

LINK ACADEMY TRUST

CHRISTMAS 2017 NEWSLETTER



A Merry Christmas to All

FROM NICKY DUNFORD CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

In November Academy Orders were received for the three schools of the Woodleigh Federation to join the Link Academy with a conversion date of 1st March which was very exciting as we had been working together within a Management Partnership since May. The three schools should be formally part of the Link Academy on 1st March.

We have been working closely with staff in the three schools to support them but also to benefit from their expertise, however it is planned that because of the geographical distance these schools form the basis of a replica hub. The schools will receive the same system support from Central Business Team; however school improvement will be managed from within the hub while we consider whether there is further opportunity to grow the hub with local schools and Federations close by.

We have supported Woodleigh governors in their leadership role, providing the DfE with the information they require while also introducing more effective financial systems alongside savings which we will continue to build on together. This has meant we are now able to spend more at classroom level as our aim continues to be to deliver the very best outcomes for children all our schools.

We now have a timeline of actions in place that we need to fulfil with the support of Michelmore's legal team and the Local Authority, together with our hard working staff and that of Woodleigh Federation..



Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC)

Meeting- 20th October

In preparation for the Head Teachers Board consideration of Academy Orders, we met with Claire Dockar the RSC lead that was taking our proposal forward. She was really impressed with our ethos around supporting and developing small schools and as a result we have been asked to be part of an Initiative with the DfE looking at how small schools overcome the difficulties normally associated with restricted budgets, lack of staff etc. She was also delighted with the success of the Central Business function in ensuring our schools are able to focus fully on teaching, learning and improving outcomes for our pupils. Again she understood what we are aiming to achieve through the Improvement and Inclusion Hub and thoroughly endorsed that as an exemplary model. Matt Matthew, our Trust Business Manager, is also part of a DfE pilot project to improve procurement approaches within multi academy trusts. Claire also agreed to consider becoming a Director for the Trust as she felt we had some inspirational practices going on- what an accolade! Well done to everybody because it is pulling together that enables us to achieve the very best for our children.

A Business Update

Matt has worked really hard this year to streamline our finances and ensure we have systems that are transparent and accessible to all those that need to have a clear picture of how we are managing our budgets. Michelle Adams has really stepped up to support Matt and is beginning to be in a position to do much deeper analysis of how we perform financially and how we can continue to get the very best value for money. We will be carrying forward the amount recommended of all MATs in the Academy's Financial Handbook- that is 2 months full operating costs, which is a considerable sum of money. We have also started to build a small reserves 'pot' which will ensure we can cover eventualities that might arise and / or plan small improvement projects.

This is a very good position to be in and it is through everyone's attention to detail in spending where there is a real need that has enabled this to happen. I know it can be tough, but our schools are looking smarter than ever this year, we have had a number of small externally funded improvement projects thanks to Tam Russell and a considerable refurbishment at Stoke Gabriel, some very positive developments that would have been almost impossible to achieve as stand-alone schools without academy status.

Matt has also been working with HCSS to develop an HR and Payroll package that will mean we have better provision and we will take this 'in house'. While this will mean hard work in the lead up to the changeover it will continue to make savings for all schools and will enable us to be much more flexible. Sue Howard continues to lead on HR and personnel, keeping accurate records and managing staffing changes which means that schools no longer have to worry about the responsibility of these changes and we have a consistent, co-ordinated system.

OFSTED at Cheriton Bishop

On Wednesday 6th December Cheriton Bishop experienced a short inspection; the Ofsted Inspector spent the day at the school questioning the Head of School, staff, pupils, parents and governors. I was asked to discuss the current role of the Link Academy and the future as we expect to see it. Governors were questioned to show how they support and challenge the schools leaders, while the Head of school along with teachers and TAs reported on teaching and learning to address issues that the Inspector had identified from the data available to her. Everyone was very professional in their efforts and while we are not able to reveal the outcome until the report has been reviewed it was a very positive experience and a constructive and encouraging process.

We expect to see the Inspection Report posted approximately 3 weeks after the Inspection.

