



Welcome Back ... Again!

After 39 days of home learning we are pleased to be able to welcome all our learners back into schools again! It's safe to say we've missed you, and that a Zoom screen is nothing compared to having you back in the classroom.

The return of children to schools followed a spectacular effort with staff at Hugh Sexey, Fairlands, Nailsea, and Kings of Wessex Academies conducting more than 6000 lateral flow tests on returning learners - to ensure a safe return for all.

Our schools marked the children's return in a number of ways: at Wedmore there was a balloon arch and bubble machine welcoming children through the gates, meanwhile at East Brent children enjoyed an early break time on their first day so they could catch up on the vital social interaction they had missed over the last three months.

Across the Trust, any nerves the children had were soon overcome by the excitement of being back to normal and seeing friends and staff again, with parents commenting on how easy it had been to transition back to the school routine and praising schools for going "above and beyond" in helping children settle in quickly.

We continue to implement lots of safety measures across our schools to ensure children are kept safe - including frequent hand washing and cleaning of regular touch points, but more than anything it is wonderful to have everyone back.



Winner of Pre-School Dragon Competition Announced



Earlier this year we launched a competition to name our new pre-school mascot (pictured below) and following over 200 entries from children across the Trust, we were very excited this term to announce our winner as Year One student, Ebony from Weare First School. Ebony's chosen name was 'Ella' - selected by the mascot's designer, former Trust student, Jess Blacklock; and Ella will accompany promotional material for Trust Pre-Schools in the years ahead.

To celebrate Ebony's win, we presented her with a framed certificate, letter of congratulations from our Chief Executive Gavin Ball, and most importantly a box of chocolates! We hope that like us you can't wait to see Ella around our schools.

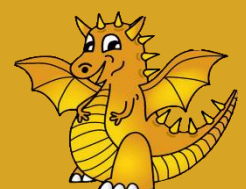
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Chief Executive's Message

As we approach the end of Term 4 here at the Wessex Learning Trust, I am delighted that this term has once again seen the return of our children to schools. Children are the lifeblood of our schools and the past few months without them have been strange, to say the least. Although we are not out of the woods yet in terms of overcoming COVID, having children back in school is a huge step towards normality, and something that we know will be great for all our children's development and progress. I would like to thank all our incredible staff who have worked so hard, both with virtual teaching, but also with getting schools ready to welcome learners back. This includes all the staff who were involved with our lateral flow testing programme, to whom we owe a huge debt of gratitude. Without everyone's input we would not be where we are today. Further to this, I must thank all the parents who have supported their child's learning over the last three months. We know how important your input has been, and we thank you for juggling everything to help keep children on track.

As you can see from everything in this term's newsletter, we have jumped straight back into doing what we do best - providing outstanding education and experiences for all our children, from two to nineteen. The amount that learners have already achieved since coming back is incredible, and I know that this will continue following the Easter break. I have been particularly excited to see what the children at Nailsea have been doing, since this term marks the first time they have been on site since joining the Trust!

I must also take this time to say we were very sad this term to say goodbye to our Chief Operating Officer, Keith Perry who has moved onto a new position in another school. Throughout his six years at the Trust he has supported us to achieve so many incredible things, and been an integral part of the team. We wish him all the best in his future endeavours. I would like to welcome Jane Hutton who has taken on the role of Acting Head of Operations in his place, and look forward to all she will bring to the role.

Thank you as ever for your continuing support, stay safe, and have a lovely Easter break!

A New Chapter for World Book Day

On the 4th March schools in the Trust marked World Book Day with their children, however this year - as with so much else - the usual celebrations, dressing up and activities had to take a new, COVID safe form, as schools were not yet open to all learners.

At Axbridge, children were invited to take part in an 'Extreme Reading Challenge', photographing themselves reading in the most unusual locations possible including in a tree or up some scaffolding. At Lympsham, vulnerable and critical worker children came into school dressed as their favourite characters and joined classmates on a fancy dress Zoom call to discuss their characters and best loved stories. Meanwhile, at East Brent they made characters out of vegetables and had a Zoom 'read-a-thon' where staff and students shared book recommendations. Weave children designed book covers for non-fiction books on topics that interested them, and at Cheddar there was a very special visitor for the children, as Peppa



Pig came to visit! Finally, at Fairlands staff and children dressed up in school and at home, and Year 8 learners came up with an idea for a competition, to create a book out of a toilet roll. There were more than 80 entries, from Paddington Bear (with suitcase and marmalade sandwiches) to Tom, with a winner and runner up being selected from each year group.

