

WESSEX WEEKLY SPECIAL

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www.wessexweb.org.uk - 20373 hits so far!!!



Q: Why did the chicken cross the playground ?



The Gardening Club's fantastic scarecrows
Titania and Bottom from 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'

This week:

School Closure update!!!, PE Week – can you help?, LOTS of event and term dates, and more.....

SOLAR PANEL ECO TICKER:

4816KWh of Electricity Produced

2745Kg of Carbon Dioxide saved



From the Head's Chair Special



.....**URGENT.....SCHOOL CLOSURE UPDATE.....URGENT.....**

Thank you to those of you who have contacted me since the letter I sent (dated 23rd April) regarding the planned building works at Wessex and the consequent impact on your children at the end of the Summer Term and the beginning of the Autumn Term. Please take the time to read this letter carefully as it contains important information regarding how I plan to proceed. I am very aware that the planned early closure and late opening has prompted many parents to have to re-think their plans for the Summer, causing inconvenience to many and difficulty to some. I hope the information below will give further clarification of what is involved as well as the challenges we face as a result.

As you will know from previous communications, our Lower School and Nursery buildings are due an extensive electrical re-wiring project and I have explained already the extent of the impact of such works. In parallel with this planned work, I have also explained that we are, as a school, finally in a position to develop our building with a new entrance hall and administrative offices, combined with a link between Upper School and Lower School. This project will serve a variety of purposes. It will provide a more centralised 'heart' to the school, ensure we are able to work with everyone more efficiently, finally bring the two 'old' Junior and Infant schools together and, as mentioned as a priority in the feedback from the parent questionnaire sent out last term, ensure we have a secure site.

I must take this opportunity to clarify a few points to counter some of the questions that I have been asked in order to ensure that the message is both consistent and clear. Many schools in the Local Authority have over the past few years reached the point where similar works are necessary. In ALL cases, the policy is to close early and open late, in order to allow completion of the works and preparation for the beginning of the new academic year. This decision is not taken lightly, and I have liaised with the local authority and school governors prior to seeking the permission for the proposed closure from the Director of Children's Services, which was duly granted. There is another, much smaller school in RBWM that is also undergoing a similar project with exactly the same time scales as in our case.

What I haven't mentioned previously is that a considerable factor which has contributed to our particular situation is that, due to the age of the buildings, there is a significant amount of asbestos incorporated within the buildings that needs to be removed safely prior to the commencement of any works. I didn't mention the asbestos element before as although it is completely safe in its current location, I did not want to cause parents any undue concern. However, I hope this explains why the proposed works can't just happen 'at weekends' as was proposed by several parents. Obviously I don't want any children, staff or parents anywhere near the school buildings whilst the specialist asbestos removal is taking place.

So, what am I going to do?

As promised, I have been working in close liaison with a variety of 'bodies and providers' to find a solution for the problem that faces all of us as a result of these works. I have

spoken to and had meetings with representatives and leaders of local secondary schools, the community centre, the local authority, local scout groups, marquee hire companies, councillors and cabinet members in order to try to offer options to you. As you will appreciate, this period of investigation has taken some time and to those families who feel that the notice is short, I will point out that I am tied to the time scales imposed upon me by the local authority and that I was able to give four weeks more notice of the intended closure than other (smaller) schools which have recently been through a similar process.

I need all of you to think very carefully about how you can help with the proposed works at Wessex. This work has been overdue for a number of years and in my opinion 'put off' for far too long. I want your children to have the best, safest, most effective environment in which to learn – which is perhaps why your children attend Wessex in the first place. It is time for an upgrade and I hope it will demonstrate the most exciting period for the school for many, many years.

After discussion I have agreed that the local authority will now provide storage containers and the services of a removals company to help us move packed boxes to storage and back to classrooms at the beginning and end of the Summer holiday. I do not want the company to do the packing, as I know this will affect the time needed to get the school ready in September – I DO NOT want to delay the start to the new year any further. This agreement will allow us to continue to use the Upper School building during the last week of term. Both Cox Green and Desborough Schools have kindly offered space in their schools, along with some support from their teachers as many of their pupils will have already 'broken up' for the Summer.

The Plan:

If you are unable to arrange childcare during the proposed school closure, I am very pleased to be able to offer 'business as usual' at Wessex. Depending on numbers, our Y5/6 children will spend their week at Cox Green School and the rest of the children will be based in the Upper School building, with our Nursery children in the main school hall. Whilst this is far from ideal, I am determined to offer solutions to any problem imposed upon our families and children by events beyond my control, but am equally determined to make any offer fairly to all families rather than just those who shout the loudest. What I must clarify is that every member of staff needed to teach children during that week will reduce our capacity to prepare the buildings for the works. If you are able to help in any way by volunteering your time, please indicate on the slip at the end of this edition of the Wessex Weekly. If you are able to make alternative arrangements for your children, ATTENDANCE RECORDS WILL NOT BE AFFECTED.

