



West Dean Church of England Primary School

West Dean, Chichester, West Sussex, PO18 0RJ

Telephone: 01243 811247



We do our best in all we do, with God's love.

'Love one another. As I have loved you, so must you love one another.' John 13

Newsletter 16 09.01.26 There are still a lot of winter bugs about so attendance has fallen slightly to 96.2% this week.

Don't forget, Rev Sarah's 'Rector's Rambling' available by [CLICKING HERE](#) Always an interesting and inspiring read.



We hope you all enjoyed a fabulous Christmas period with your families. We were, once again, overwhelmed by the generosity of your Christmas gifts and well-wishes to staff. On behalf of all the staff, sincere and heartfelt thanks to you all. Your support and love is much appreciated

Welcome back to the start of 2026 and an exciting new school term. There is all sorts going on between now and Easter and learning has kicked-off with great enthusiasm and a hive of exciting activity this week. It has been wonderful to see the children return to class and be inspired by new learning themes and engaging 'hook' activities to spark their interest. Do take time to read about what each class has been up to.



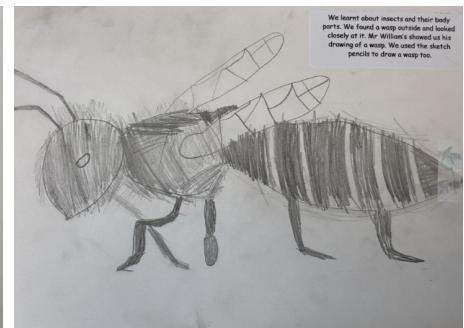
STEMtastic Propulsion - Chestnut Children had some careful thinking and designing to do as soon as they returned to class for 2026, in order to solve a tricky boat design STEM challenge. Combining their skills in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths, they were given a range of materials and tasked with designing and building a boat, propelled by a (elastic band) wind-up motor. Their boats were tested in open water, well, a piece of guttering filled with water in the classroom, with impressive results!

The next day, an iceberg appeared in the classroom, as inspiration for the current learning about the history of the Titanic disaster. As luck would have it, there was plenty of ice available in our school grounds during the chilly first half of the week, so Mrs Johnson was able to float a 'bucket-berg' in a tank of water, so that the children could carefully observe the proportion of ice showing above the surface, compared to that which lurked below!



Let's look closely

Apple class have just started a learning journey about mini-beasts and have been 'Looking Closely' at pictures of insects this week. Sometimes, things happen that are unplanned that but perfectly with our learning and add an extra element of excitement. Having just learnt about insect body parts, the children were very excited to find a (slightly drowsy) wasp in the outside area. After a brilliant discussion and a close look at it, the wasp was carefully placed in the hedge away from harms way to continue its sleep. Later that afternoon, the children produced some stunningly detailed sketches of the wasp.



Terrific Tiger Transformation!



Maple Class children were excited to find the outlines of some animals hiding in the undergrowth on their class room display board when they arrived on Tuesday. There was a very plain looking parrot and the outline of what, at the time, resembled a sparkling white polar bear. It didn't take our marvellous Maples long to sort the problem. Embracing their topic theme 'Don't let them disappear' and employing brilliant painting skills, between them the children have transformed the very plain cat into the most spectacular tiger. Stunning work, Maples!



What's the State of Matter Beech Class?

It's been a mixture of science and mystery in Beech Class this week. Arriving on Tuesday to a laboratory of colourful liquids and bubbling bottles, the children began to explore their science learning for the term, 'States of Matter'. It was when some very large footprints appeared in class along with a 'Please help us' message from somebody calling themselves The Giant Scientist, that things took a mysterious turn. We don't yet know who the Giant Scientist is, but this mystery has certainly sparked the children's imagination and several of them have been keen to share their theories already. Later that afternoon, as with Chestnut Class, the freezing weather helped to provide an impromptu learning opportunity for Beech Class, in the form of a completely frozen swimming pool. On closer inspection, we couldn't believe that it was solid to a depth of about 10cm. Mr Williams had to work hard to make just a tiny hole with a hammer!



Fruit and Milk for the Spring Term.

If your child would like to have a drink of milk and a fruit snack at break time this can be booked on our Arbor payments system.

Milk for the Spring Term - £6.50

Fruit for the Spring Term - £6.50

If your child is in Apple or Maple Class fruit is provided free of charge under a Government funded scheme, there is no need to book this.



News from West Dean 'Friends'

Thank you again for supporting our 'Friends' Christmas events, you have all been amazing and we have raised in the region of £3,000 after expenses.

This is such a fantastic amount of money which will go towards our new Trim Trail along with potential grant funding for which the Friends are also busy applying.

There are lots future events planned, so please keep an eye out on future newsletter and on your email for further details. A huge thank you to our volunteers who work so hard and to all of you for supporting our school.

'Pre-loved Uniform: westdeanuniform@gmail.com. If you have any specific requirements from our pre-loved uniform, don't wait for the next sale, you can email us to see if we have what you need!

Thank you to everyone for all that you do to help and support our 'Friends'.

Even though Christmas is over there are still lovely West Dean gifts available!

The children have worked hard and designed a range of bespoke bags and tea towels.

These are available to purchase from school. They are a shop item on Arbor, Tea Towels £5 each and bags now at the reduced price of £4.00. These will make wonderful gifts for friends and family and also a lovely keepsake of your child's time at West Dean.



Attendance, punctuality and arrival at school

Thank you for the really good effort to start the new year off with good habits, ensuring your children are in school and ready to start their learning at 8.30am.

