

Wednesday Whistle



We return from the Easter break to the new term in the middle of spring. The sun is shining, the blossom is out, and leaves are emerging on our trees. Whilst I specifically refer here to the season of spring, a suitable reference can also be made to re-growth and rejuvenation. Our schools have been closed, we have been directed to maintain social distancing and our country continues to fight the coronavirus. However, we seem to be on the cusp of turning the corner, we join together weekly to celebrate the magnificent work of the NHS and we are now starting to consider when and how we might reopen our schools.

During this extremely difficult and unprecedented time we are doing all we can to support key frontline workers in the fight against COVID-19, provide some form of home e-learning and most importantly do our best to help our most vulnerable children.

We must, however, look forward with optimism. Through these unforeseen circumstances we have shown a collective strength, resilience, a deep belief in what we do and a gritty determination to succeed. Above all we have pulled together as a team and supported each other when required. The possession of such qualities and collective camaraderie enable us to look forward with hope and confidence.

Having said this there is still much to do to meet the current challenge and I unashamedly draw attention to the three key stands of our current work:

- Strand 1:** Face-to-face care for children on site
- Strand 2:** Regular phone calls with vulnerable children and strong liaison with LA's
- Strand 3:** E-learning and assessment for those children at home

We are aware that those working on strand 2 activities are seeing an enhanced level of concern for our most vulnerable children and a heightened desire for them to

attend school. As such, we now expect the number of children attending WeST Edu-care on a daily basis to increase.

As signposted in last weeks 'Whistle' we will continue to operate and provide Edu-care through the current hub structure, with additional capacity now provided through the reopening of Plympton St Maurice, until at least Friday 24th April. This remains under review.

In reinforcing the view to the future I am delighted to celebrate some leadership appointments that have been made over the last few weeks:

- Kevin Dyke has been appointed as the Headteacher of Coombe Dean School with effect from 1st September 2020.
- Jen Veale, currently an experienced Headteacher in Somerset, has been appointed as the Executive Principal of South Dartmoor Community College and The Atrium Studio School from the start of the autumn term.
- Chris Rickard has been appointed as the new Head of School of Holbeton Primary School and will take up post from 1st September 2020.
- Kate Patrick has been successfully appointed as the new Headteacher of Woodford Primary School with effect from 1st September 2020.

The news of Kate's successful appointment means that we are now seeking to recruit a new Headteacher for Dunstone Primary School. This is an extremely exciting opportunity to lead this wonderful school. For more information regarding this vacancy please do read the application pack which will be attached to the Wednesday Whistle e-mail.



With best wishes,

Rob



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10 tips to help if you are worried about coronavirus

As life has changed for most during the current coronavirus outbreak, many people may be experiencing feelings of anxiety, stress, worry, sadness and frustration. It is important to remember that it is okay to have these feelings and they will pass. In the meantime the NHS Every Mind Matters page has shared a list of 10 tips to help with these feelings. The full list along with extra resources and helpful information can be found [here](#).

1) Stay connected with people

Maintaining healthy relationships with people we trust is important for our mental wellbeing, so think about how you can stay in touch with friends and family while needing to stay at home. You could try phone calls, video calls or social media instead of meeting in person – whether it's with people you normally see often or connecting with old friends.

2) Talk about your worries

It's normal to feel a bit worried, scared or helpless about the current situation. Remember: it is OK to share your concerns with others you trust – and doing so may help them too. If you cannot speak to someone you know or if doing so has not helped, there are plenty of helplines you can try instead.

3) Support and help others

Helping someone else can benefit you as well as them, so try to be a little more understanding of other people's concerns, worries or behaviours at this time.

Try to think of things you can do to help those around you. Is there a friend or family member nearby you could message?

4) Feel prepared

If you have not already, you might want to talk with your employer, understand your sick pay and benefits rights, and get hold of some essentials for while you are at home.

You could also think about who you can get help from locally – as well as people you know, lots of local and community help groups are being set up. Try to remember this disruption should only be temporary.

5) Look after your body

Our physical health has a big impact on how we feel. At times like these, it can be easy to fall into unhealthy patterns of behaviour that end up making you feel worse. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, drink enough water and exercise regularly. Avoid smoking and try not to drink too much alcohol.

6) Stick to the facts

Find a credible source you can trust – such as GOV.UK or the NHS website – and fact-check information you get from news-feeds, social media or other people.

