

# Wednesday Whistle



In the twelve days since I last wrote to our parental community so much has happened, but in other ways so much remains unchanged! Our country lingers in a version of 'Lockdown', with no sign of this being lifted in the near future, and our Prime Minister has now been admitted to the Intensive Care Unit at St Thomas' hospital. Who could have predicted such a turn of events just a matter of one month ago! Strangely, we are now tasked with predicting how we are going to respond to the next wave of challenges that lie ahead over the next four months.

Your collective camaraderie has enabled us to rally around and support our communities by providing our version of Edu-care through two stages – one very school based, the second through a hub structure. We are now giving due thought and consideration as to how we shape our next model of Edu-care delivery for what could be a 14-week unbroken stint.

Our aim, of course, is to support the government strategy of preventing the spread of infection – keeping us safe, promotion of working from home wherever possible and recognising social distancing.

Whilst we plan the next phase of Edu-care we will continue to operate our current model of delivery until Friday 17th April. In doing so we should gain an understanding of how many vulnerable and frontline key worker children will require care post-Easter.

I'm taking the opportunity here to thank colleagues for their involvement and support of Edu-care whichever stand of activity that has been. Indeed, not everyone will readily recognise the different work streams that ensure we securely look after all of our children.

**Strand 1:** Face to face care for children on site.

**Strand 2:** Keeping in touch phone-calls with vulnerable children and liaison with LA's

**Strand 3:** E-learning and assessment for those children at home

In addition to these forward-facing strands there remains a busy and essential back-office function that keeps WeST working on a daily basis. Thank you to everyone – it is a colossal team effort!

I sign off by wishing everyone and their families a safe and peaceful Easter break – even if it is only an extended weekend.

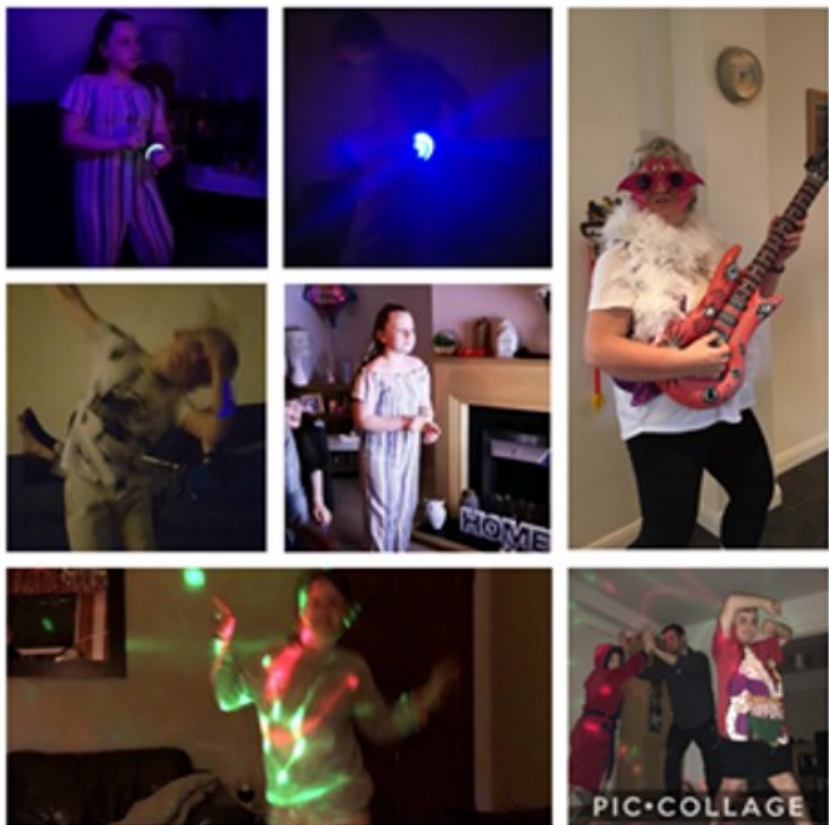
Best wishes,

Rob



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## FUN IDEAS FOR LEARNING AT HOME



Dunstone Primary School teachers and students have been working hard to keep the community spirit alive.

This week they have hosted a virtual disco to get everybody moving and to keep spirits high!

Dunstone has also created a fun art activity for its students to complete at home...

Look at the beautiful sunflowers below which the students have drawn.

Some Easter plans may be on hold for now but there is still lots of fun to be had from the safety of home.

Enjoy celebrating the Easter weekend with creative craft activities and games which can be found online.

Click here to [see](#) some ideas.



Do you have an exciting idea for learning at home?

To share your idea in the Wednesday Whistle please e-mail [admin@westst.org.uk](mailto:admin@westst.org.uk) with your ideas and photographs!

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## Working From Home

For many WeST colleagues the work environment has changed as they adapt to working from home and juggle competing demands. But do not fear, we've gathered up the top tips for working from home effectively so take a look and see what works for you...

