

Spring Newsletter - March 2024



**Dorset**  
Studio School



**A unique setting for the study of  
Environmental Science**





### ► Message from the Principal

Dear Parent / Carer

I am delighted to welcome you to the Spring edition of our newsletter which comes, as you will see, with a Royal seal of approval! As ever, there has been a huge amount taking place, with our wonderful teaching staff availing themselves of myriad opportunities to truly make your child's learning come to life.

Our year 11 students are but days away from their final GCSE exams. They have been working and revising hard to ensure their best outcomes. We wish them all well over the coming weeks. Easter provides a fantastic opportunity for some focused revision. We would anticipate that students would complete a minimum of two hours daily. I'm sure they would value your support through the provision of a low stress environment centred on encouragement.

The summer term will be a busy time for the school. We will be launching our Facebook page shortly after Easter, are anticipating our OFSTED report a few weeks into term, it is likely that we will have joined the Wessex Multi Academy Trust



by the end of term, and the developments with the building project will be entering a busy planning phase.

I would like to thank the very many parents, carers and wider school community for the welcome support and good wishes during our recent inspection, and for your ongoing encouragement towards the continued development of this unique school.

With many good wishes for the Easter break and beyond

P A Green

Principal

### ► King Charles Hedge Laying

Logan H and Jack F were invited to take part in a National Hedgelaying Society competition hosted by King Charles on his main farm. It was top secret due to security so we couldn't say much until now. There were 40 entrants from across the UK of all ages, so the boys were incredibly fortunate to have been selected.

The King stipulated that the hedges had to be laid in Southern, Midlands or Welsh style and as Logan and Jack normally do Dorset Style they had to learn a new style as they did it. The boys did incredibly well, met and had a conversation



with the King and then were treated to soup and a Hog Roast afterwards.

It was a great day and King Charles was lovely and made some lovely comments about the boys' hedge. He also informed them that he himself had planted that hedge when he was younger - so they really were working on the King's hedge.

#### ► Humanities

### **Cost of Living Crisis...Not just a modern-day issue?**

Throughout history people have experienced financial hardship. They have tried to survive on 'starvation wages' and raise their families on 'shoe string budgets'. Whilst the nation tightens its purse strings and battles through the greatest cost of living crisis of a generation, it is only fitting that Dorset Studio School students explore the challenges of people from the past.

In Dorset there is no more famous example than that of six farm labourers who battled for survival against a back drop of agricultural change in 1834. Today we simply know them as the Tolpuddle Martyrs.

In February we took all of our Year 8 students to the Old Shire Hall Court House in Dorchester where the Tolpuddle Martyrs faced trial for swearing an illegal oath. Students learnt about the hardship of Dorset farm labourers and their battle with Squire Frampton for fairer wages. In reality, wages failed to keep pace with the cost of living. The pressures on farm workers was increased by growing mechanisation and a labour surplus which kept wages low. In response, the labours met in secret to form a 'friendly society' and swear an oath to stick together at all costs. In essence, this secret contract formed the basis of an early trade union agreement, an act that was outlawed at the time. Following their arrest, the Dorset labourers were placed in irons and marched to the Shire Hall court house where they would await trial. Our year 8 students were given the opportunity to walk in their footsteps and spend the day experiencing nineteenth century justice.



Upon arrival students all swore their own oath, as the farm labourers had done in 1834. They were then taken to the cells to experience how the six men were held in captivity. After time in the cells they were finally brought up to the court house where they re-enacted the infamous trial. Roles were allocated with everyone being asked to participate.



We had a judge, jury, gallery, witnesses, a prosecution and defence council, key dignitaries (including Squire Frampton) and of course...the Tolpuddle Martyrs themselves. Students dressed in costume and acted out the entire courtroom drama. It was a fabulous learning experience which really brought the subject to life.







At the end of the trial the jury returned their guilty verdict and the judge sentenced the martyrs to 7 years of hard labour in the British penal colony of Australia. We learnt about how they managed to survive their brutal sentence and ultimately...their pardon.

All students agreed that it was a great day out and an amazing way to learn about the past, but also about how the hardships endured by the Tolpuddle Martyrs still resonates with many Dorset people today.

S Dearden (Head of Humanities)

### ► Mathematics

All of Key Stage 3 have been studying units on space and measure this term. This is a mixture of angles, perimeter, area and volume, and for those in year 9 and at Key Stage 4, Pythagoras' theorem and trigonometry. These topics particularly lend themselves to real-life applications, with

references to construction, environmental management and landscape design, as well as some more creative opportunities.

