



Get in touch: [williamellispa@gmail.com](mailto:williamellispa@gmail.com) Twitter: @WESparentsassoc • Instagram: [william\\_ellis\\_school\\_pa](https://www.instagram.com/william_ellis_school_pa)

## Dear WES Parents and Carers

Welcome to our February 'Eco Special' edition of the WESPA newsletter.

For this special edition, Nick and Al, the newsletter team, are joined by the WESPA Eco Group.

Read on for the latest eco news initiatives and plans at WES.

If you'd like to contribute to future editions, please get in touch by emailing [williamellispa@gmail.com](mailto:williamellispa@gmail.com).

Team WESPA

For all previous issues, please visit [sites.google.com/view/williamellispa/news](https://sites.google.com/view/williamellispa/news)

## Spotlight



## Sel Pomeyie – Head of Geography

### *Who are you and what do you do at WES?*

I am Sel Pomeyie, and I would be most known for my role as Head of Geography, which I have held for the last 5 years.

Prior to this I was a Head of Year for eight years (just in case you were wondering, I've been at WES for 17 years). Recently, I have had responsibility for leading on adaptive teaching in the curriculum.

A lesser-known role that I have in the school is line managing RE.

### *What does a regular day for you at WES involve?*

A description of a regular day at present would be full of exasperation!

Thinking back to a more stable time (aaahh) I would do some early morning planning, and register my form.

I'd then teach various lessons (depending on the

day), perhaps do a break/lunch duty then plan/mark/tidy up and get ready for the next day.

The best part of each day is being in the classroom with the students.

### *What fun things have happened recently or are coming up for the department?*

In November we had the Clean Air Project come to WES and build air quality

sensors with Year 11s.

Air quality sensors have been on our wish list of equipment for a while to measure air pollution levels during our urban fieldwork, which will be happening just after half term. We now have a set made by the students!

The Year 7 volcano model competition normally happens at this time of year which is always a big hit with the students.

*It is fantastic to hear that*

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## Spotlight

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*you are supporting the boys with the Sustain - ability Committee. Could you tell us a little more about the Committee, Earthfest 2024 and any other initiatives you have in mind for the boys and school?*

The Sustainability Committee is working towards making WES a more sustainable place.

That can either be through action (i.e. the committee is keeping a record of energy use in the school), education (making others aware of

the benefits of living a more sustainable life), or lobbying (pressing senior leaders about issues they believe need addressing).

Earthfest is a four-day event in which thought leaders and industry experts try to foster connections, ignite ideas and inspire change about sustainability issues, through interactive demonstrations, talks, and workshops. Two leaders from the committee, A.J. Pouget and Hugo Keane, were selected to help plan the Earthfest event, which this year will be held in Kings Cross.

WES was the only Camden school to have two Year 10 representatives, which was only allowed as the Clean Air Project were so impressed with our students' engagement.

*What is the best way for new boys to get involved in all the various eco goings on at school?*

Talk to the student council reps (or me) as a first port of call.

Part of the work that I hope to be doing with the Sustainability Committee is getting them to think of ways to promote what they are doing, and giving

suggestions about how others can get involved (watch this space!).

*Tell us something fun we might not know about you!*

I lived in Costa Rica for two years from 2002 – 2004, teaching English as a foreign language. *No hablaba nada Español antes de ir, pero ahora hablo bastante.*

*Thank you Sel, it's great to hear more about what you and especially about things like the air sensors. What a great initiative. We will watch this space!*

## School news

# Students named Earthfest Junior Ambassadors

Two William Ellis students have been appointed to serve as Junior Ambassadors for Earthfest, a major festival exploring and celebrating sustainability.

In January, Year 10 students AJ Pouget and Hugo Keane took part in a planning session for the event, which will take place in King's Cross from 18-24 April 2024, and will host talks, interactive demonstrations and workshops on electric transport, sustainable fashion and emerging green technologies.

Hugo and AJ, both representatives on the School Council's Sustainability Committee, provided feedback and ideas for the organiser, the Camden Clean Air Initiative, an NGO working to improve air quality across Camden.

They will participate in another planning session



in February. Earthfest expects to host some 100,000 guests, so it is a tremendous opportunity for William Ellis students to be involved in planning it.

