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Dear WES Parents and Carers

Welcome to the December edition of our WESPA newsletter. Read on for the latest news, how to get the most out of life at WES, dates for

the diary and more. If you'd like to contribute, please don't hesitate to get in touch by emailing williamellispa@gmail.com.

Team WESPA

For all previous issues, please visit sites.google.com/view/williamellispa/news

Spotlight

We are sure many parents of boys in Year 11 will now be thinking about what to do for Sixth Form – so Al Mobbs thought it would be a good moment to catch up with the ever-ebullient Director of Sixth Form, **Flora Wilson**, to find out more about her role and life in Years 12 and 13

Who are you and what do you do at WES?

I am Flora Wilson and I do LOTS of things at WES – I was appointed as Director of Sixth Form, and that is still my main job, but I also teach History, line-manage SEND, coordinate PSHE and (as from this year) write the timetable, wash up after the staff Christmas dinner...

What does a regular day for you at WES involve?

A regular day starts with gate duty – yes, I am one of the people your son may well have complained about, checking that everyone is wearing full school uniform before they come through the gate. Then it's inside to make a pot of coffee (filter – I'm very fussy!), and check that all is well in the Sixth Form.

On Tuesdays and Fridays I then go straight to teach my Year 13s, but

other days I am either in an online meeting or On Call – checking in on any lessons without their regular teacher, and supporting students (and sometimes staff) to manage their emotions and behaviour.

Then – break duty and more coffee: often from the café on the Heath, which has become part of my duty, as so many of our sixth formers appear to treat it as a home from home!

My favourite part of any day is the time when I am available for students to pop in and chat: they sometimes raise concerns about their progress and their ambitions for the future, or we talk about their friendship groups and how to resolve issues that are causing stress.

This year I have two very fashion-conscious Year 12 girls who like to make sure that my outfits meet with their approval,



so they pop in to check whether I look ok. After lunch duty (often refereeing football, for which I am sadly unqualified in ANY way), there is another meeting, or on Fridays, an On Call.

My favourite day has to be Tuesdays when, before I get back on the bike to cycle home to Hackney, I

get to sing my heart out (and laugh a lot) with the parents of the WESPA choir.

What fun things have happened recently or are coming up for the Sixth Form?

The Sixth Form School Council is organising a

Continued on page 2

Spotlight

Continued from page 1

Christmas party for students on Wednesday, 20th December, so I am looking forward to that!

They are also very keen on organising an International Day, which I know is a subject close to WESPA's heart, so I am hoping for some productive collaboration.

How do you join the 6th form at William Ellis?

All WES Year 11s are guaranteed a place in the 6th Form at WES. The application process starts in January, after students receive their mock grades and have a better idea of what they might want to do, and what they can do: although everyone has a guaranteed place, we enforce quite strict entry requirements for our internal as well as our external students, so they are not guaranteed a place on their favoured courses.

Tell us something fun we might not know about you!

I am a keen cyclist and once cycled the length of the Pyrenees with my husband. Travels are less exotic now, but I did cycle from Leeds to Hull last year, after a brilliant gig in Leeds (not immediately after, I hasten to add!).

Thank you Flora, it is so interesting to hear about your work at school and your very empathetic approach to your students. Good luck with the washing up and hopefully we might tempt you on an upcoming sponsored WESPA bike ride!

School news

Life after WES

Whether it's studying at LaSWAP, considering an apprenticeship or looking at universities, it's never too early to start thinking about the options.

In the October edition, we heard about the Career Ready programme and a paid internship from Y13 student Tom.