When something doesn't go according to plan and you are a little late, if the playground has cleared of children, please go to the front door and report to the office, rather than trying to access the classrooms directly.

There is no adult supervision outside at this point and for security and safeguarding purposes, we must lock the pedestrian gates as soon as possible.

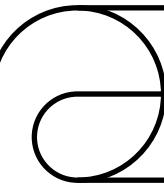
There are a lot of winter bugs around at the moment so understandably, absence due to illness has risen either side of the Christmas break.

A reminder please that you should use your discretion as parents regarding when your child is ready to return to school following a cough or cold related illness. However, where they suffer vomiting or diarrhoea, they MUST remain at home until 48 hours after the last instance of this, to help reduce the risk of passing anything on.

Finally, since there is an immediate bombardment of holiday advertising in the media as soon as Christmas Day is over, you may be thinking about planning a holiday for the coming year.

A reminder please that in line with Bishop Luffa Partnership Policy and Local Authority Policy, authorisation of absence for a term time holiday will not be given for anything other than very exceptional circumstances. Unauthorised absence of more than 5 school days may result in referral for a fixed penalty notice from the Local Authority.

Please work with us and support us in this. We know that the cost of holidays goes up when schools break up — it does for us too — but there are 13 non-school weeks a year and your child's education and time in school is relatively short and therefore precious. It isn't just about the individual lessons they miss, it's about gaps in the sequence of learning that occur and, particularly where absence occurs close to a school holiday, the important social opportunities children miss.



Yr R Raffy - for being such a kind and caring friends to others.
Well done!

Yr 1 Edith - for looking closely and taking care at sketching a wasp during art lessons.

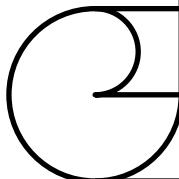
Yr 2 Theo G. - for working so hard on your handwriting and writing some amazing sentences in the first week back.
Well done!

Yr 3 Eddie - for settling into West Dean so well. We love having you in Beech Class.

Yr 4 Luna - for your fantastic attitude to learning. Keep it up!

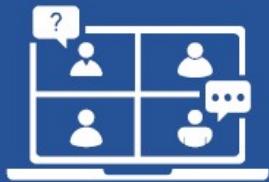
Yr 5 Teddy - for your amazing STEM challenge boat design and your thoughtful ideas for how to improve the propeller.

Yr 6 Lilly - for listening carefully to instructions and then creating a fantastic outline to your geometric iceberg picture



TRAINING

SPRING TERM 2026



WORKSHOPS

Making Sense of Masking

Tuesday 13th January

7.30 - 9.30 pm

Understanding Demand Avoidance

Thursday 15th January

10.30 am -
12.30 pm

Making Sense of Wellbeing: Self-care skills for parents and carers

Tuesday 20th January

7.30 - 9.00 pm

Understanding Sensory Processing Differences

Wednesday 28th January

10.30am -
12.30pm

Making Sense of Anxiety in Adolescence

Tuesday 3rd February

7.30 - 9.30 pm

Making Sense of Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

Wednesday 4th February

7.30 - 9.30 pm

Making Sense of Annual Reviews

Thursday 5th February

10.30 am -
12.30 pm

Understanding Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Thursday 12th February

10.30 am -
12.30 pm

All of the above training will be delivered on Zoom

For further information visit our website or email: outreach-training@reachingfamilies.org.uk



All our workshops are free of charge. For more information or to book a place, please visit our Eventbrite page or scan the QR code.

reachingfamilies.eventbrite.com



**Reaching
Families**

www.reachingfamilies.org.uk

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2025/26 INSET Days

Monday 23rd February 2026

Wednesday 22nd July 2026



Spring Term 2026

Tuesday 6th January—Friday 27th March

Half term break—Monday 16th to Friday 20th February

Monday 12th January	First week of school clubs
	Chestnut Class 3 Peaks Challenge
	Open the Book Assembly
Tuesday 13th January	Hugo Van Driel Assembly
Wednesday 14th January	8.30, Westgate Swimming, Yr 3,4,5 (drop off at Westgate Leisure)
Tuesday 20th January	Young Voices, O2—Chestnut Class (no running club with Mr W)
Tuesday 20th January	Drama for All, Apple and Maple Class (in school)
Wednesday 21st January	8.30, Westgate Swimming, Yr 3,4,5 (drop off at Westgate Leisure)
Wednesday 21st January	SSP Quicksticks Hockey (details sent to those attending)
Thursday 22nd January	1.00-3.00, SSP Future Flyers at Westgate (selected Chestnut)
Tuesday 27th January	8.45 Poetry at Bishop Luffa (Chestnut Class)
Wednesday 28th January	8.30, Westgate Swimming, Yr 3,4,5
Wednesday 28th January	SSP Cross Country Event at Bishop Luffa (details to follow)
Wednesday 4th February	8.30, Westgate Swimming, Yr 3,4,5
Thursday 5th February	1.00-3.00, SSP Stinger Netball Event (selected Chestnut tbc)
Friday 6th February	Foodbank Friday
Week beg. 9th February	2 x Year 10 Bishop Luffa Students in school on work experience
Tuesday 10th February	Safer Internet Day
Tuesday 10th February	Hugo Van Driel Assembly
Wednesday 11th February	8.30, Westgate Swimming, Yr 3,4,5
Wednesday 11th February	'Friends' Film Night (details to follow)
Thursday 12th February	1.00-3.00, SSP Future Flyers at Westgate (selected Chestnut)
	No Dance Club on this day.
Friday 13th February	Final day of half term
Monday 23rd February	INSET Day (no children in school)
Tuesday 24th February	First day back to school for all children