Tickets for Earthfest are free for the general public on Saturday 20 and Sunday 21 April, and can be booked here: <https://www.earthfest.world>

# School Food Matters comes to WES

Year 10 Food Tech students had a cooking masterclass with School Food Matters (<https://www.schoolfoodmatters.org>), an organisation that advocates for free school meals and food education.

Their Know your Onions programme also teaches students how to plant fruit and vegetables in school gardens.

WESPA Outdoor Lead Jane Worroll is working with School Food Matters and the school to find a patch on the grounds for growing some vegetables.

The WESPA Newsletter will be the first to bring news of new shoots.

# School news

The new WESPA sponsored WES Eco Club met for the first time this term. Here's what Alfred in 8B had to say:

**"We had our first Eco Club meeting today. It was really fun. We learnt about how humans have impacted our environment and what we can do to change that. We made a fire and toasted marshmallows. Next, we're going to build bird boxes, plant hedges for the hedgehogs and dig a pond! Heath Hands members are coming to talk to us about hedgehogs and next week we will be learning to whittle."**

Our huge thanks goes to Y8 parent Jane and Andrew Mangham from WES for leading this wonderful initiative.

# WES Eco Club



WES Eco Club



Sunset round the firebowl



Eco Club supplies



Installing new bird feeders



William in Y8 and Mr Mangham planting apple trees



Toasting marshmallows



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the CEO of a major fashion brand will earn in four days what one garment worker earns in their entire life.

Bel sees our garment manufacturing system as one in which poor people sew clothes for rich people, and is troubled by its racism.

Deforestation, waste, and chemical, water and plastic pollution are among fashion's devastating impact on the planet, with polyester (a type of plastic which is made from oil, and which is used in William Ellis uniforms) one of the major culprits: it is now used in almost two thirds of our clothes.

She said there is virtually no animal welfare in the fashion industry: the treatment suffered by animals in the production of leather is so awful that Bel became vegan.

What can fix this system that exploits workers, animals and the environment? Bel said that the problem is the sheer volume of clothes being made, about 120 billion pieces every year, only 1% of which is recycled.

"We must fundamentally change the way we shop," she said.



## “ Textiles produce between 8 to 10 percent of all carbon emissions ”

She suggested buying 5 new garments a year, only what we really need, and creatively repairing what we already have.

She warned students to be aware that fashion companies are creating desire to make money for themselves, and to think about where our clothes

come from and who made them.

She also encouraged students to tell brands what they think, join or support groups that are challenging the industry, and to create their own campaigns.

Students asked many questions, most centring

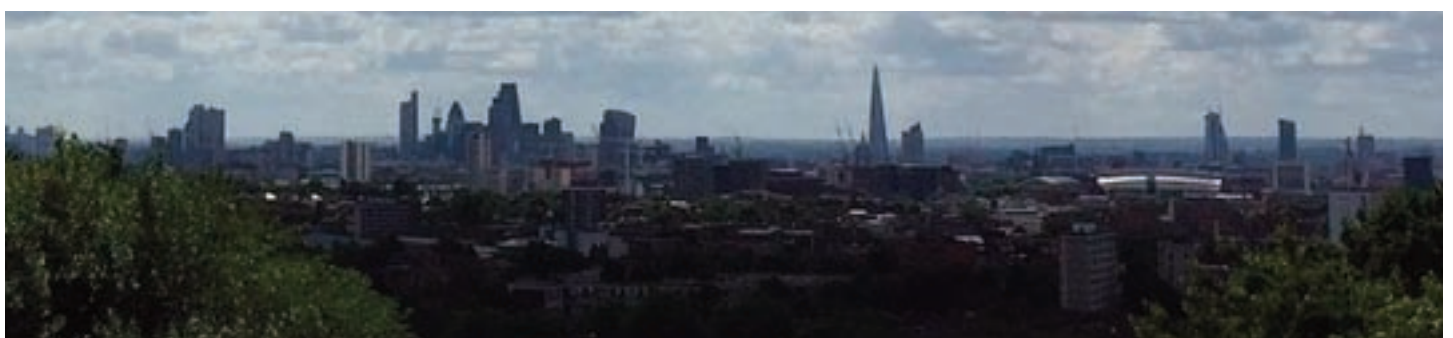
around how to solve the systemic problems Bel described. The detailed and unsettling information in Bel's talk clearly made students think about how their actions today will affect their future and the future of the planet.

