was awarded a Distinction for that category.

The adjudicator told my tutor that I missed third place by one mark. I am pleased that I got Distinction, but a little gutted that I did not get third place, although I did get two accommodations, which is one below a distinction.

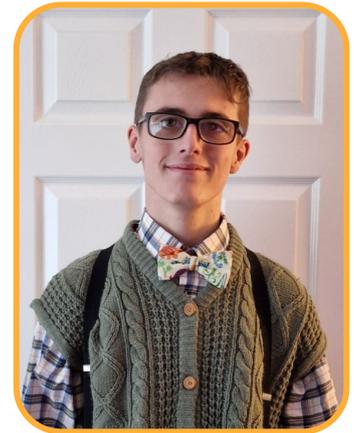


I won The Mayors award Oswestry Youth Music and received a trophy, this was for participating since 2016 and overcoming my diversity due to my disability.

I have always been told, 'If you believe in yourself you can do anything'. That's true because I do everything I want to do and don't let my physical disability or vision impairment hold me back. For a career I would like to be an actor or a singer.

SIS would like to thank Kyle for writing this article to show others what you can achieve if you put your mind to it. We can look forward to great things from him and wish him well with future productions.

By the time you read this article Kyle will have performed on the West End, in 'Trouble's A Brewin' in Shaftsbury Theatre London with The Pauline Quirk Academy (PQA). The photos are of Kyle's Mayors award, Kyle receiving the award from the Mayor and wearing the Mayors chain and him in costume for the play, 'Back to the 80's.'



Mason is in Year 10 at school and loves Engineering.



Mason started cycling in 2017 and continues to compete in solo competitions. For the last 12 months he has learnt the skill to ride a Tandem bike with a partner. He is supported by a pilot (who steers the bikes/eyes of the bike) Mason is the stoker who pedals at the back both team members work hard together to be in sync.

This sport takes dedication and concentration from Mason who with the help and support from his parents travels to parts of the UK at the weekends to train hard.

He has recently competed in British national championships for Velodrome.

Where he achieved both Silver and Bronze medals.

You can see Mason in action on YouTube British Cycling. He is an inspiring young man with big potential.

Goal: to be part of the Paralympics



Spotlight on a VI charity

There are many sources of support available regarding visual impairment for families and individuals but not all of them have the high profile of the better-known ones like Guide Dogs UK or RNIB. I want to share some of these in this and future newsletters.

The Sensory Inclusion Service (SIS) is not affiliated to any of these organisations in any way so please use discretion when giving personal details to any organisation.

In this newsletter I want to highlight the Nystagmus Network and Look.

Rob Tipton Lead QTVI SIS



They are a charity that aims to inform and support people who have nystagmus as well as raising awareness to others. They have a range of advice and information ranging from benefits to education support and also host virtual and in person get togethers.

Contact Details: <http://nystagmusnetwork.org>,

Email: info@nystagmusnet.org, Tel: 01427 718093

Look have a range of ways that they can help including:

Mentoring projects where young people with a VI can talk and share experiences with others who have the same or similar issues.

Events where VI young people, parents and families can meet up and make new friends. A help line and information. Education support. An accessible holiday flat in Scarborough for VI children and their families.

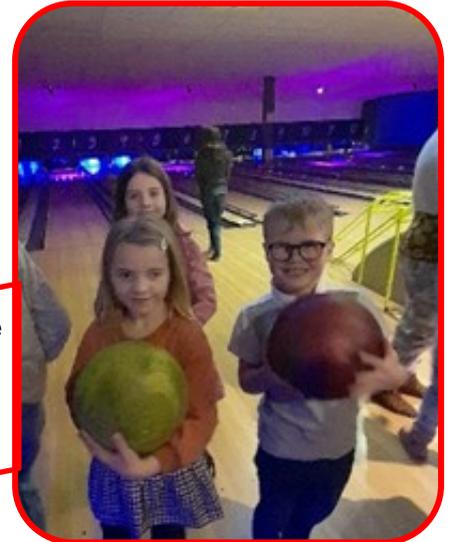
Contact Details; <http://www.look-uk.org>, Email: info@look-uk.org, Tel: 07464351958



Bowling Event



Phoebe and George Celebrating



Ella, Amelia and Charlie lifting bowling balls that are bigger than their heads!