For example, year 9 have been working out the angles in regular polygons, and from this they have made tessellating patterns of prisms and had great fun seeing how their models matched the reality of prisms of regular polygons.



### ► STEM lunchtime clubs

Picking up from where they left off last term, students have been taking part both in Lego club and Science club during lunch times.

Lego club has continued to encourage teamwork and creative thinking, with students building machines from the available Lego to achieve challenges – a recent project involved building cars that would go the furthest after rolling down a slope.

### ► English

There isn't a human emotion that hasn't been written about in a book.

This is why we are passionate about our subject in English and passionate as to how it allows students to not only understand other worlds and the power of language but how their language and literature is part of what makes up their own identity.

English is a subject that always allows for real world connections, and it is something that we are conscious about when teaching. For example, this term our Year 9's have been looking into the conventions of the tragedy genre. This not only links to their prior study of Greek mythology but also allows for discussions about today's society.

In a recent lesson, students have been learning about the character of Lady Macbeth and the societal expectations around women at the time she was created by Shakespeare. Through this, students learned the term 'patriarchal society' and what its characteristics are. Some students were able to link this to other texts they'd seen or read and this led to conversations about the world they live in today and whether or not a



patriarchy still exists.

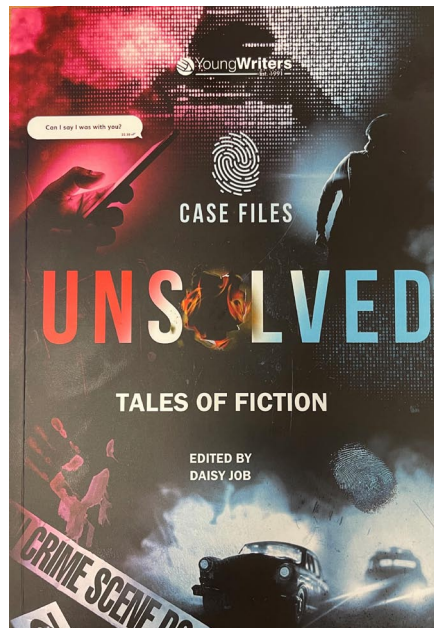
Meanwhile, students in Year 10 have been studying their GCSE poetry collection. Here, there are 18 challenging poems that all link in themes; whether this is love, war or time.

During one poem, 'A wife in London', students learned about the Boar War and Britain's role in the creation of concentration camps during this war. This led to challenging conversations about patriotism and whether it is right to always believe in what your country is doing.

Finally, we also encourage students to try their talents in the real world. This week, we have a number of KS3 students representing DSS at Thomas Hardy school where they will be taking part in creative writing workshops.

As always, thank you for your support at home. We are also delighted with the uptake in KS3 homework; with the reading logs and vocabulary proving popular.

Through our weekly word quizzes, we are really seeing the confidence rise in our students when faced with real world vocabulary that they may not often hear at school.



### Young Writers Competition

Young Writers Competition - We are very proud of Sophie W and Thomas G who have both become published writers through this year's Young Writers Competition. The compilation of stories, entitled **Case Files UNSOLVED - Tales of Fiction**, features 100-word stories from secondary school pupils around the country. It is a fantastic achievement for both Sophie and Thomas to be selected, their published work is below:

#### **Two Wrongs Don't Make a Right, by Sophie W**

*Midnight. The time is right to strike. They all stand there weeping at my death, even him, the one who dealt the deed. He*

*stands there pretending to be grieving. I'll get him, I'll get him good. With the funeral over, I venture to his house, all the way. I remember what my mother told me: Two wrongs don't make a right, but anger has driven my wits. With him in bed, my haunting will begin. Chandeliers rattle, the fire goes out, windows smash, cutlery flies and plunges through his heart. I'm avenged. People say the dead can't talk...*

#### **Fred, by Thomas G**

*Dropped Dead Fred fell unconscious in his bed. Hit his head on a shed. Fell unconscious yet again. Committed a robbery at eight past ten. Got arrested yet again. Broke out again without getting found by his family. Little did he know, his family watched the news and found out he broke out, so they put him in the car and handed him into the jail to serve his time. Then they got bored, so committed a crime and helped him break out of jail.*

#### **Dorset Young Farmers speaking competition**

Enya H and Bethany H both recently took part in the Dorset Young Farmers speaking competition. Enya entered into the reading competition, public speaking and braintrust competition with some other





fantastic members of Beaminster YFC, and Bethany entered the public speaking competition.