But students were also inspired by Bel's story—of confronting uncomfortable facts about her occupation, and then acting. One sixth former said the following day that he is researching careers in sustainable design.

### FASHION'S IMPACT

- Labour Rights Abuses
- Modern Slavery
- Child Labour
- Animal Cruelty
- Racism
- Mental health
- Deforestation
- Chemical Pollution
- Water Pollution
- Plastic Pollution
- Waste
- Carbon emissions

*WESPA is active in promoting education about careers. If you or someone you know can talk to students about what it is really like to work in their career, please contact us at [williamellispa@gmail.com](mailto:williamellispa@gmail.com)*



## 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 **AJ** in Year 10

*I understand that you and fellow Year 10 student Hugo represent WES students on the Sustainability Committee. Can you tell me a little more about the Committee, what your aims are and how you help them become a reality?*

On joining the school, Hugo was determined to help the environment and, after research, found that all the pieces of school uniform that we are required to buy are mainly plastic and every time we do things like wash our uniforms, we release microplastics.

Hugo resolved to try to make changes to this and raise awareness, creating a very informative powerpoint, and even managing to get to talk to the Head Teacher.

After becoming close to Hugo later on, I was inspired by his determination to help, and I decided to help him achieve his goals. As of now, we are still working on a way to make the transition to a more eco friendly uniform easier on the school.

Another example of something we are doing in the Sustainability Committee is monitoring the school's electricity usage. After partnering



with a company, we are now able to see a graph of our electricity usage. We found that we could save up to £25,000 just by discovering what is using so much electricity, even through the holidays.

***Congratulations on your appointment as a Junior Ambassador for Earthfest 2024. What does your role entail?***

As a Junior Ambassador for Earthfest 2024, I have been given the opportunity to see the plans for Earthfest ahead of time and give my input into how or what we should do for activities.

There will be meetings to give us updates on the situation and to see if any suggestions worked out.

***There are lots of environmental initiatives happening at WES. What would be your advice to students (and parents) who would like to get***

***more involved or have ideas they think would be great for school?***

My advice for both students and parents is not to wait. You have to remember that global warming won't wait for someone else, so if you see an opportunity, then take it.

I would personally recommend speaking to Mr Pomeyie as he is the person that has helped us get into Earthfest as ambassadors.

***Do you feel that environmental issues are represented in the national curriculum or would you like to see more integration into subjects?***

On a more negative note, I don't think there is a lot of learning about global warming, as what I have learnt so far comes from having picked Geography GCSE and having teachers who care about it.

I would like it if all students were made aware of how we are killing our world, and how to stop it.

***In an ideal world what environmental initiatives would you like to see happening at WES?***

In an ideal world, I see a WES that is mainly, if not fully, reliant on green energy, with an eco-friendly uniform, and we would use less plastics.

I believe that this dream is not impossible, as there are changes that can be made that would actually benefit the school. A very good example is that in the canteen, there are plastic water bottles that students can buy in case they get thirsty after eating.

Makes sense right? Well the problem is that no one buys them because you can get water for free by walking for 30 seconds to get to the fountain. The result is unused plastics which we could remove.

# YES to shorts, NO to the environment – for now

Eco Group Co-Chair **Alexandra Milenov** reports

Students will be able to wear shorts and leave their blazers at home in June and July.

Headteacher Izzy Jones announced the change that was decided by Governors in December 2023. The Governors also decided not to make any changes at this point to address the environmental concerns raised by parents until after the next Ofsted review.

The new summer uniform policy comes after parent and student consultations found strong majorities reporting that students were uncomfortable in hot weather. London has experienced record-breaking heat during the summer terms of 2022 and 2023, and also the beginning of this school year, with a week of 30°C weather last September. Climate change experts predict that such extreme heat will be more common.

