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HERE



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The start of a school year is always intense and I know that many colleagues are feeling it. If you are new to one of our schools, you will no doubt be particularly ready for a break as you get to grips with unfamiliar systems and processes and get to know new colleagues and pupils. This September we welcomed 60 4 and 5 year olds into our Reception classes – nearly all of whom will spend the next 12 – and in some cases – 14 years being educated in one of our schools. That is an extraordinary privilege and quite humbling to know that we are directly responsible for influencing the young people these children will grow into. Similarly around 620 11 year olds joined us in year 7 this year – our biggest intake to date – and from first impressions they seem to have settled really well. Many will have volunteered to show the next cohort and their parents around at one of our recent secondary school open evenings – testimony to how quickly they develop an attachment to and pride in their new school. Thank you to all of our secondary colleagues for putting on a series of amazing events for next September’s intake. Feedback has been superb.

As the school year started with the sad news of the death of Queen Elizabeth, schools marked and honoured her outstanding contribution and public service through assemblies and books of condolences. We were therefore very grateful to Norma Pugh, wife of the late David Pugh, chair of governors at Holyrood, who travelled to London and laid a floral tribute in Green Park on behalf of all our schools.

I have just completed almost two weeks of Ofsted training and although I don’t intend to do a large number of inspections, the training has given me an invaluable insight into the application of the inspection framework. The good news is, the training was very reassuring and I am more convinced than ever that our schools are well placed if and when the Inspector Calls.

Our schools have all agreed the same priorities for this academic year and it will be no surprise that attendance, provision for the most disadvantaged and SEND are top of the list. When we analysed the KS4 outcomes, the difference between students with attendance over 95% and those who were below 85% was brutal. Even those who attended over 90% did considerably better than those whose attendance was only 5% worse. So whilst the attainment gap is largest between those who come to school regularly and those who don’t, it is the disadvantaged cohorts that are over represented in the group of persistent absentees. It is imperative therefore that we get these students into school, give them a sense of pride and belonging and teach them well to secure their future life chances.

This blog by Dr Dan Nicholls on why we must make the disadvantaged our priority is a long but excellent call to action on why we must be the difference in these children’s lives.

<https://dannicholls1.com/2022/10/10/the-world-is-getting-darker-bring-light/>

Thank you again to everyone for your commitment to our school communities. I look forward to a year of continued success.

Lorraine Heath, Chief Executive Officer, Uffculme Academy Trust



LORRAINE HEATH





Our Autumn Term has set off at a blistering pace. This piece has given me a chance to reflect on all that has gone on here at Axe Valley Academy and I cannot believe we are nearly at half term.

Our Year 7s have been utterly amazing. They have settled in so well. On their first day, every member of staff lined their route to the hall and welcomed them in. That set the trend and they are well and truly part of our family here. They have absolutely revelled in our club offering. Choir practice is packed. Volleyball takes up three courts. Craft club is so over-subscribed it has a rota system. The library is buzzing with book worms, chess and movie fanatics. It really has been a very happy start to the year.

On top of these clubs, we are also preparing for a production of Bugsy Malone. This has been embraced by all years. The music is much appreciated by staff around the buildings too!

Our Open Day and Evening were super busy this year. The morning tours were more popular this year – this gave families a chance to see the school in calm, purposeful mode, although we did have to race to classrooms to borrow students to do off-the-cuff tours! Our students were absolutely incredible and showed off their school with pride and enthusiasm. The feedback we have received has been fabulous, which we hope will translate into great numbers again for us. We are gaining the reputation we strive for as being a small school with large expectations and great results.

This year we started a new tradition with a Year 7 walk. It was a truly beautiful day. The students had an amazing time with new friends and old. It was generally a great bonding experience and a chance to enjoy the stunning countryside we sit in.

Another source of great pride has been the work of a group of Year 11 students fundraising in order to raise money for Brain Tumour Research Campaign. This is a charity very close to our



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hearts as one of the student team sadly lost a cousin to a brain tumour recently and cancer has touched all of our lives in some way and so raising awareness and some money for the charity is very important to us.