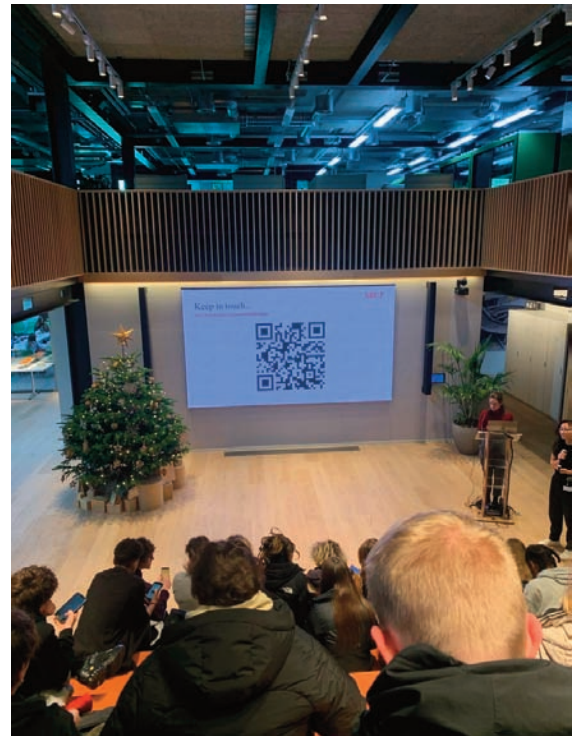
In this edition Monty in Y11 let us know about the WES outreach day out at design firm Arup.

Arup coordinated an outreach day for the LaSWAP year 10s and 11s on November 30th.

We were taken on a Arup London Office Tour and we had to pay attention to the design of the building. We paired up and created an overview of what constitutes good design and bad design.

We learnt about how to create a portfolio, how to write a CV and what makes a good personal statement.

The presenters were very knowledgeable and they gave us insights from their own experiences at university and working for Arup.



We had a lovely lunch and more importantly we learnt a great deal.

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Here are some useful links...

<https://www.arup.com/careers/early-careers>

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/what-and-where-study/university-open-days>

<https://www.whatcareerlive.co.uk/>

WESPA news

Parent skills



Dad Michael (right) and head of music Oliver Singleton

It never ceases to amaze us what talents lie within our community. One cannot deny that budgets are tight and an area where we can help is by lending those skills to the school.

We want to express huge thanks to Y8 dad, Michael, for building some wonderful bespoke guitar racks. These, coupled with the instrument repair work has saved the department over £2000 meaning the department budget can be spent elsewhere on even more musical opportunities for William Ellis and LaSWAP students.

Currently, parents are already helping with architectural advice, environmental and conservation guidance as well as the more practical skills mentioned above.

If you would like to offer your skills to school, in any area whether it be your job or your hobby, please add your name to the WESPA Parents Skills list and join the parents already making a difference.



WES and Parliament Hill Strings

Winter Entertainment!

What a pleasure it was to see all the students performing at Winter Entertainment and what an amazing evening it was – brilliant performances and such a lovely atmosphere. A big thank you to all the staff that made it possible and especially to our head of music, Ollie Singleton, for all his encouragement, behind the scenes magic and for creating these wonderful opportunities for the students.

Well done to the WESPA Choir! I can't tell you how great it is that this wonderful group exists – it goes way beyond the singing. Thank you to Ewan for your time and energy in leading rehearsals and of course to the amazing Alex for steering the ship with inexhaustible good vibes. Our choir is open to all so please do get in touch if you'd like to join.

And thank you too to the many parents and family members who helped on the night. Behind the bar, stacking chairs, dressing tables... buying drinks and the many donations. It all adds up to making the evening as special as it was and we raised just shy of £700 for the music department. Well done everybody!



Alfred, Colin and Sacha (out of shot) in Y8



Joseph, Sonny, Alex, Ashton and Felix



WESPA bar team



WES and WESPA Choirs united!



WESPA Choir

Social media, online influencers & how to keep our boys safe

Social media and online influencers are increasingly an inescapable part of everyday life – so how do we help our boys navigate this fast-changing digital world while also keeping them safe? We are very fortunate to have amongst our parents very progressive thinkers who can share and use their expertise to help all of our sons.

Dr Helen Bendon is one such parent. For this edition Al Mobbs asked Helen to elaborate on her projects with the school.

I am interim Head of the School of Film at Middlesex University where we teach degree and postgraduate programmes such as Film, Animation, Photography and Games Design. I also work with my colleague Ben Serlin on Changing the Culture, a university-wide initiative to address discrimination, bullying, harassment, intimidation, violence and any other form of hate.