The consultations were part of the Student Council’s campaign to make the school uniform environmentally sustainable, which is supported by WESPA. They revealed majorities who are concerned about the environment, and the uniform’s negative impact. The branded blazers, PE kit and ties are made of

polyester, which is a type of plastic made from fossil fuels. In his analysis of the uniform’s impact on the environment, Year 10 Student Councillor Hugo Keane found that buying blue blazers, PE t-shirts and shorts for only the Year 7 group, releases enough carbon to melt 3 cubic metres of Arctic ice.

stated that the blue blazer, and the long and short-sleeved shirts, are treated with stain and/or wrinkle—resistant finishes. WESPA is continuing to work with Selina on obtaining a complete list of chemicals. The school governors remain open to exploring alternatives and remain

Ms Jones also pointed to projects to green the school grounds and the after-school Eco Club run in cooperation with WESPA, as examples of the school’s commitment to protecting the environment.

Hugo said, “I guess the thing I’m happiest about is the number of people who didn’t know that polyester is a fossil fuel and that microplastics are released from the uniform, but who now care.

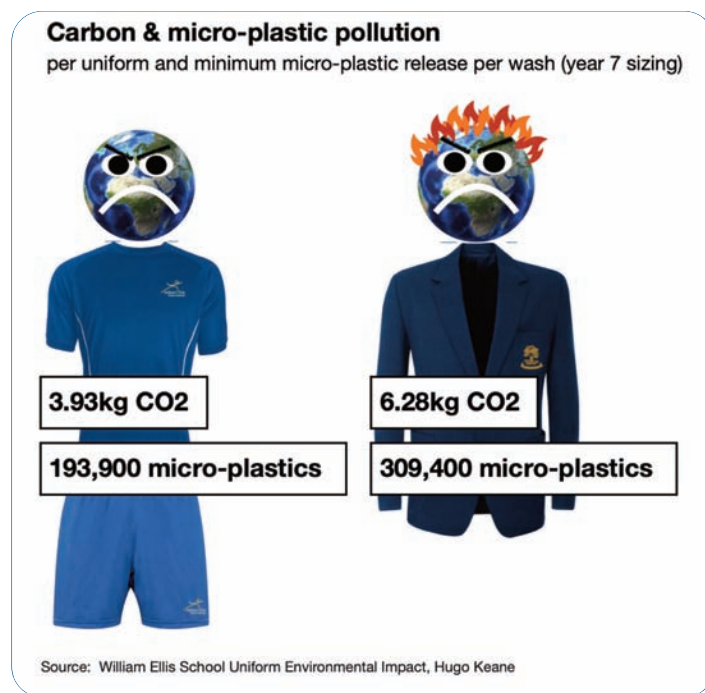
“101 students didn’t know that the school uniform is made of polyester, which is a fossil fuel, and 145 didn’t know that microplastics released from the uniform end up in our food and water, but these students now care. I’m happy my work on this is raising awareness. Winter is disappearing. We’re out of time. We need to do something now.”

The new summer uniform policy is detailed on the WES website here: <https://www.williamellis.camden.sch.uk/uniform>

The WESPA Uniform Consultation – Summary and Recommendations can be found here: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/169wMSZV2qTuBLqM8OYO6RivUTQT5CueHoH3Kh2bSgNo/edit?usp=sharing>

Hugo Keane’s analysis can be found here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/11xlo2nk7UE8-kHWIv414iIFNDwHiZZrN/view?usp=sharing>

And the student consultation results here: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1psy\\_ebDL\\_u4NbcLUKHLGI5QjTy9eF5Dl/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1psy_ebDL_u4NbcLUKHLGI5QjTy9eF5Dl/view?usp=sharing)



“Our blazers are making it too hot... to wear our blazers,” said Hugo.

His analysis also points to potential health risks from chemicals that are used to dye the school’s uniforms and make them stain and wrinkle-resistant.

The Chair of the Board of Governors, Selina Skipwith, has been active in communicating with the school’s uniform supplier for information on what chemicals are used in our children’s uniforms for several months. They have

engaged in this conversation.

In her 19 January 2024 newsletter, Izzy Jones responded to parent concerns about the environment by describing the school’s efforts to reduce its overall carbon footprint. The school has invested in systems to monitor its electricity usage, intends to upgrade heating systems to reduce gas consumption, and is exploring the possibilities of installing renewable energy infrastructure.