Enya was the main speaker in the public speaking competition and Bethany had to give the speech for the vote of thanks.

Both girls did really well together with teammate Rebecca and got placed 2nd - only two points off of the team who came 1st. Enya's teams were also placed 3rd in the reading comp and 3rd in Braintrust.

Enya has been taking part in these competitions for a few years now. As it is with all of us, it can be a daunting task to speak in front of others and Enya has challenged herself to overcome her nerves and anxiety to take part, but as soon as she starts talking in the competitions you wouldn't even know. Her speeches are full of passion, emotion and she speaks really well. Several people made lovely comments about her speaking.

Bethany had never entered into a YFC public speaking competition before, however she spoke clearly and almost filled her allocated time (only 5 seconds out) and was the only person to get anywhere near to filling their allocated time.

Below is a sentence from Bethany's speech which speaks volumes about the value of participating in public speaking challenges...

*"This is my first young farmers public speaking competition, and as a person who lives my life on the entertaining rollercoaster that is called autism it's really hard for me to do something out of my comfort zone and it's even harder for me to sit or stand still so I do appreciate your patience and understanding. However, this will help me grow in confidence and develop so I am very pleased that I have taken part today."*

YFC really helps children and young adults grow and do things outside of their comfort zone, for more information please go to <https://www.dorsetyfc.org.uk/clubs/>

### ► Animal Care and Environmental Science

At the very end of the Autumn Term, Years 7 and 8 were involved in designing and producing their own sustainable Christmas decorations and wreaths. Year 9 worked professionally to complete their turkey project. Students have been learning about the five animal welfare needs by creating an enclosure,

feeding, health checking the birds as they approached their slaughter weight. They were invited to watch the humane dispatch, which emphasised the importance of quiet, calm atmosphere as one by one the slaughter-man ensured they were pain free as they met their end.



The Land based staff were so proud to receive compliments about our student's work ethic from the farm staff as they carefully plucked the birds to become the centre piece of their Christmas tables.

January saw year 9 students working at Dorset Wildlife Trust's Wild Woodbury rewilding project. In teams they have been completing works to restore this intensively farmed land to its pre-WW2 wetland status. To do this they have been digging down



to find the terracotta drainage pipes and then smashing them to release the water. 'Operation: permission to smash' has been popular and so by demand a third week was added to the schedule. Students have learnt that by returning this land to a wetland, it will act as a natural sponge for the area preventing flood risk further downstream towards Wareham.

Forest School students have been enjoying a number of adventures and experiences during the Spring term. The cold snap introduced ice into the sessions which proved to be a fantastic source of learning through play. Forest School leaders were following the children's curiosity as they explored this sparking medium. Questions such as why are there bubbles frozen in the ice? What

happens if we put ice onto the fire? It allowed us to bounce around the science curriculum of gases, liquid and solids. Others wanted to experiment with applying their tool skills to this new medium – How could we make ice sculptures? What type of tool works best? Then followed some triumphant team work to get the biggest piece of ice Eccles wood has ever seen all the way down to the fire circle to become an ice table.



A huge thank you to Bear W for his fantastic game keeping skills. Bear has brought in pheasant and pigeon for us to try. Students concocted a recipe which was to wrap the pheasant in bacon which proved extremely popular. It was wonderful to hear how one student commented that forest school makes him try new things. Another added that he realises forest school pushes him out of his comfort zone.



Reassuringly he added this was a good thing! A huge thank you for your ingredient donations. The maple syrup really added another level to the bacon wrapped pheasant!

#### ► Student Voice

**Cargo shorts** – these are now available to purchase online at a cost of £25.95 from Price and Buckland. Shorts are optional and for the summer months only. The addition of shorts to the uniform list was raised at the last student rep meeting and we have been working to make this happen. Students are delighted!

**Red Nose Day Friday 15th March** – Students were invited to wear red in order to support the





fundraising efforts of Comic Relief. The students at the Lower School site also participated in a bake sale to add to the fundraising efforts.

**Stationery shop** – we are working hard to set up the stationery shop on the Lower School site as students have said they would find this really helpful. Thanks to Miss Allen who has volunteered to supervise this.

**Vegetable Plot** – our year 10 and 11 reps have restarted the vegetable plot at our Poundbury site. They are working with Mr Humphries to erect the new polytunnel ably supported by Mr O'Reagan and a small group of year 10s during their work experience afternoon.