We began this work back in 2017 in response to Universities' UK's 'Changing the Culture' report into tackling violence against women, harassment and hate crime. Whilst some of this work is about policy and process, the most important part is how we create positive change for our student and wider communities.

With my creative background, this is where I come in! I work with my students on campaign films, posters, TikTok content, photographs and performances in response to briefs we've created with community partners.

We've worked with a number of organisations such as the Violent Crime Prevention Board, Barnet Mencap and Solace, embedding partnership projects into the curriculum to help our students learn about important social justice issues as they



Year 11 mentors running workshops for Year 8 students

hone their creative and professional skills.

In February I worked with Mr Pratt to design the Year 8 Deep Learning Day at WES, building on previous work he has led

supporting the boys to navigate some difficult territory around misogyny and online influencers.

Andrew Tate had at this point gained a lot of attention in the social

“ Role models are really important to help the boys become confident with questioning content ”

on exploring masculinities. When Mr Pratt suggested working together on this, it was a great opportunity for us to think about how some of our approaches in Higher Education could align with the school and their openness to

media space, specifically targeting boys and young men. In 2022 Guardian journalists created a TikTok profile for a teenage boy and were quickly shown videos of Tate, including misogynistic and hateful content.

Whilst social media platforms did act eventually to remove Tate from various channels, the problem does not go away, and in fact the idea of 'cancelling' misogynistic voices can have the effect of amplifying them. It can give the impression that our boys can be cancelled in the process.

This is a very difficult space for boys to navigate. Influencers such as Tate give some motivational guidance and make boys feel seen, and yet he also presents misogynistic and harmful views which have the potential to radicalise.

And all this is happening without us grown-ups

Continued on page 5

Social media, online influencers & how to keep our boys safe

Continued from page 4

really seeing any of it. It certainly wasn't appearing in my feeds. So, our approach was to work closely with the school to design workshops, not to judge or to cancel, but to engage in conversation to find ways of unpacking and countering some of these harmful views.

We did a lot of preparation beforehand with Mr Pratt and a group of Year 11 mentors, who also ran workshops throughout the day. The Year 11s are vital in this process as their influence has so much more currency with the younger boys that we do.

We had some brilliant and challenging conversations with the boys across the course of the day. We focused on helping them interrogate messages and content they receive online, think critically about the motivation, intended audience and impact of these messages. We had rich conversations about fake news, about how to fact check and thinking before sharing. We talked about algorithms and the psychological pull of social media. We listened to the boys as to why they follow different kinds of online influencer.

There were some key takeaways for me.

Counter Don't Cancel

This was the name of the workshop and indeed I think this was absolutely the right way to go when talking to the boys. Finding ways to present alternative perspectives, to



The WES 'Counter Don't Cancel' documentary being showcased at Middlesex University

give them some critical tools to be able to do that is more effective than shutting down the conversation, or indeed having a panic reaction to something that you see or hear that you disagree with.

Have the conversations

One of the boys said they thought that teens were targeted with this kind of content because they are still forming their identity, I thought that was exactly right. Belonging is important when you're a teen, so sometimes being part of something can be more significant than questioning it.

Role models are really important to help with this idea of critical thinking, to help the boys become confident with questioning content.



Dr Helen Bendon working with Year 8

There was a brilliant moment in the workshops when Mr Harris sat at the table with the boys and got involved with the tasks we'd set, and had a conversation with the boys. You could see straight away that they liked the fact he wanted to listen to them and that he was open to navigate the issues alongside them.

This is something that we can all do, it's less confrontational which is less likely to result in an open conversation with your teens.

As parents we can support one another too. Ben and I delivered a parent's workshop with Izzy Jones last night for WES parents and talked them through the project. It was really good to see how important this is for

other parents too.

The more we can share our concerns and strategies with one another the better we can keep the lines of communication open with our children.

It's not all done in a day

You don't resolve a global issue such as misogyny after one workshop!

These conversations are important to embed in the school culture, and it's brilliant that the school is committed to doing this. To help us think about continuing this work, we took three of our BA Film students with us who captured the day and interviewed the boys.