# Sowing the seeds for biodiversity

Local Camden school parents may have noticed a flurry of activity in the outside spaces of their schools. Ponds being dug, trees planted, hedgehog highways and much more. Much of this activity is down to the Camden grassroots organisation Growing Green. WESPA newsletter editor Al caught up with **Claudia Kretzschmar**, co-founder of the organisation, to find out more about the amazing work they are doing in our neighbourhood.

*For those new to Growing Green, can you tell us about the organisation and how it started?*

The idea came during the pandemic, after endless talks about how much better things would be if we took action. So we did!

We started by barging our way into Parliament Hill School, planting lots of trees and native hedges. After that, we set up Growing Green; our focus is increasing biodiversity in schools, and our approach is hands-on: with the help of the school community, we plant hedges, build ponds, sow wildflower meadows and so much more.

We want the air to be cleaner, the wildlife to thrive, and the students to have a healthier environment.

*Why do you think it is important to take action?*

Talking is good, but it is so much more satisfying to take action, and the things we do are instant, tangible and visible.

*What advice would you give to parents who would like to help their children get more involved with their community and looking after their environment?*

Leading by doing: turn up to planting days at your



lots of great people, and there is hope.

*We are hugely grateful for all the energy and ideas you have put into William Ellis School. Your project proposals are wonderful and will create a huge impact on the school both for the environment and in supporting the curriculum. Your help with who to approach for fundraising was also invaluable. If you were in charge of all Camden schools outside spaces, what would be on your priority list?*

- Use all rainwater from building roofs to flow into rain gardens and swales instead of the sewer.
- Employ a biodiversity-minded gardener for each school.
- Build an allotment at each school and use the produce in the school canteens.
- Plant an orchard at each school.
- Rip up most tarmac.

school; join in with the gardening or eco club and offer any skills you have to the school community. It can be tough to get teens motivated, but being outside and working in nature is just the best thing, and the benefits for kids are undeniable.

*Growing Green is not just about plants and I know that you do a lot of work to protect our local wildlife as well. What are the most useful things we can do to help both our flora and fauna?*

See where your talents are and how much energy and

time you can invest. Start with any outdoor space you have, from windowsill to garden, and turn it into a biodiversity haven.

Get involved – either with hands-on work supporting or joining local groups like Growing Green or with campaigning for a greener borough and beyond.

When we started, we thought we were the only ones who cared, but that is not true, and we were blown away by the amount of people who were already taking action. It is so rewarding; you meet

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Growing Green!

FROM THIS . . .



. . . TO THIS

- Only use permeable paving.
- Use Highland cows, not lawnmowers.
- Take all available measures (dead hedges, log piles, ponds, etc.) to turn every outdoor space into something valuable for nature.
- Get rid of leaf blowers.
- Turn fences into (impenetrable) native hedges.
- Reduce the parking spaces by half (sorry teachers!) – that would free up spaces for allot-

- ments or forest gardens.
- Cover remaining car parks with roofs that harvest rainwater and also solar energy that can power electric bike/car charging stations.
- Cover all roof buildings with solar panels from PUNL (Power Up North London).

As you can see, I have thought about this a lot and think Growing Green should be in charge. If we did all that, we would have spaces where each student feels like they belong, where they can relax and

use their skills. I'm convinced we would see a sharp decline in mental health problems.

*I can't help but notice the pace in which Growing Green is growing itself!*

*Your website (<https://www.growinggreen.org.uk>) makes for exciting reading. For families wanting to take action themselves, how best can they support what you are doing?*

Growing Green is hiring! Schools often lack the resources (time, money, expertise) but want to make a change and they seem to love what we are doing.

We want to help as many schools as possible and are hoping to grow our team and are looking for project managers – email for more info.

Other than that, come to planting days or send your kids along. Immerse yourself in nature and learn. Donate what you can: time, expertise or money.