**Year 11 Prom** – The Prom sub – committee are meeting regularly to discuss how they would like their upcoming prom to look. We are currently discussing food options, decorations and entertainment!

**Children in Need Ramble** – I am delighted to report that the much awaited Children in Need ramble raised over £150. Well done all!

**Careers** - students raised

through their reps that they would like to have more information on career opportunities outside of the school's specialism. Working with Mr Humphries and Mr James, students have been given the opportunity to visit Reading University and attend several career events locally.

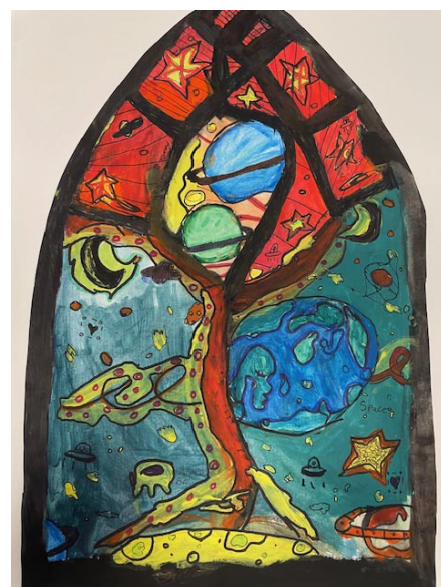
**Autism Awareness Strategy** – Our student reps from KS4 have launched an Autism Awareness Strategy which will commence with student led conferences to raise awareness of neurodiversity to both KS4 and KS3 students.

### ► The Arts

This half term in art, year 8 students have been inspired by the local designs and shapes seen in historical buildings such as our local Stinsford Church.

Students studied the shapes and the content of the stained-glass windows in this church and other churches and buildings. They were asked 'If you wanted a stained-glass design in your home of something you love to do or see, what would it be?'

Children were encouraged to bring in their own photographs from which to draw inspiration,



and to use a range of mixed media and design ideas to create shape and form in their work.

Many students were inspired by their hobbies and by the changing seasons of the countryside.



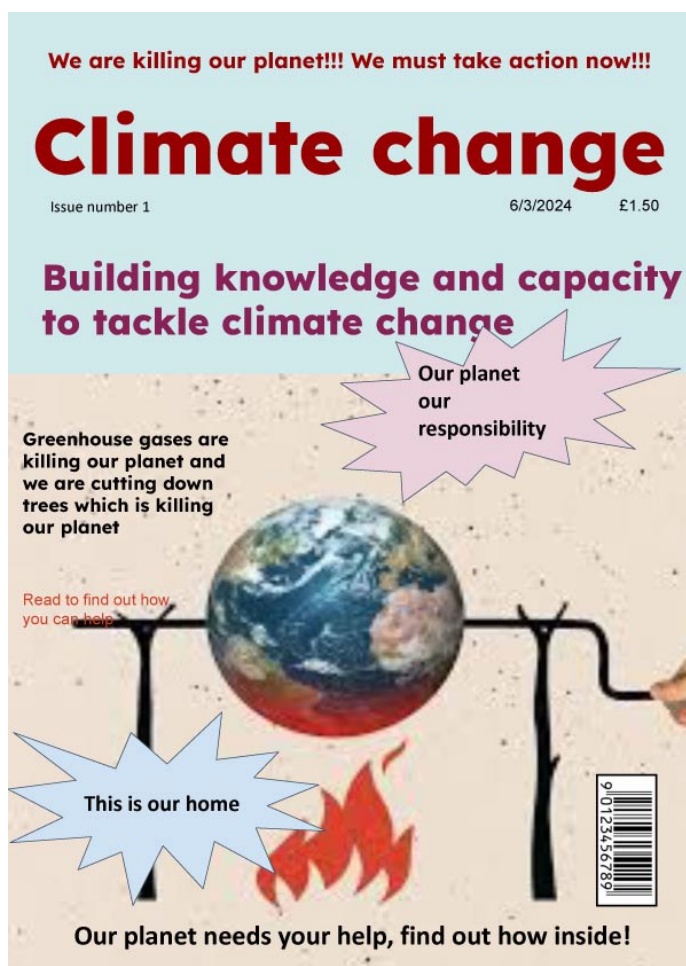




► Online Safety / ICT real-world applications

**Persuasive Design: opportunities and risks**

During this half term, Year 7 pupils have been learning how graphic designers using computers to manipulate and combine text and images in order to make magazine covers that raise awareness of global issues such as climate change, gender equality, and the preservation of wildlife. Learning how to carefully select photos and choose bold contrasting colours for headlines and key information has highlighted how there is always careful thought and purpose behind every piece of printed or online design they see.