In order to raise awareness and funding for the charity, across October they have a series of events planned to include a non-uniform day at school where students wear pink or purple to represent the charity, a soak the teacher event, a senior student vs staff dodgeball match and a sweet and cake stall in the run up to our main charity walk. At the end of October, they will be walking as a student team from Dalwood to Axminster and camping out overnight.

Their goal is to raise £1,000 across October. They are asking people to sponsor them for this Charity walk and camp out on our GoFundMe page:

<https://gofund.me/1e1df46d>



LAURA JENKINS





The start to the year has been a tremendously busy but also very successful one at Holyrood. It has been fantastic to see our school improvement focus on our provision for our SEND and PP students coming to life and so I would like to begin by thanking not only the leaders in these areas (Katie Wilson, Sue Watson, Jonathan Black and Susie Fernandez-Gomez) for their drive and impact, but to our whole staff team for pulling together to make things better for our most vulnerable students. We can safely say that our school is providing an even better deal for these students at the end of this half term, when we compare ourselves with last year.

The start of this year has also presented lots of opportunities to celebrate where exam outcomes have improved at post-16, and across subjects and groups of students at KS4. In addition, I have been really impressed by the forensic analysis our Subject Leaders have undertaken to understand what they can learn from our results and feed forwards into improving our teaching over the coming year. I would like to once again thank everybody who worked tirelessly to make sure that our Year 11 and Year 13 students could achieve success last summer.

Aside from the serious business of exam results and analysis, September and October have brought a huge range of opportunities for students to 'Join In', starting with an incredible clubs offer! I have never seen such a varied and regular clubs offer and I know that our students are very grateful for the opportunities offered to them by the staff, from sport to art and drama to IT (and everything in between!), so, thank you!

It has also been great to see the trips offer expand this year, allowing students to experience activities, places and cultures that they might otherwise not. In fact, I am writing this entry on the coach back from a weekend in Glasgow with 70 students who visited Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum and attended a Celtic FC match. We were so grateful to The Kano Foundation for donating 70 free tickets for the game, and for providing lunch for our students. We even managed to meet the team afterwards – I don't think I will forget such a special day in a hurry, particularly when I remember that 40 of the students who came with us receive free school meals. What a great experience for them! Moreover, we have seen groups go to Plymouth University, Theatre Royal, Bristol and Wookey Hole, this half term. It really is an exciting time to be a part of the team here.

In addition, our new in-curriculum DofE Award programme has begun with 200 Year 9s taking part. This is new to us and builds upon the silver (year 10) and gold (sixth form) award programmes already so established at Holyrood. I would like to thank our entire DofE Team, led by Karen S, for their amazing dedication to giving students this opportunity.

Why do we exist?

Since 1910, Holyrood has existed to serve this community.

It's your job to leave it in a better place!

We exist to promote [social justice](#) and [social mobility](#) for Chard and the surrounding area.

How do we behave?

'Work Hard, Be Kind and Join In'

- We ensure disruption-free learning for ourselves and others.
- We follow reasonable requests from all adults at the first time of asking.
- We treat people and property with respect.



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Finally, we have begun an exciting piece of work with The Reach Foundation (Feltham) to consider how we can step beyond the school gates to have the best possible impact upon the prosperity and chances of our community. Our visits to London have been really inspiring and we are looking forward to working with colleagues from Neroche as well as Uffculme Primary and Uffculme School to share our learning from this exciting project.

This is a school that continues to hold the best interests and betterment of its community at the heart of all it does and I continue to be proud of the journey of improvement we are taking together. We know who we are and what we stand for which was probably best summed up by a Year 8 student on the recent Glasgow trip who said, sniggering... 'Sir, do you want me to take your next assembly? We all know how it starts. Since 1910, this school has served its community. We exist to promote social justice and social mobility. Our behaviour expectations are...!' And so the student continued to deliver our starter messages from assemblies to an audience downstairs on our coach, which remind the students of who we are and how we behave. I didn't know quite how to react but I reflected that having a shared purpose that is understood by all is critical, particularly for our vulnerable children who need to feel like they belong to something.

Thank you, TeamHolyrood, you are amazing, as always.