Mr Pratt has been using the short film that we made to aid further conversations in the classroom. We went back a few weeks after the Deep Learning Day to talk to the boys and the teachers about what the experience was and if it had effected any change.

You can see the short documentary that we made here. We had a big event at the university in May this year in which we showcased all the work that the students have done with partners this year, including this film. Jess Phillips zoomed in from Parliament to open the event, which was called 'Hear My Voice'. The film won the audience award so it had a big impact on the night.

What next?!

Our experience in Higher Education tells us that when we need to address

Continued on page 6

The Inside Track

In every edition of the newsletter we ask a student to lift the lid on life at WES. In this edition we caught up with **Seba** in year 9

It has been great to meet and work with you in the band sessions in the last couple of weeks. You are a very talented multi-instrumentalist! How did you get into music?

My dad used to play a lot of guitars in the house and we listened to lots of rock and jazz and I thought that was great. I saw School of Rock and thought that playing guitar looked pretty cool, so I started to play music.

My dad bought me an acoustic guitar, and I started playing the drums. Then I met more people who played music, so we started to play together with my friends. I now have both guitar lessons and drum lessons each week.

It was great to hear your bands performing at Winter Entertainment this year. What advice would you give to any students wanting to form a band?



Seba (right) playing with WES bandmates

Ask in school if there are people who enjoy listening and playing the same music that you like and see if they want to play some with you. Even if your friends don't play yet you might convince them to learn. Philip in our band doesn't play bass but he is learning whilst we play.

Year 9 is one for decisions. How do you feel about going into year 10 and choosing your GCSE subjects?

I feel pretty good because I have been able to think about it a lot and we had lots of discussions about it with my friends. So, I feel I know what I want to do.

What do you think you might like to do when you leave WES?

I want to do my A-levels in WES and then I want to go to university. Both my parents work at a university so it is an obvious choice for me. I might study history or music, or the history of music. If that doesn't work out, I might want to open a music shop some day.

I have met you through music but there are many other things going on outside of the academic lessons. What advice would you give to students in year 7 on how to make the most out of their first

year at WES?

Join as many clubs as you can! You can always leave again, but joining is the best way to see what you like. Join the choir, the chess club, sports clubs, everything. Sign up for all available trips and visits as you might find something that you really enjoy. Importantly, talk to your teachers as they can advise.

And finally, if you could introduce a new thing to WES, what would it be and why?

More leniency in school uniform policy. And can we have less maths please?

Social media, online influencers & how to keep our boys safe

Continued from page 5

something within our communities, a top-down approach alone will not effect change. We need to work together with the boys and include them in creating the culture of the school. We're working

with the school, including the boys on designing the Deep Learning Day for February 2024.

At the university we are working closely with Barnet Council on another event for 2024 and we're focusing on supporting young people with healthy

intimate relationships, calling out misogyny and amplifying positive voices of our young people.

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It's been a real pleasure working with the teachers and boys at WES on this initiative, they've taught

Ben, me and my students a lot too so we can keep giving this important issue attention and hopefully work with more schools next year. The most powerful thing is when the children themselves want to become agents of change.

Stepping into the next chapter

WESPA chair **Al Mobbs** reports on the 2023 election for our new Trustees

We have covered much ground since the last AGM and it is with great pleasure that I can let you know that Vicky (Y7, Y9, Y11), Caroline (Y8) and Sibylle (Y7, Y9) were elected as Trustees. Galit, Alex and I were also re-elected.

Between us we span many areas of expertise and I look forward to the next chapter of WESPA – there is much to be excited about. I would also like to thank retiring Trustee Pri for her contributions to WESPA and all her continued support with the plans for outside spaces.

Here is a little more about each Trustee...