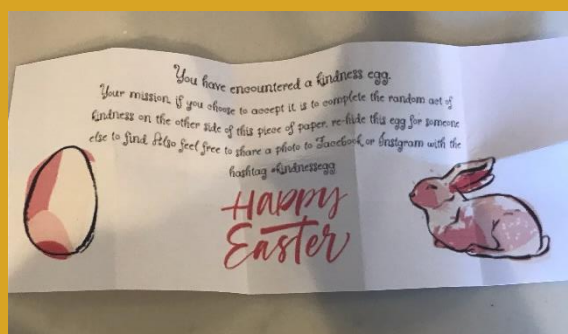
The importance of reading cannot be overstated, and we are proud that our schools managed to keep up celebrations despite the adversity of COVID.



Egg-straordinary Acts of Kindness

While home learning in March, Ruby – a Year 8 at Hugh Sexy Middle School – wanted to lift the spirits of those in her community during lockdown, so decided to leave some ‘Kindness Eggs’ in various locations around her village. She wanted to spread messages of positivity and encourage finders to do something nice for someone else. Ruby ordered twelve hollow plastic eggs and printed out a message to go inside each of them, saying: *“You have encountered a kindness egg. Your mission, if you choose to accept it, is to complete the random act of kindness on the other side of this piece of paper, then re-hide this egg for someone else to find”*. ‘Random act of kindness’ included ‘leave someone flowers’ or ‘write a letter of appreciation to someone you love’. After the placement of the twelve eggs, Ruby went on to discover the following day that all bar two had been found and taken to-be re-hidden. Realising the success of her initiative, Ruby was quick to order another twenty-four eggs; assembling them with further acts of kindness and placing them around the village, encouraging the good deeds to continue to proliferate.

We’re incredibly impressed by Ruby’s selfless work and believe she exemplifies the kind-spiritedness which we encourage in all our learners.



Police Horses Visit Fairlands

As the culmination of a recent scheme of work, Year 5 pupils at Fairlands Middle School were delighted to receive a visit this term from local PCSO Becky Smith, as well as two officers from the mounted division: PC’s Rowan and Tristan. The lucky pupils were introduced to horses Mike and Trinity and learned more about the role of the mounted police, their equipment, and what it takes to become a police officer. It’s safe to say the children really enjoyed the visit by the officers and learned some valuable information about the role of police within the community.

Science Week at Weare

Children at Weare First School enjoyed celebrating ‘Science Week’ earlier this term, with each class investigating a different area of science and innovation. As well as engaging in a range of practical experiments, children enjoyed watching videos from real scientists – some of whom were even Weare alumni! In reception, children practiced scientific observation skills using magnifying glasses to explore the insects outside; while in Year 1 they became meteorologists, making windsocks (pictured) and using a thermometer and rain gauge to collect data about the weather that week. The year ones also learned how climate change has meant it is much warmer now than 50 years ago, and what we can do to stop this continuing. Year 2 studied the importance of bees to the ecosystem, and Year 3 learnt about insects and how plants adapt to attract insects, culminating in the production of bug hotels to make sure the school insects would have a home. Finally, in Year 4 children considered how we could live on a new planet, as well as investigating chromatography and lava lamps.

It’s safe to say the week was a great success, with the children learning many amazing things and being inspired to get involved with science.





Getting Green at Draycott First School

The children in Goldfinch Class at Draycott and Rodney Stoke CE First School have returned to school with renewed interest in planting and growing. Supported by Mrs Zoe Amey, their Teaching Assistant, they have been planting seeds in the raised beds including beetroot, cabbages and carrots. They have also been growing sunflowers ready to plant out in the better weather. The children's interest came from an amaryllis which they grew before Christmas and caused lots of excitement each morning when they measured it.

The children's efforts will soon be a feature at the front of the school, so be sure to keep an eye out next time you're there to see what the children have been up to!



Putting the 'Fun' into Fundraising



The children at Shipham First School took part in a 'Nose and Spoon' relay race for Red Nose Day. As with the traditional egg and spoon race, the children had to balance their red nose on a spoon and make their way round the obstacle course as quickly as possible without dropping their nose. The children really enjoyed taking part and demonstrated excellent teamwork, raising an incredible £123 for Comic Relief!

Cooking up a Storm at Kings

Children at the Kings of Wessex haven't let virtual learning get them down! For Year 9 Food Prep and Nutrition students lockdown has seen them cooking delicious meals such as vegetable kebabs and broccoli pasta from their homes. Although lessons have been online this hasn't stopped students like Winnie mastering the skills of spiralsing courgettes or making a roux sauce. Winnie praised the school's online teaching, saying "I have so much fun, and learn new things every lesson!" Although we're glad to have learners back in school, it's great to see that success can still be had away from the classroom.



Bidding Thank You and Farewell to Retiring Reverend



The staff and students at Axbridge and Shipham First Schools are this term very sad to be saying farewell to their parish vicar, Rev. Tim Hawkins, as he retires from his role at Easter. Rev. Tim has been an integral part of the schools for many years and has done much to develop a family ethos and make everyone feel cared for. The children will very much miss his regular assemblies, full of wonderful stories and experiences, as well as being involved in his church services - particularly around times like Christmas.