### Working from home—Dos and don'ts

- **Do** get ready for the day as normal, wake up at your usual time, shower and put on appropriate clothes.
- **Do** create a dedicated workspace with to-do lists and calendars to keep you organised.
- **Do** take short screen breaks every 20 minutes as well as a lunch break, this will enable you to remain focused during working periods.
- **Do** create boundaries for family and enable them to differentiate between work time and home time (for example you may decide to wear your lanyard in work time).
- **Do** communicate with your manager, colleagues and team through phone calls and video calls—stay connected!
- **Do** prepare for backup plans! Your internet or computer may crash one day, be prepared for this and do not panic if it happens.
- **Don't** lose your routine—for example, waking up later and staying in your pajamas can decrease productivity and impact negatively on wellbeing.
- **Don't** work in a space where you become distracted and feel disorganised. For example, you may want to work in a space away from your children or you may want to declutter a particular area to work in.
- **Don't** stay stuck to your screen—move about often to keep you focused.
- **Don't** let the day slip away mixing work and personal commitments. It can be very challenging to do both and may be more effective to set specific times for your work and times for personal tasks.
- **Don't** be detached from your team as this can be detrimental to your wellbeing and work streams may overlap.
- **Don't** forget to keep your work safe. If you are working with confidential information make sure it is stored in a secure area, either digitally or physically.



You may have seen the recent guidance launched by the HR team regarding working from home and a checklist to complete in liaison with your line manager to ensure your wellbeing and arrangements. Please see the staff portal for further information.



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# Wednesday Whistle

## WORKING FROM HOME WITH CHILDREN YOUR GUIDE TO REMOTE WORKING WITH A FAMILY

Juggling work/life balance and the demands of a family has never been easy but in the current unprecedented circumstances it is more difficult than ever. Here are a few thoughts on getting through lockdown in one piece.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF ROUTINE

"Let what is irksome become habitual, no more will it trouble you." (Ovid)

Routine is an integral part of family life, so aim to establish a new schedule and stick to it as far as possible. This will normalise the new situation as much as it can be. If there are multiple adults in your family, consider sharing the workload in chunks of allocated time; this will give you all a portion of uninterrupted time. If this is not possible, try using absorbing activities, perhaps something which would normally be restricted (TV, a video game, a craft activity) to give yourself some breathing space.

As previously shared in our working from home guidance, if you have a defined working area, this will help provide separation from work and family responsibilities.

We all understand that these are really trying times; the most important thing is to be open with your manager about the problems you are facing.

### HOW WILL I KEEP MY CHILDREN OCCUPIED?

Your children's school will be a great source of resources and support during this time. Look at their website for links to activities and learning opportunities. Take some time to plan what the week will look like, perhaps on a Sunday afternoon with the whole family. Mix up the learning and fun and try to enjoy this opportunity to spend more time together.

## WHAT IF I AM FEELING OVERWHELMED?

Be kind to yourself. Any change situation is difficult to cope with, and this unplanned and open-ended situation is bound to be unsettling.

- **Keep in touch with your networks**, both work and social. It is likely your friends and colleagues will be finding this as difficult as you are. Perhaps you feel fine but can provide support to someone else.
- **Keep your manager in the loop**. The old saying 'a problem shared is a problem halved' may not always be true but if your manager is not aware of a problem, they can't make adjustments for it. Take advantage of the DAS Employee Assistance Programme on 0117 934 2121. This is open to you and members of your family. There is no limit on the number of calls and it is completely confidential.
- **Keep yourself well**. Prioritise your own physical health by taking regular exercise, eating and sleeping as well as possible. Try to minimise the things that cause you anxiety e.g. rolling news, social media.

## HOW CAN I PLAN FOR UNEXPECTED INTERRUPTIONS?

You can't! Children are children and will not grasp the importance of your conference call. We are all in similar circumstances, whether or not it is a child, a barking dog or the doorbell ringing. At a time like this we should all understand that everyone is doing their best in challenging circumstances.





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## NOTICE BOARD

### Vacancies

The following vacancies are currently being advertised within our organisation:

#### Oreston

- Class Teacher

<https://www.orestonacademy.com/current-vacancies/>

#### Plymstock School

- Head of Performing Arts
- Deputy Head—Pastoral
- Deputy Head—Teaching and Learning
- Teacher of Mathematics

<https://plymstockschool.org.uk/vacancies/>

#### Woodlands Park Primary

- Class Teacher

<https://www.woodlandspark.devon.sch.uk/vacancies>

#### Yealmpton Primary School

- Year 4 Teacher—temporary

<https://www.yealmpton-primary.devon.sch.uk/page/?title=Vacancies&pid=107>

#### Westcountry Schools Trust

- Premises Manager

<https://www.westst.org.uk/news/?pid=7&nid=2>

### Workout of the Week

#### Cosmic Kids

Need to break the day up with some calming mindfulness and yoga activities? Try out the cosmic



kids! These videos use stories that children know and love to engage them in activities that will promote physical activity and mindfulness.

[Take a look here](#)

### UPDATE FOR THOSE ENTERING CASUAL CLAIMS ON ITRENT (DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL)

When entering claims for a casual employees, please ensure you use Casual Claims or Casual Claims Miscellaneous Rate. You should not use Variable Hours, as these relate to employees who are specifically on variable hour contracts.

You should also make sure that if these are entered via Fast Input, the correct type is used.

Spine Point Claim should be used for Casual Claims. Hours/Session Claims should be used for Casual Claims Miscellaneous Rate.

When entering Casual Claims or Casual Claims Miscellaneous Rate, make sure the Holiday is entered in the same way.

This means for Casual Claims using Holiday Pay on Casual Claim, or for Casual Claims Miscellaneous Rate using Holiday Pay on Casual Claims Miscellaneous Rate. They should not be mixed.

If you know that you have already entered claims incorrectly for April, please email [payrollacademyteam-mailbox@devon.gov.uk](mailto:payrollacademyteam-mailbox@devon.gov.uk)