

DASP NEWS

**The Newsletter of the
Dorchester Area Schools Partnership**

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DASP Middle Schools achieve Science College status.

The outstanding achievements of three Dorset Middle Schools have been recognised by the Department for Education and Skills.

Dorchester Middle, St Mary's and St Osmund's Middle Schools join Thomas Hardy Upper, in being designated Science and Mathematics Specialist Colleges, following rigorous DfES and HMI inspection of their work and results in Science and Maths. In a joint bid, the schools submitted plans showing how they were going to maintain and improve their already high standards and how they would share their expertise with other schools and the community. Children at all 3 Middle Schools already take tests, designed for 14 year olds, a year early.

"The excellent performance at GCSE of Thomas Hardy pupils, builds on the work of the Middle schools, as we in turn build on the work of our feeder First schools" said Gordon Redley, Head of Dorchester Middle School. "Last year, at Key Stage 2, DMS results in tests for 11 year olds in Science, put us into the top 3% of schools nationally. And at Key Stage 3, in Science and maths tests taken by 12 year olds, more than 80% of the children equalled or bettered the results of pupils nationally who were a year older."

Carl Winch, Head of St Marys Puddletown, said that year on year results at the school were higher at the end of Year 8, than those of pupils nationally at the end of Year 9, by an average of over 10%. "Our OfSTED Inspection, two weeks ago, confirmed that we are a very good school and that the teaching and learning in science was graded as 'outstanding'." All three head teachers were full

of praise for the dedication, skills and expertise of their staff. "The teaching staff from all 3 DASP Middle schools work closely together", said Ron Jenkinson, Head of St Osmund's. "It is through them that the children in our area do so well. Last year, Ossie's overall results for Year 8 pupils were better than many school's Year 9 pupils, locally and nationally, who took the same tests."



The Middle schools' achievement in all gaining Specialist Status, is probably a national first by DASP. The schools have ambitious plans to now share their expertise with their 'feeder' schools and the local community over the next few years, aided by substantial DfES funding.

The schools also wish to learn from others in order to improve and develop further. There will be an event in the Autumn, to which members of the local business community will be invited, to hear of the schools' plans. This will provide an opportunity for all stakeholders to be involved in the development of the future workforce.

DASP Office Staff Conference a big success!



A beautifully sunny May 2nd saw the first DASP Conference for its Office staff. In the attractive grounds of Kingston Maurward College, near Dorchester, more than 30 staff, from the offices of DASP schools, gathered to listen to guest speakers and share their experiences.

At the heart of the Conference planning, was the recognition that the office staff are, in many ways, the 'face' of the school. It is they who the public first see, when they arrive at the school. It is they who have to deal with the awkward problems and defuse potentially disruptive situations. They must be diplomats, nurses, accountants, counsellors and sometimes even secretaries! And all this, often with a minimum of training, once in post. We wanted to recognise this by providing input that would have relevance and value to them, in their day to day dealings. The day would also be a chance to meet others facing the same problems and share experiences and solutions.

The main part of the day was a presentation by Mike Harley, from Inspire Excellence Ltd. His theme was 'Dealing with People' and how we can affect a situation. He showed that our response to someone could transform their behaviour. He would often come back to the notion that 'There are no problem people, just people with problems'. In other words, we have to understand that if someone is angry or upset when they come into school, they are likely to have a good reason for this, or to at least believe they do. How we react then decides if they calm down, or get angrier.

Foundation Stage Brain Gym

Last term the DASP Foundation Stage teachers met for a practical workshop based on 'Brain Gym'. Our session was led by Angie Chapman and Marie Harris, Early Years Consultants. They reinforced the theory that physical movement stimulates the brain, thus learning can be released. We all enjoyed an afternoon trying out many of the practical suggestions and drinking lots of water! This term our session will be based on 'Phonics', led by Shelia O'Donnell on Tuesday 15th May.



Reaction tests at the Prince of Wales School

On the 30th January, seven A' Level students from Thomas Hardy School visited us at the Prince of Wales school, to do some reaction tests on children in Years One and Three. We went on the computers and went on a program that tests how fast you react. The test involved pressing a button that tells the computer how quickly you are able to react. We had fun working with the older students who came with their teacher Mrs. Fields. At the end of the test, we were all given a special certificate.



by Aislin (POW First School)

News from Puddletown First

The Healthy Schools, Dorset held a celebration day at The Brownsword Hall, Poundbury, Dorchester, on March 7th. We were invited to the event with eleven other

schools to be presented with our Healthy Schools Award.