## Gender Equality



Above - Gender Equality cover by Bentson B.  
Left - Climate Change magazine cover by Ellie D.

Whilst this is very useful when trying to get an important message across, the same techniques can be used to manipulate viewers' thoughts and behaviours when engaging with content online.

Please read the information on the next page about persuasive design, its potential effect on behaviour and some tips for children and adults to minimise its impact when viewing content online.

Paul Chapman  
Assistant Principal / Designated Safeguarding Lead



# What Parents & Carers Need to Know about PERSUASIVE DESIGN ONLINE

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

'Persuasive design' refers to the techniques that companies employ to influence our thoughts and behaviours when we're on the internet. These approaches can be spotted on websites, in apps and even as part of some video games. Persuasive design means that this content has been deliberately presented in a way that's intended to encourage you to spend your time or money (or both). These methods often prove highly effective at keeping people engaged and invested for longer than we might expect.

## POTENTIAL ADDICTION

In the digital world, persuasive design can make certain activities more addictive and harder to walk away from: some people may begin to feel anxious or irritated without access to their device or their favourite app, for example. It can also often leave users feeling isolated, as – if they spend most of their time on social media – they may start to find it difficult to talk to other people in real life.

## MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

Scrolling online or gaming without regular breaks is proven to be harmful to our mental health. The constant bombardment of news stories (many of them negative), images and influencers' posts can create sensations of unease, uncertainty and FOMO (fear of missing out). Young people can get so immersed in this environment that they become less likely to spot misleading posts.

## PROLONGED SCROLLING

Social media can draw any of us – regardless of age – into a continuous pattern of refreshing our screen, following posts and links down rabbit holes or reading countless comments made by others. This aimless scrolling can eat up time which could have been spent on more productive activities. It could also lead younger users into areas of the online world which aren't age appropriate.

## SENSORY OVERLOAD

Repetitively scrolling, clicking on links or playing games can create an unending stream of new information and visual stimuli. Put it this way: social media isn't exactly renowned as a carefree, chilled-out environment. Such overstimulation can become too much for young people to handle, resulting in sensory overload and causing them to feel stressed, overwhelmed and exhausted.

## COSTLY ADDITIONS

Video games sometimes display offers for downloadable content or loot boxes which can be bought with real money. While these 'microtransactions' temptingly promise to improve a player's gaming experience, most of the time they are money sinks. Young people in particular, excited by the chance of enhancing their game, could spend quite a sizeable sum very quickly indeed.

## PHYSICAL CONSEQUENCES

Hours spent sitting and scrolling means far less time moving around and getting exercise: hardly ideal for a young person's physical health. Additionally, prolonged exposure to the light given off by a phone's screen can lead to eye fatigue and discomfort, especially if viewing it in the dark. Extended phone use before bed can also impact on sleep quality, affecting mood and energy levels over the following days.

## Advice for Parents & Carers

### ESTABLISH LIMITS

Talk to your child about setting some time limits on how long they can use their phone, tablet or console in the evenings or at weekends – or perhaps how often they can go on a specific app, game or website. You could also decide to involve the whole family in creating this shared screen time agreement, making things fair (and healthier) for everyone.

### NIX NOTIFICATIONS

Stop knee-jerk responses at the source by turning off push notifications and alerts. Whether it's a gaming notification or a social media update, these not-so-gentle reminders are designed to catch our attention and lure us back to our device. Switching them off – or even deleting any particularly intrusive apps – can help prevent your child from being reeled back into the online world.

### ENCOURAGE MINDFULNESS

Acknowledging any addiction is key in overcoming it – and compulsive scrolling is no different. If anything mentioned in this guide sounds familiar, it could help to have an honest, open chat with your child about how much time they spend online. Get them to think about how often they scroll through social media aimlessly or habitually open it up whenever they have a spare moment.

### MAKE A CHECKLIST

Considering a list of relevant questions can be an effective way of helping children figure out why they're scrolling on certain sites or consuming particular pieces of content. A checklist can prompt young people to ask themselves if they're learning anything or benefiting from this activity – or if they're wasting their time. Taking a step back can sometimes help us to see things more clearly.

## Meet Our Expert

Rebecca Jennings has more than 20 years' experience in the field of relationships, sex and health education (RSHE). As well as delivering workshops and training for young people, parents and schools, she is also a subject matter expert on RSHE for the Department of Education.



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