The communities of both schools where Rev. Tim has worked would like to extend a huge thank you to Tim for his dedication to the schools and wish him a happy and fulfilled retirement.



Brent Knoll Gains Beautiful New Mural



The children at Brent Knoll Primary School have been treated to a beautiful new piece of art to brighten up their playground. The mural on the at the school was re-done by local artist, Freya Paige, to give the children an exciting new environment to enjoy. Freya even spent some time talking to children at the school about the piece and how she creates her murals. Safe to say, the work looks amazing and will be a striking feature for anyone visiting the school. You can watch the mural's creation, in a time-lapse filmed by Freya on her YouTube channel [here](#).

Eco-Warriors at Axbridge

Since returning to school, the children at Axbridge have been making the most of the spring weather by taking their learning outside! Having already earned their Bronze Eco-Schools Award, the children are now in the process of working towards their silver. To help them achieve this, children have this term begun developing a wildflower meadow at their school 'furlong', planting seeds and learning more about how plants grow. In addition to this, the school PTA have invited the children to take part in a sunflower growing competition, with entrants encouraged to enjoy the process of gardening and plant care. In the summer term the school plans to continue with this initiative with a dedicated 'Eco-Week' in school, as well as lots more outdoor learning in their newly re-developed Forest School!



An Update from the Leisure Centre

Success for Nailsea Autism Resource Base



While everyone at Kings Fitness and Leisure is counting down the days until the centre can re-open fully, the team are easing back into things with a range of Easter Sports Camps available for children aged 4 to 13 over the Easter break – the perfect thing to keep children active. In addition to these camps, the centre is running gymnastic and dance sessions for juniors, starting in April, with an offer of 'buy five, get five free' currently in place offering great value for you and your child.

For more information visit www.kingsfitness.co.uk

Following its launch in September, the Nailsea School Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Resource Base has been a huge success. The Base is for students with an ASD diagnosis and Education Health Care Plan to have an extended transition into secondary school life with them ultimately being able to successfully access the main school full time. The students are aided to develop their academic skills, as well as their communication, and thrive through small group teaching in their dedicated classroom space. The base has been praised by parents for providing learners with the support they need, and we for one can't wait to see their great work continuing.

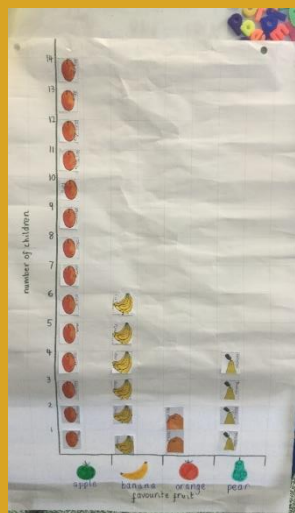




Kings Runs Wellbeing Event to Support Children in Lockdown

Before children were able to return earlier this month, pupils at the Kings of Wessex took part in a wellbeing event to promote mental health and mindfulness. With pupils working so hard online, the last afternoon of the term was reserved for pupils to engage in something different, learn new skills or take some time for reflection. There were a number of teacher led activities on offer including a cook-a-long, the chance to learn Tai Chi or contribute to 'Wessex Island Discs'. Other activities included taking a virtual tour of Berlin or Paris, meditation, a creative treasure hunt, producing a musical or dance number and more.

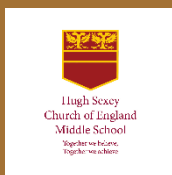
The school was incredibly proud to offer students these opportunities, as it recognises the toll that lockdown and home learning takes on all of us, and believes in not only nurturing learners academically, but also supporting them to become the best, most centred version of themselves that they can.



Census Sparks Creativity at Mark

As all of us completed our census' this term, the children at Mark were also getting to grips with surveys through the Office for National Statistics' 'Let's Count' project. The project sits alongside the national census in a bid to engage children with statistics and understand why we have census'. Each class in the school learnt about the census, what it is, why it's done and how the information is used, before undertaking a mini census in their classes. This project helped set the children's learning into context and supported their numeracy work on graphs, charts and data collecting.

Current Vacancies Across the Trust



Cleaner | Teacher of Business Studies | KS2 Assistant Head | KS3 Assistant Head | Admin Assistant

For more information on our vacancies, visit: www.wessexlearningtrust.co.uk/careers/current-vacancies

A Note from the Editor ...

I would just like to thank you for reading this edition of the Wessex Learning Trust newsletter - we are incredibly proud to be able to share with you everything that our amazing learners have been up to this term! We are also especially proud that this edition of the newsletter contains something from every school in the Trust - a testament to the exciting and vibrant community which exists in our schools.

We hope you've enjoyed reading the newsletter - please share it with family and friends who may be interested. We will look forward to bringing more news to you next term!

On behalf of everyone at the Wessex Learning Trust, I would like to wish you a safe and happy Easter break - we look forward to welcoming you back to school soon!

Our Academies will return on Monday 19th April 2021