Puddletown First was represented by four pupils, three teaching assistants and our headteacher. Our pupils talked about and showed how Puddletown First School has covered all the aspects of gaining healthy schools status. This was followed by Mrs Ghataura doing a short presentation about our school website and how we keep people informed of our schools progress. The day ended with the children being given certificates for their presentations. Then followed the presentation of school certificates and a closing speech by Stephen Prewett, Director of Children's Services for Dorset County Council.



On Thursday 26th April we had a visit from Vicky and Rhyan, who are part of the Safer Neighbourhood Team based at Dorchester Police Station. They came to talk to each year group about road safety. Each child was given the opportunity to take part in road safety scenarios and were informed of issues which may have arisen within the tasks.

French Enrichment at DMS

Year 6 pupils from Dorchester Middle, St Osmund's and St Mary's Puddletown participated in a French enrichment session at Dorchester Middle School led by Ms Helen Perry. The Theme was 'le pique-nique', pupils devised role plays using authentic French food, which they enjoyed eating up afterwards!



Parents visit Charminster Nurture Groups.

As part of our commitment to being a nurturing school we have been running small groups to develop social and emotional skills for learning with children. Each class from Y1 – Y4 has a weekly group for 6-8 children lasting 1 hour, led by a trained Teaching Assistant. Parent's permission is sought for children to join a group and discussion with the class teacher or SENCO is encouraged, but not often taken up. The children who are part of each class's nurture group were very excited when we suggested that their parents might like to come to a session. They were pleased to write the invitations and most were delighted, and some a little nervous, when their parents said they would come!

A plan to show parents the regular routines and also to involve them actively was worked out amongst the leaders. Each afternoon for a week, groups of parents arrived, some having taken time off from work to join their children. Many had heard of the groups by name and wondered – what do they do in 'Beech



Bunnies', 'Maple Munchkins' etc [KS1 groups] and in the KS2 class groups. The parents' response was way beyond our expectations. 50 % of the parents of 2 groups [KS1] and 87.5 % of the other 4 groups [KS1 & 2] joined their children for the hour, participated in the feelings train and the games, heard about how the children had been achieving their targets during the week and worked on a joint activity for parent/s and child.

They asked questions, some expressed concerns and many were encouraging and appreciative. Almost all wanted to be kept in touch, at least once a term, to know more about their own child in the group – why they were there, what their targets were and what they were getting out of the group. Some parents also wanted to know what they could do to help at home. Now we can respond and hopefully fulfill these requests!

Judith Griffies
St Mary's First, Charminster

Gifted and Talented Enrichment Sessions

This summer term there are 38 Gifted and Talented Enrichment sessions being offered to DASP pupils in Years 4 to 8. They involve pupils from all DASP First and Middle schools spending half a day learning about a wide range of topics. The sessions are as diverse as Latin, Morality, Water Colours, Journalism, Business and Micro Climates. Last year the G&T pupils completed questionnaires at the end of their enrichment session. The results showed that all pupils had thoroughly enjoyed the experience. When asked what they would change about the session, 25.2% said they would like the session to be longer. 58.6% said they would like the opportunity to share their work when they got back to school. This year, parents are being asked to complete questionnaires detailing their thoughts about their child's experiences at the enrichment sessions.

Prince of Wales First visit THS

Year 4 children from the Prince of Wales, visited Year 11 students at Thomas Hardye School. Year 4 had been working on the story of Romeo and Juliet through English and also in DT, making puppets. Year 11 students had also studied Romeo and Juliet; they invited the Year 4 children to join them in a workshop, to share their learning.



The Year 4 children thought the session was great. They won a quiz against the Year 11



students, guessing missing words from rhyming couplets about the story. The Year 11 students were surprised by how much of the plot the children had grasped and understood.

The Year 11 students presented work using Shakespearean language, which was fascinating for the Year 4 children to watch. Dramatising parts of the story in mixed groups was great fun. The session ended with the Year 11 students retelling the whole story in 2 minutes! Despite the age difference, the Shakespearean story was a great success for both year groups. The experience of working collaboratively together was super, the sharing of knowledge and understanding happened on all levels.

**Clare Mewett
Prince of Wales First School**

Quarry Visits

Tatchell's quarry and landfill site near Wareham, are keen to welcome school groups. I took my year 3/4 class as part of the 'Improving the Environment' topic. The visit included a walk round the quarry and landfill site, followed by a falcon demonstration, as falcons are used to keep other birds off the tip. The children particularly enjoyed wearing the hard hats and fluorescent jackets!



If you are interested in arranging a visit to the quarry contact Rob Hawkins at:

Tel: 01929 554170 or 07736 698274.

**Annie Burson
Winterbourne Valley First**

To contribute to this newsletter, e-mail:

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**Or post to Richard Scott at the Thomas
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