

This was Sherborne Learning Centre's third voyage on the John Laing.

6 crew, 2 staff.

Louise, Georgia, Levi, Naomi, Jordan, Ellie

Natalie and Chris

The 3 days were sponsored by the Royal Thames Yacht Club.

2 students were old hands, building on their previous experience.

4 were very new to the idea.

Natalie is a newly qualified PE teacher, working as my able assistant.

The voyage news reports;

On Monday we were joined by another group from Sherborne Learning Centre who started with a short passage from Ocean Village to Hamble Point marina - a lively and excited crew! Next day they headed down the western Solent towards the Needles before turning and sailing back downwind to Cowes for dinner, games and showers. Wednesday morning saw some shore leave before heading back to Southampton and the end of the voyage.

The conditions were harsh, F6 gusting F7, with rain in the squalls.

The students experienced self-inflicted sleep deprivation, followed by a boisterous day in the Solent that challenged them all... at one point Louise was the only member of the crew able to sail the boat, with Levi looking very green but determined not to suffer the ignominy of being sick or retiring to his bunk. The others were there already. The next day they emerged, after a serious night's sleep, keen to sail the boat; preparing the boat, hoisting sail, helming, tacking and winching. Even the time spent cleaning the boat, happy hour, was effectively engaged with. Speed washing up is always a winner, with everyone being involved and speed eating of chocolate pudding puts the consumption of food in a different light; it's fun!

On our return there was clear evidence of social, emotional and physical development amongst the students.

Levi had been the one student that colleagues said was least likely to embark... he was there! Careful preparation included calls home to his parents, advising what he should bring. Interesting conversations about their own memories of school trips all helped. It transpired that this was the first time he had slept away from home and had left his home town, without his parents.

Louise was able to reintegrate herself with her peers after a traumatic incident, the week before.

Georgia so impressed the sea staff that they invited her back as a trainee bosun. She has since communicated with Caroline White and is keen to participate on the refit weekend.

Naomi was very new to us in October and the trip enabled her to become part of the group much quicker and more positively, than she might have.

Jordan revealed his true character and became sociable having barely said anything in the weeks he had been at the Centre. His friendship and team working with Levi was fantastic to see; together

Chris Hutton
1st December 2014

they worked the mizzen all watch, becoming proficient with repetition, having started with no self-belief whatsoever.

Ellie handled the return trip in a mature way, having started out with all the knowledge and answers, she then extended herself quietly, being useful around the ship. Her comment about the 3 day trip not being as beneficial as a 5 day, has been noted. She felt she had not had a chance to develop her skills. No sooner had she got over her seasickness, Ellie had 1 day to sail and then leave. She could see the benefit of the extra 2 days training where skills could be put to good use and practiced.

As Natalie talked to the students in the weeks that have followed, it's clear they look fondly and with humour on the time spent together. She has gleaned telling details of how they have been involved, challenged and moved on.

Colleagues at the Weymouth Outdoor Education Centre have commented on the radical difference in attitude experienced in young people, after a John Laing voyage. Previously there has been little or no cooperation, afterwards there has been enthusiasm and engagement.

There is always a positive vibe about the Centre after a John Laing voyage, with young people asking to go again and new people becoming more open to the idea of participating. Staff who have not had any previous sailing experience have said how much they have enjoyed the experience, including the extended contact time with the students. The shared experience follows on into the classroom, where teaching and learning becomes more the norm and less of a confrontation with the youngsters.

Thankyou again to OYT (South), the volunteers and sea staff of John Laing, and to the Royal Thames Yacht Club for making the voyage possible.

Chris Hutton

(teacher, Sherborne Learning Centre)

Reflections of a 3 day journey on the John Laing.

As a newly qualified physical education teacher at the Sherborne Learning Centre, working in a developing physical education course; I am eager to explore all the different routes in which our pupils can develop physically, socially and emotionally. When the John Laing trip came up in conversation, there was nothing but positive feedback to be had both from staff and students (except of course for the expected sea sicknesses). Therefore it was an opportunity that I just had to be a part of.

Before embarking on the trip, I took notice of all of the student's behaviour, peer groups and confidence levels; due to the fact that I understand from previous experience of residential trips, that all of these areas can be developed. I planned to monitor each pupil's progress throughout the trip, to see if there were any noticeable changes.

On the first day of the journey, we were greeted by all of the students (an unexpected bonus) and the welcoming crew aboard the John Laing. The boat was harboured in Ocean Village, Southampton on a delightful sunny day. All of the students were excited to begin their trip and were full of smiles.

As our trip began, each of our students were given jobs to complete both as an individual and as part of a group; something that some of our students really struggle with. However, rather surprisingly, most of our students learnt how to cooperate and communicate effectively with one another. This meant that changes in the student's behaviour had already begun from day 1. Some students found that they enjoyed taking different roles than that of other pupils, and they all seemed to find their role in their small teams; until it came to tidying the boat. This is where a minority of students thought it silly to clean the boat at the end of each day's hard work; that was until the skipper put on some of their own music and turned it up loud. This then made 'Happy hour' just that, Happy.

The second day of the trip was made famous by the amount of people falling ill with sea sickness (myself included); however the crew and remaining children left standing demonstrated empathy and kindness to others; which was not only heart-warming to witness but also quite surprising at times. This was due to the fact that in the school environment particular pupils didn't get along with one another, however on the boat it was a whole different story; showing that they were developing socially and emotionally. Coming from a background in physical education, I was also aware of what tasks each pupil was carrying out; whether it be climbing the mast to attach a sail or helping a peer to raise the raise. From what I was able to observe throughout the 3 short days we were on board, all of the pupils had attempted and mastered new skills; some of which they thought wouldn't be possible. This was mainly down to the crew on board, who were knowledgeable, friendly and fluent in the way they helped our pupils; something that is desperately needed when working with challenging children.

The final day of the trip was most likely my favourite of all the days, due to the fact that it was clear to me just how much each and every single one of our pupils had either learnt or developed within the last few days. This was evident when they were asked to go and tie on a fender to the outside of the boat, they didn't have to ask how to tie the knot or exactly where to put it; they were just able to complete the task independently; something they couldn't have completed at the start of the trip. Also the atmosphere on board was that of an enthusiastic team, who were all socialising well and truly enjoying themselves.

The fact that I was able to be involved in such a trip with the pupils at the centre is a memory that will stay with me forever. I will always view this trip as beneficial to any pupil, of any ability, due to the fact that all of our students progressed, learnt new skills, developed confidence in themselves and most importantly enjoyed themselves from start to finish.

A special 'Thank you' to the crew on the John Laing 6-8th October 2014.

Natalie Willis