Totnes Learning Community

We have had some very encouraging discussions and intend to strengthen our work within the Totnes Learning Community group in the future as we have now signed up all our small schools as part of the organisation. All our schools will have access to Subject Leader Briefings delivered by Babcock staff and other training opportunities, an example of which would be the early Years Group. This training and support will ensure we are keeping abreast of changes and new developments within the core subjects. Heads of School will have access to Operational Meetings which will enable the sharing of good practice in leadership and Heads will continue to meet as part of the Strategic group shaping the way forward by sharing ideas, expertise and the capacity to offer support and training across all schools. Matt is also leading the Administrators group and has some exciting ideas around cross school support and reviews.

Dates for all meetings will be sent out to schools and we will ensure staff have the opportunity to attend not only to be able to share good practice but also to gain understanding of changes and pedagogy.

A very exciting move forward!

Expansion of the Improvement and Inclusion Hub, offering more for our children

There has been the opportunity for Multi Academy Trusts to apply for a Multi-academy Development and Improvement Fund this term and we have submitted an application to support the creation of a Crediton area based hub of small schools and further expand the provision available from our Improvement and Inclusion Hub.

We hope we will be awarded this fund but it is not guaranteed, however in considering this development we have decided we will ensure we do increase the capacity of the IIH to support Heads of School. We envisage three strands of support-

1. The current inclusion work, supporting vulnerable and challenging children, linking with external agencies that have necessary expertise
2. Special Educational Needs and Disability, helping HoS to apply for funding and making links with Educational Psychologists, with the Plymouth Excellence Hub etc
3. Disadvantage pupils, tracking and supporting improved outcomes.

The facility we provide will continue to be based at Bearnas but staff will be available to every Academy and will be travelling out to schools to do the very best for our children.

School Performance

The 2017 school performance tables are out and we must congratulate Tedburn St Mary, soon to join us, for taking the top slot with 100% of pupils meeting expected standards.

Top performing school in Devon, a brilliant achievement.

When analysing the positions according to subjects: Tedburn St Mary is top in writing progress and maths progress, with Stoke Gabriel in 16th position in writing and in maths Hennock is 5th and Stoke Gabriel is 6th

Stoke Gabriel is in the top slot for reading progress, with Tedburn St Mary third and Hennock 9th

Yeoford is third in the percentage of pupils reaching higher standards in reading, writing and maths in KS2

So quite a good showing for our small schools! Well done to all our schools- what an achievement.



News from the Heads of individual schools in alphabetical order:

Bearnes Primary School

Our oldest children have been attending some amazing workshops at Coombeshead this term, including photography, writing, maths and art. They have also been to a workshop to build incredible lanterns in readiness for the annual Lantern Parade through Newton Abbot.



Anti-bullying week initiated some important discussions which resulted in a number of brilliant presentations to parents.

The Outdoor Experience has been another feature of our learning this term as our minibus has transported children to Hennock to enjoy their local facilities, making resources for the wildlife. We also used the parks around us in Newton Abbot for wellie walks and the beautiful new outdoor classroom in our playground.



School Council have been busy as usual raising funds through a bake sale and Spot-tacular Day for Children in Need, while the older children are working with Coombeshead to develop our impact further afield.

More inter-school sports have taken place this term, although as yet we haven't been bringing home the trophies- we are working towards it!

Maths teaching has taken an exciting turn as we all follow a similar approach to the Singapore model which involves starting with the concrete/ resources, moving to pictorial representations and finally applying the skills learnt to more abstract methods. The children have shown consistently better progress as a result and are developing a real passion for maths.

Finally, we have introduced Accelerated Reader, a brilliant supportive reading package that has really revived attitude to reading; the library has been moved into the centre of the school and new books have been added, all of which has increased reading power in our school!

A brilliant term with loads achieved!



Diptford CofE Primary School

Pre-School have officially joined the school and have opened full time in our new building. Our EYFS team have worked extremely hard in setting up this new environment and putting new systems in place and are working well as a new team.