Al Mobbs

My name is Al and I am Alfred's dad. He is in Y8 now and I became a Trustee and Chair of WESPA in January 2023 when he was in year 7. My background is in music. I have worked extensively across the commercial sector both as a player, company director and trade union board member. However throughout my adult life I have always taught music and helping the next generation is what I love best. I had always intended



WESPA Trustees: Al, Vicky, Alex, Caroline, Sibylle and Galit

to help with WESPA but becoming Chair was never the plan! There is so much to be positive about at WES and I took on the role because I wanted to help shed a light on the many great things going on at school and bring to life the many fantastic ideas staff, parents and boys come up with. As parents, the biggest of the groups at school, we have a great opportunity to transform the school experience and help our community. For me that starts with rolling up my sleeves and getting stuck in. And it has also been a great way to make some wonderful new friends!

Alex Boojj

I have been a WESPA

trustee since April 2023. I wanted to actively partake in school events, attend meetings, and collaborate with teachers and administrators in order to stay informed, gain insights and contribute to the pupils' learning experience at WES. Along the way, I have seen positive change and made lifelong friends. I am mum to three children, Monty and Max at WES and Jules at PHS and am a study abroad educator in Higher Education.

Galit Ashkenazi-Golan

My name is Galit Ashkenazi-Golan and my son is Tamir in Y9. I work in the academic faculty in the Math department at LSE where I am a

professor. My research focus is in Game Theory, the mathematical modelling of strategic interactions

When we joined the WES community, we encountered such caring, great teachers, and I wanted to become a Trustee to find a way to give back to school and community.

Sibylle Erdmann

My name is Sibylle Erdmann, I am a psychologist who works with organisations. I have two sons at William Ellis, in year 9 and in year 7. I am really interested in how we create new knowledge through different ways of knowing

Continued on page 8

Continued from page 7

such as embodied and artful knowing.

I was a parent governor at our local primary school and I have some experience of SEND in the school system. I am a supporter of the role of parents in neonatal and paediatric care in the healthcare system and am currently volunteering for a charity in Early Intervention, helping families with babies who are at risk of a developmental disadvantage.

I recently became a WESPA trustee as I was energised by the

possibilities of what we can do for this amazing school that is William Ellis.

Vicky Lockwood

I am Vicky Lockwood and I have three sons across years 11, 9 & 7. I am a qualified primary school teacher with a background in chemistry. I also provide science & forensic enrichment club activities and workshops for primary aged children.

Having been helping and volunteering with activities through WESPA for a while, I wanted to take more of an active, supportive role within WESPA. Volunteering to

become a trustee and helping the WESPA Team and community do great things I believe is a great way to give back to WES.

Caroline Matute

My name is Caroline Matute, I am a scientist and lecturer at the Royal Veterinary College. My son, Colin, is in year 8. I attended a WESPA meeting last year because I was curious about the school and wanted to meet other parents. As the year went by, I slowly became more and more involved. I joined the parents' choir, supported the organising team for the International Evening, and all the

positive vibes that originated from this growing community of parents made me want to become more involved.

Because of our background in Biology and Chemistry, with my fellow WESPA trustee, Vicky, we would like to promote a cooperative and supportive partnership between parents and teachers to create opportunities in the STEM (Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) field for our boys. If you have a particular interest or skills in science, we would love to hear from you!

There's a new spring in our step...

Last year, thanks to the generosity of parents, we were able to help the PE Department buy a new trampoline. It has arrived!

WES Head of PE Josh Levitt said: "This means we now have three trampolines, allowing the students more practice time in lessons so they can make more progress in their gymnastics lessons.

"This will also be invaluable for the GCSE students who use trampolining for their practical exam in the summer. Thank you WESPA – it looks great!"

Since then we have also funded a new floor for the gym



and replaced some of the fitness equipment.

We're currently chatting with Josh about buying a new table tennis table so watch this space!

If you think your son might like to have a go on the trampolines, gymnastics club is after school on Fridays.

Band workshops are making a scene

Al Mobbs reports

For any parents who have dropped into the music department, you will know that there is a rather exciting, nascent band scene at WES.

I had the pleasure of running workshops with four WES bands in the run up to Winter Entertainment and the boys were brilliant – very welcoming, serious about their music and with a great sense of camaraderie.

They are so vibrant and full of life, inquisitive and keen to push themselves to make great things. I'd love to hear from any students interested in starting a band.



