

Wednesday Whistle



Welcome back to what would normally be recognised as teaching term 6. I know, though, that in reality there hasn't been a noticeable break of any description since the half term holiday in February. We have been extremely busy in one form or another through both the Easter period and the Whitsun period that has just gone.

We look forward, however, with optimism. We look forward to welcoming more children back into our primary schools from Monday 8th June and Year 10 and 12 students back into secondary schools from Monday 15th June. We can also be optimistic because of what we have achieved. We have provided 'Educare' to those families that really need it, been resolute on checking and supporting the most vulnerable, ensured that families have been in receipt of food or vouchers as appropriate and adapted swiftly to a supported form of e-learning.

In addition to these forward facing activities I know that many colleagues have managed to engage in online professional development, participated in webinars and partaken in coaching conversations.

When we finally get a moment to step back and reflect on the last 12 weeks we will see that across a spectrum of activities we have collectively risen to the challenge of supporting our children, colleagues and communities through unprecedented times.

We now take our next steps forward in a safe and measured way. In the coming weeks, whilst our schools will have more staff and children on site, they will look and feel different. Measures taken to support effective social distancing will mean that day to day operations in schools will be different and the normal ambience will have changed. However, the early signs from other schools that have opened ahead of us are positive and that staff and children alike have adjusted quickly.

It could be said that as we reopen more widely each WeST school has within it four mini-schools.

Mini-school 1: Educare. This is now well established and is supporting significantly increased numbers

Mini-school 2: Vulnerable children. It is crucial that this team of staff continue to keep in regular contact and support our most vulnerable children. The phone calls, external agency liaison and home visits are of utmost importance.

Mini-school 3: E-learning will be the core vehicle of delivery for the vast majority of our children for some time.

Mini-school 4: Curriculum delivery for those year groups invited to return to school.

The combination of these four strands of activity will bring pressure to bear on both our site capacity but also that of staff. Thoughtful planning and good communication will go some way to easing the burden. I suspect that as demand rises, and parental confidence in our schools being safe increases, we will face difficult decisions around our capacity to provide Educare. We will have to prioritise places to those that are most vulnerable and where using Educare really is a last resort after all other avenues have been exhausted.

I wish to signpost HR advice and guidance that is offered later in this edition of the 'Whistle'. Specifically, can you please take a moment to participate in the staff survey – I'm assured this will only take a few minutes.

I close with saying what a pleasure it was to visit Yealmpton Primary School last week to see its new outdoor learning facility being constructed. A massive thank you to Lyneham Estate for their generous sponsorship and making this transformation of the grounds possible.

Thank you for all that you are doing and good luck for the term ahead!

Best wishes,

Rob Haring

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Have Your Say....

A staff survey following the pandemic & shaping next steps.

WeST has developed a specific staff survey for all colleagues to gather feedback and input to help shape future plans as we expand our educational provision over the coming months. The survey opens today and will be available for 1 week, closing Wednesday 10th June. The short survey has 11 questions to share your perspective. You can access this link on any internet enabled device or use the QR code below. Results will be anonymous and reviewed centrally by the Executive Team. A summary of the results will be published in future editions of the Wednesday Whistle.

To complete your survey: [click here](#) or scan this QR code:



So grab a coffee and have your say!

NASUWT – The Teachers Union

Your employer WeST meet with your trade unions termly and NASUWT have found this to be positive for our members. So that we can faithfully represent your points of view ideally NASUWT would have at least one rep in each workplace. We would also like a primary and secondary representative to attend trust level meetings with your regional representatives. If you are interested in joining our team of workplace representatives or would like to find out more please contact me (David Whitworth) at rc-southwest@mail.nasuwt.org.uk or call me on 07920331655.

For employment related support please contact your workplace representative if possible or email us at advice@mail.nasuwt.org.uk .



WESTCOUNTRY
SCHOOLS TRUST

Wednesday Whistle

Reading Students Raise Money for Charity



At Ivybridge Community College, the Learning Resource Centre raises money every year for various charities through book sales and 'readathons'. This year is turning out a little differently, however, they still wanted to organise some fundraising, especially as they have so many keen Year 7 students who would otherwise miss out.

Holly Trafford, Learning Resource Centre Assistant Coordinator, writes, "One of our favourite charities is **Read for Good**. They supply children in hospitals with great new reading books and fantastic storytellers. A £50 donation will buy one trolley filled with wonderful new reading materials for the children, which I'm sure you agree is needed now more than ever.