Once I have a final indication of the numbers of children in need, I will contact parents who require support with further details regarding times, places, lunches, where's, when's, etc.

So, What does this mean for you?

Summary:

This is not a perfect solution I know but I need to ensure what I firmly believe is best for the future of Wessex. I have had an equal number of comments which express understanding and support as I have concern about the impact of early school closure. If

it was down to others, we would close, full stop, no questions asked. However, I believe it is my duty and ambition to ensure we provide whatever we can for the benefit of our families, community and most importantly your children, however difficult or challenging. I appreciate the letter from a parent published in the Maidenhead Advertiser this week which recognises the efforts and improvements we have made to enhance communication with parents. I hope you will appreciate that this is a challenging situation for all of us. However uncomfortable in the short term, it will secure the long term future and benefit of the school.

I could argue that my hands are tied and I could argue that we follow Borough policy whatever the consequences for our children and families. I won't do that, as I feel strongly that I **MUST** try do what is right for the children, as the staff, governors and I always have as the highest priority at all times.

Please ensure you have let us know if you need support during the last week of term and return the reply slip below by the end of this term to enable us to plan effectively. INSET days will carry on as usual, as we need the time to continue school development issues also impacted by the school closure.

I have incorporated this letter into a special edition of the Wessex Weekly as I hope parents can trust that it is a regular and consistent source of information they can rely on, and therefore is more likely to give you the information you need most effectively.



From the Head's Chair (II)

RETURN OF THE CHAIR.....



I would like to begin this week by congratulating the children in Year 6 who have had an intensive week as they completed their end of Key Stage 2 tests (SATs). Everyone has worked really hard to ensure that the children were as prepared and relaxed as possible during what for some can be a stressful time. I know that every child did their very best and I am very proud of them for their confidence and determination. I would also like to say well done to our Year 2 children who have also been working hard on their teacher assessments during the past two weeks. They have again worked very hard and shown just what they are capable of. Well done children and thank you to the staff for all the support they have given the children.

A parent reminded this week that in last week's edition I had forgotten to feedback about the Year 1 visit to Tiggyswinkles Wildlife hospital. I didn't have to ask the teachers how the trip had been as I was treated to Blue class' assembly on Thursday which told us all about it! The children had obviously had a brilliant time and learned a great deal from the visit, both about lifecycles as well as the important work going on to look after and preserve our native wildlife. The children had crated artwork using pastels as well as lifelike collages of the hedgehogs they had seen using materials discovered in our school grounds. They explained that hedgehogs were nocturnal and that their spines are made from the same material as our finger nails. The children also taught me that you should never put out bread and milk for hedgehogs in the garden as they are allergic to the milk. Apparently pet food is a much preferred choice! They wrote instructions and made bread in our Lower School kitchen in the shape of a hedgehog which I must say went down very well with the parents who attended. Well done children and thank you Mrs Town for your super assembly!

The picture on this week's front cover shows the two scarecrows created for the competition I told you about last week at Hampton Court Palace. As you can see, they are very impressive and look forward to hearing how we fare. Well done Mrs Elliot, Mrs Palfrey and Mrs Piper for bringing the children's ideas 'to life' and thank you to Mrs Vee, Mrs Davies and Mrs Champion who helped the children finish them off!!

I would like to share a couple of 'not-so-good' news items with you this week. Firstly, I have had two further examples of inconsiderate parking reported to me this week by disgruntled parents. If your car is registered GM55 GME or R366FKK, please can I remind you to park either at the shops or around the corner when dropping off or collecting your children. Thank you. Secondly, I was very disappointed that Wessex joined the unfortunately ever growing number of schools and other public buildings to have the lead stolen from the roof. We have been paid two visits in the last week during which thieves have ripped out the lead flashings around our Upper School roof, breaking roof tiles in the process and causing approximately £3000 of damage. I would like to thank the neighbour in Powys Close who first reported seeing individuals loading up their van - in broad daylight last Friday evening! We do have the registration number and have reported it to the police. I cannot begin to express my anger and frustration that individuals pick on schools and cause this type of damage.....one day they might well have children of their own attending schools that are affected in the same way, and all for the sake of a few pounds of scrap metal! Grrrr!

On a more positive note, have you noticed the number of web hits in recent weeks? It continues to creep up and up and I hope very soon we will have hit the 20,000 mark. What an achievement in such a short space of time! Finally this week I have just been shown live images from the camera in the bird box on the side of the Upper School hall. For the first time (it's taken 2 years) we have a new brood of Blue Tit chicks in the nest - we think there a four of them, being visited by their doting parents. I intend to share the pictures and sound with the children during assemblies and have our very own 'Wessex Springwatch'. If any of you would like to see the pictures, we have a special TV set up in the Upper School hall. I guess the junk orchestra will have to play a little more quietly from now on!