*Thanks to Growing Green*

*we are now underway with our first outside spaces project, a Teachers' Calm Space and Student Study Zone*

*(<https://www.growinggreen.org.uk/projects/williamellis-school-camden>).*

*This will include a pond, a wildflower meadow, seating area with benches made in DT, small native hedge to increase wildlife habitat, a mini orchard and other wildlife elements including log piles and climbers.*

*With the help of Growing Green we made a successful application to Veolia who are funding this project with a £1000 grant. Pond digging will start any day!*

*For more information and to get in touch with Growing Green, check out their website here:*

[www.growinggreen.org.uk](https://www.growinggreen.org.uk)

*Useful Links:*

[www.powerupnorthlondon.org](https://www.powerupnorthlondon.org)

[www.heath-hands.org.uk](https://www.heath-hands.org.uk)

[www.schoolfoodmatters.org](https://www.schoolfoodmatters.org)

## 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](mailto:williamellispa@gmail.com) to find out more about us and how you can get involved.

# Don't fret, fix it!

Under WESPA's in kind programme, instrument repairs save money and the environment.

WESPA is big on reusing and repairing. Following his restoration work last year, this month, parent and WESPA Chair Al Mobbs, donated his skills as a musician to repair four more bass guitars.

Replacing them would have cost about a thousand pounds, while repairing the broken machine heads and missing strings cost only £100.

This is also a big win for the environment: wood used to make musical instruments often comes from endangered forests, and varnishes and accessories make them difficult to recycle.

Many thanks

to Al for saving these four bass guitars from landfill or the incinerator, and giving them a new chance to make beautiful music with our students.

If you have skills, time or things to donate, please check out the How to Help page on our website: <https://sites.google.com/view/williamellispa/how-to-help>

Right: WES bass guitars back in action.

Below: Recent donation of art supplies.



## Dates for the Diary

WESPA Quiz – 23rd February at 6pm at WES

Heath Hands Family Nature Walk (<https://www.heath-hands.org.uk/whatson/family-autumn-nature-walkfeb24>) – 24th February on Hampstead Heath

WESPA Meeting – March tbc, WES School Library

New parents welcome event at WES – 20th March

WESPA Social – March tbc, 7-10pm

Working Weekend at The Mill – 8th-10th March

Growing Green Second Hand Clothes Sale (<https://www.growinngreen.org.uk/>) – 28th April

## New eco group for parents

There were so many parents at William Ellis interested in environmental issues that we formed a group.

We support our students to lead change on environmental issues, and the school's efforts to be greener, and we represent

parents who care about the environment.

We have parents with experience in promoting environmental causes, forestry school leadership and conservation, local government, art, architecture, education and advocacy.

We are eager to support student leadership, so if your child has an idea to make the school greener, please get in touch.

And if you have your own ideas, experience, contacts, or interest and energy, we would love for you to join us.



Contact [williamellispa@gmail.com](mailto:williamellispa@gmail.com)

# Working Weekends

A message from Alice, Warden at WES Residential centre, The Mill...

I am not sure that I have actually said it enough but while I am writing, I wanted to say a HUGE thank you to everyone who volunteered their time and energy at our Working Weekends last year.

A tremendous amount was accomplished across all three of the Working Weekend... all jobs that would take Sam and I months to get through. It really is always very much appreciated.

For those of you who didn't know, we are back to the pre-Covid format of a two-night residential at The Mill, for those who wish to stay Friday to Sunday.

Our volunteers carry out essential work around the site



including maintenance of the grounds and repairs.

Volunteers are welcome to come for half a day, a full day or the entire weekend.

The weekend is fully catered and children are more than welcome to join us for the weekends, as long as they are accompanied by a responsible adult.

For those requiring transport, we hope that as happened last year, there will be a mini bus leaving from William Ellis School on the Friday evening and returning back to London on the Sunday afternoon.

**2024 Dates:**

Fri 8-Sun 10th March 2024

Fri 26-Sun 28th July 2024

Fri 11-Sun 13th October 2024

Any questions, please do not hesitate to ask. We look forward to seeing you in 2024!

Alice and Sam, wardens:

[themill452@gmail.com](mailto:themill452@gmail.com)

[www.themillforestgreen.co.uk](http://www.themillforestgreen.co.uk)

For a virtual tour, click

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vCulKM37kSI>

For a more in depth introduction and interviews with Alice and Sam

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_5teyHmvAN4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_5teyHmvAN4).

## 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](mailto: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

7,000+ online brands

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-schoolparentsassociation>. 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](https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/williamellispa/?invite=1KH7PM%26referral-campaign=c2s%26utm_campaign=admin-trigger%26utm_content=srt)