This year we're taking part in the '2.6 challenge'! But rather than doing a sporty challenge, we're doing a 'reading challenge'.

Our challenge is to read for 26 minutes straight, no distractions, and see how many pages you can read. Once you've read, please donate using our fundraising page (below) and then nominate other people to do the same, either friends or family!

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/ivybridge-community-college-lrcs-26-challenge>

Amazingly, with the help of students and staff we've already raised £300, enough for six trolleys of books!

But we'd love to raise more, so for as long as we're in lockdown we will be running this charity challenge. So we nominate YOU to read, donate, and nominate to help children in hospitals enjoy reading as much as we do!"



Yealmpton Primary School Wildlife Pond



Ponds are full of intrigue and drama.

Over the half term holidays, the Lyneham Estate constructed decking for Yealmpton Primary around their existing pond as part of their community funding work. They also planted some blossom trees, wildflower area, bird feeder, bug hotel and a hedgehog house. This pond project will help deliver all aspects of the curriculum in addition to science; from history to art, maths to PSHE.

This wildlife pond, along with the wildflower and herb gardens, will be a fantastic resource for the children to further their knowledge of the natural world. The school will be putting up signage made by the children during Wild Tribe sessions and developing trails around the grounds to capture imaginations and encourage enthusiasm for the wonderful world that is nature.



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Mental Health Awareness Week at The Learning Institute



During Mental Health Awareness week the focus was kindness. In light of this, the TLI put together daily tips, hints, wellbeing support and contact information for it's staff and students throughout the week. We also asked staff to share acts of kindness they knew about or had taken part in themselves.

We had some wonderful examples of kindness from the community which we are delighted to share and celebrate with you:

- Elly (TLI tutor) was making face masks for the staff at her mum's care home.
- A core team member was making care packages for a self-isolating elderly couple and added some extra treats including some home baking and flowers.
- A family in Debbie's (core team member) village decorated pebbles and added the wording 'consider yourself hugged' and left them in gardens for people to randomly find.
- Just before social distancing Tracey (course leader) participated in a sports challenge at her gym for CALM, a charity focused on mental health issues for men.
- A core team member knitted hearts for the ICU unit at Derriford, counselled young people in the area by phone and donated to the food bank.
- One of our tutors worked with Age UK, who are supplying postcards that can be put through letterboxes. People can contact Age UK if they need help. They are shopping for people in the local area. Their daughter has been offering free singing and guitar lessons to some children whose parents/carers have limited funds during the lockdown.



You can also take a look at a week's blog from one of our tutors and see what they got up to for Mental Health Awareness Week by following this link:

www.learninginstitute.co.uk/mhaw2020

Volunteers' Week 2020



This week (1st-7th June) people are joining together across the UK to say thank you for the contribution that millions of volunteers make across the UK.

Westcountry Schools Trust would like to acknowledge and celebrate all of the volunteers within our own community, including school governors and parent volunteers. Our volunteers are a big part of our school communities and we want to say a massive thank you for all the hard work that you put in.



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NOTICE BOARD

Vacancies

The following vacancies are currently being advertised within our organisation:

Chaddlewood Primary School

- 2 x Cleaners

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

Does your school have a vacancy which you would like to be advertised on this page?

E-mail the job vacancy details to admin@westst.org.uk to be featured.

Testing for Covid-19

Tests are now available for our staff and members of their household who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms and are self-isolating. A test will provide confirmation of whether symptoms are caused by the virus and will enable you to decide when you are well enough to return to work. Tests can be booked directly via the government's online system [here](#) and guidance on how to do this is provided [here](#).

In the first instance we would encourage you to book a test directly if you are able, however, as an employer we can also do this on your behalf if required. Please contact your manager or the HR Team should you require support to do this.



The popular mindfulness app "Headspace" is offering sign-up for education colleagues for a free 12-month period if you work in a UK school. Follow this link to complete the short ID verification process to set up your free account. <https://www.headspace.com/educators-covid-19>

What is mindfulness? Mindfulness is the ability to be present, to rest in the here and now, fully engaged with whatever we're doing in the moment.

Why not try it - you can start Headspace with no previous experience of mindfulness to meditation.