Lots to think about this week I know - thank you for reading. Have a good weekend.

Nick Stevens
Headteacher

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Chicken Pox

There is a bout of Chicken Pox doing the rounds in school at the moment. If your child becomes ill with this virus it is imperative that you call the school to report it as we have a couple of children who are very vulnerable to the disease and we need to alert the families at the earliest possible time. Thank you.



Road Safety

We have received notification from the borough that Police will be arranging extra patrols to monitor parents using mobile phones whilst driving and children not wearing seatbelts in cars.

Free Lunches on Thursdays!!!

I am very pleased to inform you that we are able to offer each child at Wessex a free school meal this term and have organised the following dates:

Yellow and 30	20 th May	4E	17 th June	Orange and 3L	10 th June
4P	24 th June	5D	1 st July	5C	8 th July

6R and 6D 15th July (note change of date for 6R)

Children in these classes will still need to book a lunch on that day – they will just not have to pay for it!!! ENJOY!

PE Enrichment Week

We are running another of our popular and exciting specialist subject weeks from 24th - 27th May. The focus will be on all things PE and we wondered if there are any parents that would like to come into school to talk about a sport or do a demonstration or session – perhaps yoga or sailing or aerobics or boules or line dancing or French skipping? Please contact the school office if you are able to help. On **Thursday 27th May**, we will be holding a sports-themed mufti day where the children can come dressed in their favourite sporting outfit! (Mrs Cawte will ask Carlo Ancelotti if she can borrow the Premiership trophy and maybe the FA cup!!). We are asking for a donation of £1 on the day which will help go towards paying for the extra resources used during the week.



Some dates for your diary:

DATE	OCCASION	WHO?
19 th May – 21 st May	Y5 Residential trip to Hooke Court	Y5
24 th May – 28 th May	PE enrichment week	Whole school
Wednesday 26 th May	Yellow base assembly – 9.15am (note change of date)	All parents and carers of children in Yellow base.
Thursday 27 th May	Sporting mufti-day	Everyone
Thursday 27 th May	Foundation Stage Sponsored Wheelie	Nursery and Reception children
Thursday 27 th May	End of term 5 – 3.20pm	Everyone!
Friday 28 th May	Inset day – please don't send your children to school!	Everyone!
Monday 7 th June	Inset day – please don't send your children to school!	Everyone!
10 th and 11 th June	Class photos – remember the hairbrush!	Nursery – Y5
Thursday 10 th June	5C class assembly	All parents and carers of children in 5C.
Sunday 4 th July	PTA Summer Fair	Everyone!!!!
28 th June – 2 nd July	Y6 Residential trip to Kingswood	Y6
Friday 16 th July	End of term – usual time. (not 2pm)	All

TALKING HOMEWORK	THINKING SKILLS CHALLENGE
If you were a bird, what bird would you be and where would you go?	If a frog could talk, what questions would you ask it?

This Week's Requests...

- Flower pots of all sizes....especially small ones....for our gardening club and eco council.
- Wooden spoons to use as beaters for our junk orchestra (we need lots of them please!)
- Tesco (we are half way to our target!!), Sainsbury's, and Nestle Box Tops tokens! Please bring your tokens in to school and ask friends and neighbours to collect for us as well!
- Clothes which are no longer needed which have a variety of different fastenings for children who need practice with fine motor skills eg. zips, button holes, velcro, toggles, laces.

Caption competition

Each week we will publish a picture and would ask you to think of an apt/funny/appropriate caption. This week we are showing a famous double act (how topical!!). The winner (as judged by our un-bribable office ladies among others) will win either a free school meal or a free breakfast club place. Entries should be posted in the old 'Newsletter gaffs' box in the reception area outside the school office. The winner of last weeks picture (the food chain) is Holly Clarke with 'The shelf stacking work experience was not a great success' Come on everyone - start using those creative brains and get some captions in!



A: To get to the other slide!

SCHOOL CLOSURE – REQUEST FOR HELP

Dear Mr Stevens

Please can you arrange for my child to attend school during the week beginning the **19th July** as I am unable to make alternative arrangements at this time.

Child's Name: _____ Class: _____

Child's Name: _____ Class: _____

Child's Name: _____ Class: _____

Child's Name: _____ Class: _____

Signed: _____ Tel: _____

I am able to volunteer some time to help
pack up the school during the week beginning
12th July. (Please tick)

Thank you for returning this request as it will enable me to plan effectively, support families and children and hopefully cause as little disruption as possible. If you are able to offer a little of your time in the build up to the 'big move' that would be greatly appreciated!