Dave MacCormick, Headteacher



DAVE MACCORMICK





Life has been busy at Neroche since the start of the new academic year. We have welcomed our new Reception intake into the Neroche school family, and they have settled well. Having the pre school as part of our school secured successful transition and 24 of the new 30 children were already familiar to us all as members of our Pre School 'Acorns' class. Parent visits for our September 2023 intake are underway and our Year 6 children have been busy visiting and researching secondary schools for the next stage of their education.

Not only have we welcomed new children to the school family but also several members of staff have joined the team. Mrs Warner and Mrs Whiteman have joined the Teaching Assistant team and Mrs House and Mrs Snell have joined the Teaching Team. Miss Wilcox and Mr Smith have started their new promoted SLT roles, and they have all settled and adapted to their new roles well.

A new approach to lunchtimes has been received well across the whole school. A move towards a family dining experience is now being offered. Children are enjoying using real plates and bowls rather than moulded trays and love helping themselves and serving their friends with drinks, cutlery, and tasty items from the salad bar. A big thank you to all at Innovate who have helped to make this possible. Year 6 have been keen to help the younger children and we have been inundated with offers to help as part of the year 6 lunch rota. Visits from the Food Standards agency have secured 5 ratings for both lunchtime and our breakfast club provision.

Our Pre School and Reception children enjoyed a visit from the local PCSO, John Martin and loved being able to sit in his police car and see the siren lights flashing. John Martin is a regular face in and around the school and is planning some talks with some of our older children next half term and beyond to support our Personal Development strategy and the RSHE curriculum.

Our Year 5 and 6 children enjoyed their mini first aiders experience learning some vital lifesaving skills. The sessions were practical and hands on and the children came away with some new skills.

September saw the opening of our new approach to a greater emphasis on supporting children's mental health and an increase in our Social, Emotion Mental Health offer for the children. Mrs Dellow has started a new role this year as our SEMH Teaching Assistant and now supports children across the whole school. A very generous donation from our PFA and the skill set of our Caretaker, Chris Perry, secured the building of our new Hedgehog Hut on the school field. This building not only completes our Forest School provision but also provides a welcome base for Mrs Dellow where children are offered a calm and nurturing environment when needed. Children are able



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to access this provision throughout the school day, including social times, either in a planned or reactive way when support is needed. Pupil Voice has welcomed this initiative and a number of children have already benefitted from the support on offer.

We have widened our after school extra-curricular offer and have included some clubs that are free of charge in response to parental voice. The demand for our extended provision childcare club is increasing as more and more parents return to work post COVID. A group of our Neroche children participated in an inter school Under 9 indoor cricket tournament at Holyrood Academy this week with the Neroche team proudly winning the event.

We are looking forward to additional curriculum enrichment events as the term continues including Bikeability and a whole school trip to the Pantomime. Christmas production themes are being selected and plans to attend a local remembrance service are underway.

Ali Collins, Headteacher



ALI COLLINS





UFFCULME PRIMARY SCHOOL

It has been so lovely to see everyone after the summer break and to welcome new staff and children. We have had a very busy but productive first half term at Uffculme Primary School, and I would like to begin by thanking all the hardworking staff who have helped to ensure the children have had a smooth transition into their new year groups. As a school community, we had a Covid outbreak in September which hit our staff body hard, but the staff really rallied around and went above and beyond to ensure this had a minimal impact on the school.

I would like to share how wonderfully proud we all are of our youngest children in Reception Class. They have settled into school life and class routines incredibly well. The children have already made strong progress with not only their academic work, but also their independence. We feel privileged that they have joined us on their educational journey, and we cannot wait to see them flourish further. A huge thank you also to Mrs Sharpe and Mrs Blake who have worked tirelessly to ensure our children get the best possible start to their school life.