British Values Week was a big success and included; Anti-bullying week, Parliament week and supporting Children in Need (planned by our Diptford Diplomats / School Council).

Staff have planned and delivered a number of workshops for parents including; Accelerated Reader, Phonics, Tapestry and Maths.

We have continued to maintain and improve our media profile within the local community and have featured in the local newspapers on several occasions, always aiming to engage new families and recruit more children.

Maths teaching has begun to take an exciting turn as we are following a similar approach to the Singapore model (CPA approach) which involves starting with the concrete/ resources, moving to pictorial representations and finally applying the skills learnt to more abstract methods. We have also trialled using CAPED (check, another, prove it, explain and draw) as approach to marking and feedback in maths which is encouraging children to demonstrate mastery in their learning.



Accelerated Reader has proven to be successful in promoting reading for enjoyment as well as improving children's comprehension skills. The library has moved downstairs into the hub where it is more accessible for all children. With support from our PTFA (FODs) we received £1000 grant from Calor Gas to buy new reading books and have also had good publicity for the school as a result (film crew in).



We have participated in South Dartmoor Partnership sporting events as well as benefitting from PE CPD from Saints Southwest. Although participation numbers are not as high this year for out of school events, all the children who have attended have thoroughly enjoyed themselves and demonstrated good sportsmanship. We have made good progress in reviewing our Christian School Values which has involved children, parents and our school committee. Following a final consultation with staff, we will be ready to share and celebrate these with all stakeholders in the New Year. A busy term with lots of achievements!



Harbertonford CofE Primary School

The PTFA have bought 13 new laptops and a welly shed for our pupils with last year's funds. Our welly shed has now arrived and will allow pupils to use the field for longer. The PTFA have also been working really hard and raised over £1700 this term with autumn and Christmas fairs, movie night, and tea and cakes harvest and Christmas performance.



Our school council have had lots of lovely ideas to support charities, including Children in Need. We did well in our Book Fair, gaining £180 in free books to keep our AR shelves packed! Pupils have had visits from dentist, the Dog's League, fire service and the Multi-storey Theatre Company plus whole school trip to Ashprington church.



Children have been using our lovely new outdoor classroom, including for forest school. We have also had a highly successful bid for laying hedges! for bats...

We have been involved in the same maths approach as Bearnas using the Singapore approach, generating the same level of excitement! Working with the All Saints Teaching School Alliance has been great for Maths and also phonics development. We have been part of a School Improvement Fund project focussing on phonics- we really feel that this will really impact positively on our pupils reading progress. Our student has been a great addition to the team. She returns after Easter and George Murray will be here for 6 weeks for his early years practice.

A really busy and productive term again!

Merry
Xmas

Hennock Primary School

Hennock children have forged super links with the church this term, decorating the church for harvest and again for Christmas, it has been really appreciated and the children have really enjoyed taking part in these activities and performing in the church. As always every child at Hennock took part in the usual exceptional performance that has become one of the main highlights of the Hennock year- this year 'Dream on' was a sell out performance and was of the usual incredible standard.



Another success - Mothers and Toddlers group at Hennock has expanded beyond anything we have experienced before, we now have 2 days and 20 families and we are seeing the school grow from its grass roots. Pre-school is also expanding and new pupils have joined the school.

Gemma who leads our Pre School has introduced Muddy Maths which children love as it reflects our continued focus on outdoor learning. Year 5 and 6 have been taking part in a tool-making outdoor focus in order to build resilience in learning, they have certainly enjoyed the experience.



Our children have been involved in a number of sporting experiences with Teign Valley schools; in fact they came 2nd in the Netball Inter schools tournament which was a very exciting experience. Tim Flint has been working with us on a regular basis and as a result we are really building our sporting and healthy exercise experiences. He has also worked with children to develop Games Makers- children who work in addition to our play leaders coaching children before school and organise sports.

School Council have organised a national shoebox appeal and have done really well to support other children in this way.