Think about how possibly inaccurate information could affect others too. Try not to share information without fact-checking against credible sources.

7) Stay on top of difficult feelings

Concern about the coronavirus outbreak is perfectly normal. However, some people may experience intense anxiety that can affect their daily life.

Try to focus on the things you can control, such as your behaviour, who you speak to, and where and how often you get information.

8) Do things you enjoy

If we are feeling worried, anxious or low, we might stop doing things we usually enjoy. Focusing on your favourite hobby, relaxing indoors or connecting with others can help with anxious thoughts and feelings.

If you cannot do the things you normally enjoy because you are staying at home, think about how you could adapt them, or try something new.

9) Focus on the present

Focusing on the present, rather than worrying about the future, can help with difficult emotions and improve our wellbeing. Relaxation techniques can also help some people deal with feelings of anxiety, or you could try our mindful breathing video.

10) Look after your sleep

Good-quality sleep makes a big difference to how we feel mentally and physically, so it is important to get enough.

Try to maintain regular sleeping patterns and keep up good sleep hygiene practices – like avoiding screens before bed, cutting back on caffeine and creating a restful environment.



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Devon County Council has released guidance on how to report COVID-19 related absence. New codes have been created for when you are submitting absence information. These are as below:

Sickness Reasons:

- **COVID-19 Diagnosed:** This is to be used for employees who have tested positive for Coronavirus and are unable to work for this reason – either in the workplace or from home.
- **COVID-19 Suspected:** This is to be used for employees who are displaying symptoms for Coronavirus and are unable to work for this reason – either in the workplace or from home.

Paid Special Leave Reasons:

- **COVID-19 Vulnerable:** This is to be used for employees who are unable to attend the workplace due to being in a high-risk group. High risk groups are as follows:
 - Are 70 or older
 - Are pregnant
 - Have a condition that may increase their risk from COVID-19. More information can be found at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/advice-for-people-at-high-risk/>
 - This category is also to be used for employees who live with and/or have caring responsibilities for people in the vulnerable/at risk groups.
- **COVID-19 Unable to work:** If they are unable to work from home but also cannot attend the workplace.

The previous 'self-isolation' code has been renamed to 'COVID-19 Self Isolation' to ensure clarity and consistency.

Those who operate their Payroll through Devon County Council are the following Business Units:

- Coombe Dean School
- Heles School
- Ivybridge Community College
- Sherford Vale School
- Stowford School
- Plymstock School
- Wembury Primary School
- Woodlands Park Primary School
- Yealmpton Primary School

Devon County Council are now all working from home but their usual communication systems are still available, including telephone numbers. Please do not post to their address.

It is also recommended that links to the online forms are saved to your local area to ensure you are using the right area of iTrent. These links can be found below:

- iTrent/People Manager: https://ce0295li.webitrent.com/ce0295li_web/wrd/run/etadm001gf.open
- Employee Self Service: https://ce0295li.webitrent.com/ce0295li_ess/ess/#/login

Please do not hesitate to get into contact with the HR Team on HR@westst.org.uk for further information.

DELTA Shared Services has released information on how to report COVID-19 related absence. DELTA have asked that you continue to use the same absence spreadsheet as you have done in the past, using the two below points for those who have a COVID-19 related absence.

Sickness Reasons:

- **COVID-19:** This is to be used for employees who have tested positive for Coronavirus and are unable to work for this reason – either in the workplace or from home.
- **Self-Isolation:** This is to be used for employees who are displaying symptoms of Coronavirus and are unable to work for this reason – either in the workplace or from home.

When submitting this data to DELTA, please ensure that the following information is included on the Absence Spreadsheet:

- Name
- Payroll number
- Absence reason – one of the two above
- Date of the absence

Business Units that operate their payroll through DELTA Shared Services are the following:

- Oreston Community Academy
- Dunstone Primary School
- Chaddlewood Primary School
- Boringdon Primary School
- Plympton St Maurice Primary School
- Glen Park Primary School
- Woodford Primary School
- South Dartmoor Community College
- Ashburton Primary School
- Buckfastleigh Primary School
- The Atrium

DELTA have stated that their absence spread sheet is due to be updated and will inform us of changes once this happens. Until then, please continue to report absence as you usually would, incorporating the information above. DELTA have also stated that those who are working from home do not need to be submitted through the spread sheet.

Please do not hesitate to get into contact with the HR Team on HR@westst.org.uk for further information.

