Press Release

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Award-winning performer teams up with avanti west coast to treat pupils to feel good field trips

- *First-of-its-kind initiative to offer up to 5,000 free trips to children at schools with high pupil premium rates*
- *Spoken-word performer George the Poet will host kids' poetry workshop in London*
- *Additional trips include cooking on Manchester's Curry Mile and an artistic expression workshop at The Herbert, Coventry*

Avanti West Coast has teamed up with award-winning spoken word performer and social commentator George the Poet to launch Feel Good Field Trips; an initiative that will connect thousands of pupils across Great Britain to immersive and enriching learning opportunities, to which they previously would not have had access.

In a first for a UK train operator, the campaign will give pupils aged 4-18 the chance to travel by train to destinations across the West Coast Main Line for hands-on learning, fun and culturally diverse days-out. From learning about the science of sound in a state-of-the-art London recording studio, to art workshops in Coventry City of Culture 2021 and cooking on Manchester's famous Curry Mile, Feel Good Field Trips will offer up to 5,000 pupils previously unattainable field trip experiences. The schools involved are from Avanti West Coast's network of partner schools which all have high pupil premium rates.

The campaign builds on the Avanti Schools Programme, which aspires to connect young people from a range of diverse socio-economic backgrounds to opportunities across the route.

Rail Minister Wendy Morton said: "This is a brilliant initiative from Avanti West Coast, that will get the next generation out and about seeing the best of our country while using our fantastic rail network to do it."

Kicking off the campaign and fronting the initiative as the 'Culture Conductor' is renowned spoken word performer, poet and award-winning rapper, George the Poet. George gave pupils from Ashbury Meadow Primary School in Manchester a taste of what kind of experiences Feel Good Field Trips has to offer by hosting a once-in-a-lifetime poetry writing and recording studio production workshop in a state-of-the-art London recording studio.

WEST COAST PARTNERSHIP

AVANTI WEST COAST

Ten pupils aged 10-11 collaborated with George onboard an Avanti West Coast train from Manchester Piccadilly to London Euston in a poetry workshop, which saw them create their very own piece of spoken word art, later recorded together at Soho Sonic Studios in Camden*.

George the Poet said: "Some of our most important learning experiences as children take place beyond the confines of the classroom. Having spent time as a youth worker, helping young people to access a healthy dose of educational escapism is something I'm very passionate about. That's why I'm excited to help kick-start a project that will connect young people from a whole range of different backgrounds to exciting and enriching opportunities that they'll always remember. I had a fantastic time working with the pupils from Ashbury Meadow Primary School; together we created a brand-new piece of spoken word art and took an in-depth look at the science of sound, the recording process and how technology has evolved. I'm thrilled that so many other kids will get the chance to enjoy this kind of hands-on, immersive experience as part of the Feel Good Field Trips campaign."

Mark Gibson, Assistant Headteacher at Ashbury Meadow Primary School said: "The trip was a dream come true for most of these children who have never been on a long-distance train journey, let alone into central London. We'd like to say a huge thank you to Avanti West Coast for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for our pupils, which includes meeting George the Poet as well – that's the icing on the cake."

Other launch events which have kick-started the campaign included a hands-on cookery day with some of the most revered chefs on Manchester's Curry Mile. Pupils from COOP Academy in Stoke-on-Trent learnt about the history of the Curry Mile and cooked up a storm making a delicious vegetarian curry and baked bread in a Tandoor oven.

In Coventry, the 2021 City of Culture, the team at The Herbert guided Year 7 pupils from King Edward VI Sheldon Heath Academy around Daniel Lismore's latest exhibition 'Be Yourself: Everyone Else Is Already Taken.' Children were then treated to a creative workshop where they sketched out designs for their own piece of pattern-based artwork.

These events mark the beginning of the campaign which will see more destinations and experiences added over the next two years across the West Coast Mainline including outdoor adventuring in the Lake District and fashion upcycling in Glasgow.

Avanti West Coast is working alongside Community Rail Partners from within the Community Rail Network, including Community Rail Lancashire, Heart of England and Rail

74 to deliver this campaign, with additional partners set to join the campaign during its two-year roll-out.

Avanti West Coast Managing Director, Phil Whittingham, said:

"The past two years have been incredibly difficult and school children have been particularly affected by this pandemic. Not only has their education been heavily disrupted, but they also lost out on two-years' worth of social experiences. With the launch of Feel Good Field Trips, we want to give young people across the West Coast Mainline access to truly enjoyable opportunities which they otherwise would miss out on. Our network is rich in iconic destinations, which truly reflect the cultural diversity of our nation. We can't wait to offer some much-needed joy to thousands of children who thoroughly deserve it."

- ENDS-

NOTES TO EDITORS

For more information, visit: www.avantiwestcoast.co.uk/feel-good-field-trips

*Feel Good Field Trips

By Ashbury Meadow Primary School, helped by George the Poet

We've been stuck at home, unable to roam,

But now, we're back on track.

At times we had the blues, now it's time for something new.

So put a pen and pad in your backpack.

We're going on a journey across Great Britain

Writing down what we see.

Poetry helps us express ourselves,

And travelling makes us feel free.

We might see some art in Coventry

Or head up North to the Curry Mile.

Then to the capital with our Culture Conductor,

To record our poems in style!

Whether it's a school trip or a day trip,

All you need is imagination.

The world is your oyster, the train is your spaceship

And your adventure starts at the train station.

About Avanti Feel Good Travel

The safety of our passengers is always our utmost priority. Avanti West Coast abided by the latest coronavirus guidance from the UK government.

All schoolchildren took multiple lateral flow tests 72 hours ahead of the school trip and on the morning of to ensure the safety of all schoolchildren on the Avanti West Coast Line.

Numbers within the carriage were controlled to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience.

About Avanti West Coast

Avanti West Coast, operator of intercity rail services on the West Coast Main Line, is a joint venture between FirstGroup and Trenitalia, delivering a cleaner, greener railway that drives the West Coast forward.

We're on a mission to revolutionise train travel, linking together the towns and major cities of the UK to create an iconic railway the country can be proud of. We've got big plans including a fleet of new intercity trains, as well as the complete refurbishment of the

existing Pendolino train fleet. We will introduce more train services every week with new routes added, and a much-improved onboard service with enhanced free Wi-Fi, plug sockets, 25,000 brand new seats and improved catering. Since 8 December 2019, passengers have benefitted from improved passenger compensation, available for journeys delayed by just 15 minutes.

For the latest news, visit the Avanti West Coast Media Room:
https://newsdesk.avantiwestcoast.co.uk/

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