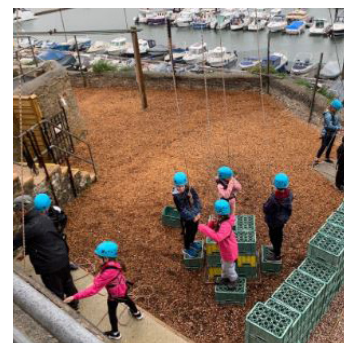
We have welcomed two new staff members, Miss Jasmin Hinder (Year 3 teacher), and Mr Dave Cooper (school caretaker). They have both made a strong start to the year and we look forward to working with them to provide the very best for our children. We have also appointed Ian Pring and Natalie Murphy as Teaching Assistants, and we are excited to welcome them both after half term.

We send our congratulations to Tony Naylor who has now retired. Tony has been an incredible servant to the school over the years as the school caretaker. No job was too big, and nothing was ever too much effort; Tony would always get things sorted! He was always dedicated and focussed on the task at hand, and we will all really miss Tony, but we wish him well on his retirement, which is certainly well-deserved. We would also like to share the fantastic news that Sarah McCann gave birth to a beautiful baby boy, Darwin. The whole school community is incredibly excited with this news and our love and best wishes go to Sarah and her family.

We are sadly saying goodbye to two of our staff team who are moving on to pastures new. Liz Cookson, our classroom and pastoral TA, and Alison Watmore, office administrator. We wish them the very best of luck for the future.

The new classroom building project is in full swing, and the foundations look like they are finally complete. Over half term, we are hoping to see some of the module building craned into position. Although the building work has had an impact on playtimes and PE, our overriding emotion is excitement about the opportunities this will afford us as a school.

Our Year 6 class spent the second week of term at Grenville House on their residential trip. The children had such an amazing time and were able to participate in a range of activities, such as caving, coasteering,



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abseiling, kayaking, paddle boarding and many more. The trip will live long in the children's memories, and I hope they will cherish these experiences forever. This trip would not have been possible if it were not for the staff members accompanying the children and me throughout the residential. The staff were on call 24 hours a day and took part in most of the activities too. So, on behalf of the school, a huge thank you to Mr Everson, Mrs Sugden and Mrs Yells.

Open Classroom sessions were held in September and were very popular. It was lovely to see so many children showing their parents round their new classrooms and meeting their new teachers informally. We are also holding our parents' evenings this week and we are predicting a very good turnout once again. The focus will be very much on how the children had settled into their new year classes.

We celebrated Harvest Festival on Tuesday 4th October with Rev Gudrun Thomas leading us in an assembly, involving plenty of singing and discussing the meaning of harvest. We were blown away with how many items were brought in for the local food bank that CHAT (the Churches Housing Action Team) coordinate. These donations will really make a difference to many local families.

On Friday 21st October, children will be participating in some Ceilidh dance workshops as part of our Music Appreciation Day. We are welcoming two musicians who will lead these workshops and we look forward to sharing some photographs with you in the next newsletter.

It has been exciting to implement a new phonics and reading scheme across Key Stage 1. This has been a huge undertaking but will make such a positive difference to early reading. A big thank you to Kathryn Moss and Becki Sharpe on their work with this so far. We are also currently working alongside Neroche Primary, implementing a new maths scheme which will allow for a greater conceptual understanding of number. It is a pleasure to work with such a forward-thinking staff.

A great start to the academic year.

Fraser Wallace, Headteacher



FRASER WALLACE



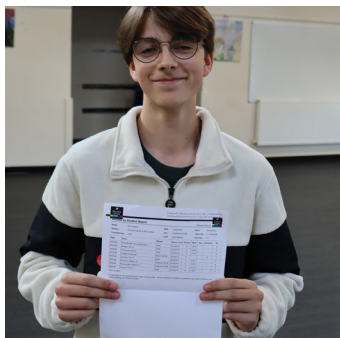


In August we were delighted to celebrate a brilliant set of exam results with our outgoing class of 2022 – the students worked incredibly hard throughout their studies and it was great to see them so well-rewarded for their efforts. 88% of students attained the new “pass grade” in both English and Maths and 86% of pupils achieved at least five good passes in all subjects, with over a third of all grades awarded being at the highest 9-7 level. These achievements were all the more impressive in the light of the heavy disruption that students faced to their education over the past 3 years due to the pandemic.