Al, Felix, Sonny and Ashton enjoying band workshops!

William Ellis Debating Society

Huge thanks to Y9 parent and WES Governor, Hugh, and to History and Politics teacher Emma Kritz for turning the ideas of a William Ellis Debating Society into a reality.

'WEDS' is now up and running and takes place on

Fridays at 1.15pm in Miss Kritz's classroom.

Please do let your sons know – it is an excellent and constructive way to learn how to argue a point, hone public speaking skills and consider multiple perspectives. Very valuable

life skills!

Hugh has volunteered to help but on the occasion that he is not able, we will need another parent volunteer to help Miss Kritz.

If you can lend a hand to steer our boys as they debate such hot topics as 'this house believes that



single sex schools should be supported' or a mock general election, please email williamellispa@gmail.com

What is WESPA?

WESPA is a charity (no. 1158812), run by parents, carers and friends of William Ellis School.

WESPA is open to all in our school community, and is a fun way to get involved in school life.

- We help raise extra funding for the school, to provide resources for the boys.
- We run social events for parents and children, to help facilitate the growth of our school community.

- We encourage as many people as we can to get involved, to create stronger bonds and ties between home and school.

■ If you haven't been to a WESPA meeting yet, if you think it's not for you, or you're just not sure how you can help, you can always email williamellispa@gmail.com to find out more about us and how you can get involved.

Dates for the Diary

WESPA Meeting – January 16th

Parent Social – February

WESPA Quiz – February 23rd

New parents welcome evening at WES – March

Working Weekend at The Mill – tbc Let the Warden of The Mill know if you would like to volunteer

Uniform Swap – throughout the term at WESPA Meetings

WES Eco Club

Eco Club is the brainchild of Year 8 parent and environmental conservationist, Jane. We are enormously grateful to Jane for giving her time and knowledge to this project. It is a wonderful opportunity for our boys.

Here's what Jane had to say:

I hope the Eco club will provide a space to truly connect with nature through hands-on experiences, knowledge and skill sharing, and conversations. With this experience, I hope that WES students will have the confidence to carry out positive actions in our school area and beyond, now and in the future.

The club will be a relaxed space helping to create a sense of trust, community, and belonging. Activities we



Eco Group Leader Jane with husband and cofounder of Forest School Way Peter – Y8 parents

are looking at include learning about wider environmental issues, practical habitat management to rewild the school grounds, such as creating a pond and wild flower meadow, learning about and supporting local plants and wildlife like hedgehogs,

campfires for cooking and toasting marshmallows and much more...

Spaces will be limited and the club will be trialled with year 8 to start. Andrew Mangham, head of year 13 will be the supervising teacher and students can sign up via their form tutor.

6 ways to support WESPA

■ COME AND JOIN IN! –

It is always great to meet up with fellow parents and carers and meet new ones too.

■ SHARE YOUR IDEAS –

WESPA is run by parents for our boys and each other. All thoughts and ideas are very welcome.

Just email williamellispa@gmail.com

■ VOLUNTEER –

The WES community is huge and diverse. Whether lending a hand at an event, joining a working weekend at The Mill, offering your professional skills to a school project, or covering one of the central WESPA roles, every contribution benefits our community and is hugely appreciated.

■ RUN A FUNDRAISER –

If you have any previous experience or want to

easyfundraising

See your favourite brands donate to us whenever you spend with them

Find out more

team up with a fellow parent and create something new, this is a great way to raise funds for the school.

■ **DONATE** – Donations to WESPA are very welcome. You can donate using the fundraising platform GIVEY at <https://www.givey.com/williamellispa-school-parents-association>. If your son has outgrown his uniform please consider donating these items to our regular uniform sales. Good condition uniform can be dropped at the

school office.

■ SHOP THROUGH

EasyFundraising – If you haven't signed up yet, it's easy and completely FREE! 7,400 brands will donate to us when you use EasyFundraising to do your everyday online shopping – at no extra cost to you! Sign up here: https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/williamellispa/?invite=1KH7PM%26referral-campaign=c2s%26utm_campaign=admin-trigger%26utm_content=srt