Finally, our Progress Pirates have been a great success, where pupils buddy up and help peer review each other's work. Pirates look for treasure in the books which helps them engage with their learning and has made a real difference to how effectively children consider and edit their work.



Landscope CofE Primary School

So many experiences and so much achieved this term!

Accelerated reader has been introduced, the library has moved back into the school building and reading has been given a new boost of life across the whole school!

It has been a really successful term for the Eco Committee, who have made a big difference to the grounds securing support from parents for our Saturday cut the trees and clear the playground flower beds ready for repairs. The children have written letters to local garden centres asking for donations of plants, we have received vouchers to spend from Trago and Fermoy's, as well as a whole trolley of plants from Hill House Nursery.



Our foundation children visit Redmount Nursing home in Buckfastleigh every fortnight for fun, games and craft enjoyed by both the residents and children in equal measure.

An Exhibition & Open Evening of Art work and FAB work took place in October ~ a great opportunity to share and celebrate fantastic, artistic creativity. Some of this work is now on display in a Health Centre. It also generated a possible 12 new families, all of whom came back for a second visit.

F.A.B. we have renamed RE! (Faith and Beliefs) and held a workshop day with vertical groupings for the children. All the work from this was shared with parents at our Harvest festival where we collected donations for Buckfastleigh food bank.

All classes have presented a class assembly for parents sharing their work and enthusiasm for learning.

Sport this term: we have continued to make the most of every sporting opportunity available to us from the School Sports Partnership. Cross country, High 5 netball tournaments, (we're in the finals in January) invasion game festivals and dance lessons and clubs.



The whole school has taken part in a field trip to Riverford Farm and field kitchen to explore from the field to our plate. The children even got to make pizzas in the field kitchen. This educational visit provided the stimulus for arts week. Wild woodland learning: The Eco Council (and key staff) have been working with Josie Wright to look at rebranding our version of Forest School as we are aware that we take a rather broader look at learning beyond the classroom than the title forest school might suggest.



We have a long standing relationship with Plymouth Uni & Marjons and benefit from the latest research as well as offering student placements for teacher training. This term we have welcomed Mrs Karen Barlow (via Schools direct) into class 3 and Miss Lauren Cooper in class 4. Lauren completed her practice with us last week ~ gaining an OUTSTANDING grade... fantastic!

We're just starting our mathematical journey ~ everyone learning new skills and trying out new teaching and learning strategies. Exciting times! Finally we have visited Bethlehem 3 times in the penultimate week ~ All three performances were brilliant and the confidence and self-assuredness displayed by the children was remarkable. What I call "Ahhh... factor 10".

A full and fun term.

Stoke Gabriel Primary School



The term started with an Out and About week where we extensively used our locality, walking, exploring forest school learning and visiting the sailing club. Similarly to make our learning exciting with an added dimension Year 3 & 4 went to Totnes to investigate the Saxon influences on our local town, Totnes. Year 5 and 6 were not being outdone and ventured off to Bristol to visit the Science Museum to extend their scientific experiences. We really love our learning!

School Council independently ran a 'pop-up cafe' to raise funds for Comic Relief which was brilliantly successful.

Chef Barbara has been working with the children to involve them in the preparation of the midday meal, going to the local shop to buy the ingredients and then preparing and cooking them. It has been a great experience for everyone.



Fitness Fridays are keeping us all active- we do a 1 minute challenge and after every session look back at our previous efforts to see whether we have improved- and we have!

Our sporting experiences have continued to be very exciting as the Paignton College sports festivals continue. We had a super Whole School Arts week where year 6 children mixed with our youngest children and every other group in between- please come and see some of the amazing work around our school.



Finally we will be sending our talking books out to parents- we planned, wrote and edited stories, finally producing them by reading aloud and recording our work, they will be going out soon. We are very proud of what we do and our school, especially now that we have new heating, lighting and in some places carpets, thanks to a CIF bid which gave us £165,000 to spend on our school.

Everything is looking really smart and feels like a whole new experience- we are such a great team!



*Finally, A Very Merry
Christmas and a Happy
New Year*