In September as well as welcoming 216 new Year 7 students, we were also delighted to welcome a number of new teaching and support staff, all of whom have quickly settled into the school.

As always we like to hit the ground running and there is already a lot going on. Earlier in the term we held an Extra-Curricular Fair showcasing the many opportunities that are open to students at the school. The number of these opportunities is almost overwhelming, providing something for every student to join, no matter what their interests. These are such an important feature of Uffculme and not only do students get more out of school when they join in with the different things that are going on, but many of these activities help to build important qualities such as independence and resilience as well as developing students’ social skills.

We were also proud to show the school to the many families that we welcomed to our Open Evening last Thursday with over 300 students volunteering to remain behind and showcase their school to our visitors. As it turned out it was one of our busiest evenings ever with 800+ visitors on site for the event. Parents were full of praise for what they had seen during the Evening and



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were truly blown away by the school – the commitment and passion of all the staff they met; the politeness, confidence, and positivity of the students; the look of the school environment; and most of all the ‘feel’ of the place. So many of them spoke of the school feeling like a special place where they would love their children to come.

Alan Blackburn, Headteacher



ALAN BLACKBURN





A big welcome to all of our new ECTs across the trust. I have really enjoyed getting into our schools and meeting you. Our year 1 ECTs are commencing their Early-Career Framework based induction, which kicked off with a seminar day at Exeter racecourse at the beginning of October. One of the biggest benefits of the Teach First/SWIFT ECF programme is the subject specificity in year 2 and it's great to have our year 2 ECTs networking and attending seminars with other ECTs in their subject areas this year. We have three new ECF leads in the team this year (Kathleen Lemon – Holyrood, Kylee Guy – Uffculme and Amelia Griffiths – Neroche) who along with our existing ECF leads, have been providing the very best of support to the ECTs in their schools - thank you for all of your hard work.

Our trainee teachers joined us at the beginning of September for the start of their initial teacher training course. Most of them have now gone off to Exeter University for a chunk of taught input, but we look forward to welcoming them back into school later in the Autumn term. Our three School Direct distance trainees have settled really well into their schools and are beginning to take on longer episodes in their lessons.

Our Appropriate Body service has been busier than ever and we now have over 800 ECTs registered across SWIFT and we are working with schools across Devon, Somerset, Dorset and Cornwall. We have met all of the ECTs and mentors and have started our quality assurance visits for this year.

In the second week of term, we welcomed Tom Sherrington and just under 80 Headteachers and Teaching and Learning leads to Uffculme School to launch the SWIFT/WalkThrus CPD offer. This is an ongoing programme across the year with Tom supporting schools to launch and embed the WalkThrus instructional coaching programme in schools. We look forward to working with the schools in the trust on this project.



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CPD offer:

SWIFT has an extensive CPD offer again this year and it was great to see so many members of staff engaging with it last year. Please do check out the full listing on the SWIFT website. As members, most of these sessions are fully funded. Paid courses have significant deductions.

<https://www.sw-ift.org.uk/cpd-view-and-book.html>



JEN KNOWLES



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A fabulous new addition to our Wellbeing offer... Reflexology

Not sure what it is? Read on...

What does it feels like?

You know that great feeling when you've cleared out the garage, under the bed, the attic... Reflexology offers you that same feeling in body, mind and spirit but without all the hard work!

Where has it come from?

Reflexology has been around for thousands of years; used in ancient Egyptian, Chinese and Indian medicine. It is becoming a widely used therapy in Western cultures and is frequently used alongside conventional medicine.

What are the benefits?

- Improved cardiovascular and lymphatic circulation
- Better sleep
- Relief from muscular aches, pains and tensions,
- Help with hormonal imbalance
- Stress and anxiety release
- Improved digestion and relief from digestive disorders
- Stimulation of the nervous system
- Improvement in cognitive health

How do I book?

The treatments are bookable (free of charge) using the Wellbeing booking link. All I need are your bare feet – leave the rest to me.

www.uffculmetrust.org/wellbeing

But I've got horrible feet...



“

The human foot is a masterpiece
of engineering and a work of art.

”

Leonardo da Vinci



AMANDA WOODWARD





www.uffculmetrust.org