

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

Children's worries over bullying should concern all of us

Some people, when looking back on their school days, will tell you that those times were the happiest days of their lives.

But, judging from the results of a snapshot survey of more than 3,000 schoolchildren, that is not the case for many youngsters these days.

The survey, commissioned by Norfolk County Council's public health department, asked a string of questions of youngsters.

The questions covered subjects from children's physical and mental wellbeing, lifestyle, how they felt about their school, family and other services.

It is particularly alarming that, according to the survey's findings, one in three children reported that they had been bullied.

And that bullying can, in these days of smartphones and social media, be relentless.

Incidents where people are punched or teased in the playground still happen.

But what this generation of youngsters has to endure is cyberbullying – where even at the end of the school day, bullies still target them.

The aim of the survey was to help to design services to meet their needs.

Valuable information to do that has been gained and we hope that ways can be found to make school a more pleasurable experience for those pupils who expressed concerns.

But it is also up to us all, as a community, to recognise that being young can be a stressful and confusing experience.

A summer of inspiration

Summer is around the corner, with long sunny days (we hope) and so much to do outside.

We constantly urge our youngsters to spend fewer hours on the computer and more time outdoors.

But the long summer break may also mean a break in learning at a time in their lives when continuity in reading and writing is so important.

The Write On Norfolk campaign, which aims to help young people keep up their writing and literacy skills over the holiday, is just what is needed to bridge the gap.

We know how wonderfully creative our young people can be, and this campaign, launched today by the EDP and Norfolk County Council, in association with Jarrold, will give them the opportunity to express that creativity throughout the summer months with a story, a letter, a diary entry or a poem with some link or reference to something, someone or somewhere in Norfolk.

As best-selling author Louis de Bernieres says today, the competition will not only be a satisfying opportunity for children to put pen to paper: it will also be an inspiration for us all.

Air ace on the wing again

As the saying goes, if you ask, you shall receive.

That was certainly the case for Battle of Britain ace Tom Neil, who was flown out to France aboard a private plane this weekend to receive his Legion d'Honneur.

His family were concerned that, nearing 96, the wing commander would not be able to make the journey - so asked the powers that be if anything could be done to lessen the strain.

They granted his request, so Saturday, just a short drive away from his home, Mr Neil and son Patrick boarded the plane and - in less than an hour - were in France.

Our congratulations go to Mr Neil, for an honour so richly deserved.

READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ A brown hare is enjoying the crops in a field at Raveningham in this photograph taken by Val Bond. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

Speaking freely in your native language is a basic right

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On January 26 this year in Adelaide, Australia, a woman called Elizabeth Close – a well-known artist – was talking in the street to her small child in her native language, Pitjantjatjara.

The homeland of the Pitjantjatjara-speaking people covers a vast area of the Central Australian desert, in South Australia, the Northern Territory and Western Australia. Their language, unlike most Australian Aboriginal languages, is surviving rather well, and has about 4,000 speakers.

A young white woman overheard Elizabeth talking to her child and started abusing her. "It's Australia Day," she shouted. "We speak English in Australia!"

The English language arrived in Australia less than 230 years ago. Pitjantjatjara and the other 250 or so Aboriginal languages have been in Australia for tens of thousands of years. There is nothing very Australian about English. But everything about Pitjantjatjara is Australian. It is a truly Australian language. The young woman, as well as being guilty of crass racism and linguisticism, was also guilty of gross ignorance.



■ The landmark Uluru, Ayers Rock, in Australia where many native languages still survive.

Picture: PA

There is another story on the same theme from the USA. It may well be apocryphal, but it's true enough in its way all the same. A dark-skinned woman in the American Southwest was in a supermarket, talking on her mobile phone in a language that wasn't English. When she finished the call, a white man nearby turned to her and said: "You're in America now – you need to speak English. If you want to speak Mexican, go back to Mexico!" The woman replied, "Sir, I was speaking Navajo. If you want to speak English, go back to England!"

There is of course no such language as "Mexican". But Navajo is one of the 250-odd Native American languages that

were spoken in what is now the USA for millennia before the arrival of Europeans.

It's bad enough to take somebody's country away from them. But to then attempt to take their language away from them too is really adding extreme insult to dreadful injury. Being able to speak freely in your native language and dialect, in your native land, is a basic human right.

We have no cause in this country to feel smug and complacent about this. In 1746 the British government declared the speaking of Scottish Gaelic "illegal" in the Highlands and Islands. And there are, sadly, still English people who accuse the Welsh people of "rudeness" for speaking their own language in their own country.