The Sensory Inclusion Service organised a bowling event for up to 36 children and young people which took place on Friday 03 March at Tenpin Telford.

We welcomed children and young people who are supported by the team along with some of their brothers and sisters. The youngest participant was George who is only 2 years old!



Rowan and Corbyn having a strategy meeting.

The pins flew and there were many strikes achieved by the participants and some unfortunate misses (by a certain VI teacher who will remain nameless to hide his blushes), drinks and a meal were included.

The evening had been funded by The Shropshire and Mid Wales Head and Neck Charity, thanks go to Mr Bowyer who is the Chairperson and an ENT Consultant for making the evening possible.

It was great to see the children and young people enjoying themselves, making new friends, letting off steam and talking with others who also have needs due to their vision. Parents and carers also had a chance to talk and share their experiences with each other. Several approached us on the evening to say how they enjoyed the opportunity to meet parents in similar circumstances to them.

A big thank you to everyone who came and to Nichola Clarke (Social Inclusion Facilitator from the HI team) for organising it all.

Little Stars

If you would be interested in attending our Little Stars family group for a morning of fun activities, chance to chat and cups of tea please contact: louise.kitson@telford.gov.uk



Rob's Easter Message ...

Hello again, another term at an end, this year is speeding by.

The Easter break is often the first opportunity of the year to get out and about with your children, that is of course if the weather is kind! One idea that you may like to check out is an event being run by Guide Dogs. The North Wales Family Fun Day at Welsh Mountain Zoo. It is taking place on Saturday 1st April and is free for children with a vision impairment and one parent/guardian and just £5.00 each for immediate family members. For more information contact the Family Events Team via email on: familyevents@guidedogs.org.uk.

On the topic of events, following the success of the recent bowling night, we really want to arrange more events for children and young people and their parents to get together. Of course, these will be dependent on getting funding, but I would really love to hear from families about the sort of events you would like us to try to arrange. Anything from picnics or visits to social evenings and pamper parties - let me know your ideas and I will see if we can get one or more of our local charities to fund it.

After Easter we are approaching exam season, so many in year 11 and year 13 may be feeling stressed. For young people with a visual impairment this can be an even more challenging time. Part of our role in SIS is to make schools aware of the access arrangements that young people with visual impairment are entitled to and these will have been included in our annual reports we send to schools so that the exams officers can factor this into the type of papers ordered or the arrangements for extra time or equipment. If you have any queries, contact the teacher of the visually impaired who works with your child for more information.

I hope that you all have a great Easter break, try not to eat too many Easter eggs!

Rob Tipton Lead QTVI SIS

Local Offer for Special Educational Needs and Disability

Discover everything you need to know about education, health and care services in your local area for children and young people with SEND 0-25yrs at...

www.telfordsend.org.uk



Key features...

- Search for clear and accessible information, advice and sources of support.
- Explore leisure, fun and short breaks activities.
- Find out about specialist services and education health and care plans.
- Learn how schools support special educational needs.
- Use the interactive map showing what is available near to where you live.
- Have your say through our online feedback form.



www.telfordsend.org.uk

Need this in large print or Braille?

If you would like to receive this newsletter in Large Print or Braille, please email

**sendandinclusion
@telford.gov.uk**



Shropshire's SEND Local Offer is a single place for information and services for children and young people with special education needs and/or disabilities, their families and the practitioners who support them.

Take a look at the [SEND Family directory](#) for local events, groups and things to do. For news and updates please like and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Email: Local.Offer@shropshire.gov.uk Telephone: 0345 678 9063

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