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CHANGES TO DBS ID CHECKING IN CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK:

As you are aware, when checking DBS ID in normal circumstances, you should be checking the physical documentation to check for indicators of fraud.

However, as of March 24 2020, due to the Coronavirus outbreak, it is not possible to do this. The Government has released guidance that states you can do either of the below points when carrying out this check whilst the schools are shut:

- ID documents to be viewed in a video link such as Microsoft Teams, Skype or Zoom.
- Scanned images to be used in advance of the DBS check being submitted

It is important to notice however, that the original documentation must be presented by the individual when they first attend their employment/volunteering. For more information regarding this, please visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/covid-19-changes-to-dbs-id-checking-guidelines>

All information correct as at 02/04/2020

CHANGES TO RIGHT TO WORK ID CHECKING IN CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK:

There has also been further guidance released from the Government in terms of checking Right to Work documentation. The following points below can be used when checking Right to Work documentation throughout the closure of schools during the Coronavirus outbreak:

- Checks can now be carried out over video calls – this could be part of the interview process, as it would be under any normal circumstances and scanned documents or photographs of documents should be sent via email or mobile
- Employers should use the Employer Checking Service if a prospective or existing employee cannot provide any of the accepted documents. More information regarding this can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/employee-immigration-employment-status>
- IF the worker has a current Biometric Residence Permit or Biometric Residence Card or status under the EU Settlement Scheme, you can use the online Right to Work checking service whilst on a video call. It is essential to receive consent from the applicant. Further information about this can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/view-right-to-work> and <https://www.gov.uk/prove-right-to-work>

How should the Right to Work documents be checked?

Individuals should submit a scanned copy or photograph of their checks via email and this should be used to cross reference when they display their documentation via camera. Before the COVID-19 outbreak, you should have been stating 'Original documentation seen on [date] by [name]' and signing this alongside a date stamp. However, this has temporarily changed to "Adjusted check undertaken on [date] due to COVID-19"

What if somebody cannot show their Right to Work documents?

You must contact the Home Office Employer Checking Service. If the person has a right to work, the Employer Checking Service will send you a 'Positive Verification Notice'. This provides you with a statutory excuse for 6 months from the date in the notice. More information regarding this can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/employee-immigration-employment-status>

How long should I carry out Right to Work checks like this?

A definitive date will be released in advance. After this date, you should revert back to carrying out Right to Work checks in the usual way.

It is important to notice that those who have had a Right to Work check conducted under these conditions, you will need to carry out retrospective checks, including those who are current employees who need their Right to Work check updating. This retrospective check must be carried out within 8 weeks of the COVID-19 measures ending. Both checks will need to be retained.

In this case, you would need to state "the individual's contract commenced on [insert date]. The prescribed right to work check was undertaken on [insert date] due to COVID-19" on their check.

What if it becomes apparent that the employee does not have the Right to Work in the UK when carrying out the retrospective check?

If, at the point of carrying out the retrospective check, you find your employee does not have permission to be in the UK you must end their employment.

How would this information reflect in the Single Central Record?

Similar to recording the Right to Work check documentation, both pieces of evidence would need to be retained, detailing the dates in which both of the checks were carried out.

All information correct as at 02/04/2020



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NOTICE BOARD

Vacancies

The following vacancies are currently being advertised within our organisation:

Chaddlewood Primary School

- Site Caretaker
- 2 x Cleaners

https://www.chaddlewood-primary.plymouth.sch.uk/web-pre-sent_vacancies_and_application_forms/45730

Dunstone Primary School

- Headteacher (internal recruitment)

Please find recruitment pack attached to e-mail.

Plymstock School

- Head of Performing Arts

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

Woodlands Park Primary

- Class Teacher

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

Westcountry Schools Trust

- Premises Manager

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

Workout of the Week

Te4ch Active

Teach Active helps teachers (and now parents) to teach their children subjects like English and Maths us-



ing physical activity. This can be a great way to engage children in learning subjects in a new and different way. [Go to the website to get your free resources and lesson ideas.](#)



Recovery of benefit overpayments suspended by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the DWP has temporarily paused the recovery of benefit overpayments, including Direct Earning Attachments. Therefore staff with deductions being made from their pay will see these temporarily suspended with effect from this month.

Please refer to the following DWP webpage for more information: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/recovery-of-benefit-overpayment-suspended>



Department for Work & Pensions