

LINK ACADEMY TRUST

CHRISTMAS 2021 NEWSLETTER



A Merry Christmas to All

FROM NICKY DUNFORD, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Dear Parents and Carers,

It has been so lovely to have all the children settled into school this term, seeing them all undertaking brilliant learning activities and thoroughly enjoying themselves in the excitement of understanding new things. As you will see from the school summaries below our schools continue to be totally individual in their approach, offering an enormous range of wonderful learning experiences. I have asked them to select just one thing to focus on, as this Newsletter seemed to have taken on a life of its own because they all wanted to show the diversity of experiences our children had been party to! I would like to take this opportunity to really thank all those parents, people in the community, staff in schools and as part of the Central Team, volunteers, governors and Trustees etc, etc.... for all their support, especially through the last two years of pandemic. It hasn't been easy for anyone and we have seen everything from issues of mental health, shortage of funds and food, to loss and bereavement and yet everyone has done their best for each other. Staff in particular have worked so hard for the school family and community, so a massive thank you from the Link Academy Trust. The last weeks of this term have been a little more difficult as we have had some small spikes in Covid outbreaks and we have not always had the staff coverage we would like. We are not alone, many schools are suffering in the same way and some have even had to reduce the days children can attend- there are no supply teachers available!

We continue to do our best to ensure we deliver excellent education and exciting opportunities and to this end have secured a Teacher and a Higher Level Teaching Assistant to support schools as necessary. They are not attached to a school but go into our schools when there is a need and significant periods of absence need coverage, this will be a real bonus to the excellent running of schools. This term the teaching staff have focussed on delivering a very progressive, skills based curriculum, in line with the new Ofsted Framework and have been working together across the Trust in Subject Leadership groups to share best practice and support each other. This too has been highly successful and has led to consistent quality first teaching in all our schools. The Executive Improvement Team have had the opportunity to go into schools to monitor and support where this has been needed. Through their coaching and mentoring a highly successful programme has been implemented which has resulted in best practice being fully embedded in schools. I am really proud of the developments that have taken place, particularly for some schools.

This term's work has been reflected in a clear growth in pupil's confidence and progress, not to mention numbers. The Trust has grown from 1,234 pupils in September to 1,388 currently, Pre-school numbers alone rising by 41 pupils and that is before our January intake. I am really proud of the way Academy Heads continually work together to share all they do, it is such a bonus of this Trust with 'like' schools all being able to forge forward through an honest and trusting approach- giving each other support to be the best they can be.

I hope you all have an amazing Christmas, please make the most of your family time. Let's hope the weather is kind to us and we all enjoy the holiday break. Thank you all once again for your amazing support

Nicky

Bearnes Primary School



The entire school was extremely lucky this term to have a visit from Space Odyssey – an out of this world experience taking them all on a journey through our solar system and deeper space.

Every child had the opportunity to spend an hour inside the huge space dome watching some amazing 360 degree immersive videos, whilst learning so many exciting facts about our galaxy and space travel.

They even got to learn what life was like on the International Space Station – as you can imagine ‘how do you go to the toilet in space?’ was a keen question!

It was a fantastic day and one we all feel lucky to have had!

"In the planetarium the director made us think that we were actually in a spaceship and showed us how some planets have rings and some don't. He showed us that Mercury has a cold side and a hot side. He also told us how clouds are made of little particles of water and when there are too many particles of water in the clouds it spits out rain!" - Alfie

"I really enjoyed the planetarium because I was able to see all different planets and stars and stars that were even bigger than the sun. I didn't know there could be stars bigger than our sun!" - Samuel

Merry Christmas from everyone at Bearnes

Broadhempston Primary School



An artist in residence, Bridget Arnold, joined us for our first arts week where we studied the natural world. We gained a real insight into how an artist begins and the strategies she uses for creating Sun prints a method of using cyanotype chemicals and sunshine to capture plants and natural objects. The children had a fantastic time working using plants that they had gathered themselves on walks. They enjoyed watching the process magically unfold and transform their plants into artistic creations. Our Exhibition & Open Evening of Art work took place in October ~ a great opportunity to share and celebrate fantastic, artistic creativity. It also generated interest from new families, all of whom came back for a second visit.

We've ended the term with some fantastic Christmas performances. I never tire of our trips to Bethlehem! All three performances were brilliant, and the confidence and self-assuredness displayed by the children was remarkable. The KS1 event was simply delightful with a real sense of joy and innocence that made it memorable for all. What I call "Ahhh... factor 10". And the KS2 shows? Well, I thought that every single child contributed to two very accomplished and entertaining evenings. A heart-warming start to Christmas!



Cheriton Bishop Primary School



At Cheriton we are lucky to have such a knowledgeable, passionate and enthusiastic community. The staff are always looking for ways to enrich the children's learning and provide real life experiences, which we know, stick with us the longest. During the Autumn term the children have had many opportunities to engage in such activities but the most recent whole school 'It's good to be green' was such a success it deserves a special mention. The children rotated, in mixed age groups, around a range of practical activities in and outside. From making improvements to encourage wildlife into our garden areas to discussing the impact of using no electricity for a day. During the day the children were resilient and dug, cut and planted despite the cold. They were supportive and looked after each other without being prompted. They had great discussions, made links to what they already knew and used this to strengthen their points. I am proud to be part of such an incredible community which demonstrates such positive behaviours for learning and look forward to how we can develop this further next term. We hope you all have a wonderful Christmas and a healthy and happy 2022.

Diptford CofE Primary School



The autumn term at Diptford has been a busy one, it has been so lovely having all the children in school and there has been lots of hustle and bustle in the build up to Christmas, I am so proud of how hard the staff and children have worked; they really are a credit to the school. Thinking back to the start of September and where we are now, wow, we have done so much, to name a few things; Hawks class went on a trip to Plymouth, we held a very successful Open Afternoon, lots of Forest School Sessions and most of all, lots of fun!

One of the biggest highlights was our Christmas production, it took a lot of work but it really was worth all of the efforts which went into organising it, so it was safe for our parents, staff and children. Getting back into church to perform came with a massive sense of achievement and the children were amazing, it really was something special, seeing everyone in church, celebrating Christmas. I hope you all have a lovely Christmas and see you in 2022!



Drake's CofE Primary School



This year Drake's School performed the play 'Born in a Barn.' Our year 3/4 class took the main roles which included, amongst others, a cockerel, an owl, some mice, and a dog! They retold the Christmas story very eloquently and the singing was amazing. One song, He's the King, was particularly moving as the children used Makaton signing as they sang. A brilliant performance and so lovely to have parents watching again this year.

The children had a Christmas themed day which included a morning of art and craft and then watching an online panto of Cinderella in the afternoon. There were lots of boos and cheers as they watched Cinderella's journey to the ball and meeting the prince. They wore their Christmas jumpers and really enjoyed the whole day.

Harbertonford CofE Primary School



This term has seen the children at Harbertonford making the most of their outdoor learning spaces with the help of parents and the community. The new Forest School timetable means that every class has a dedicated block of outdoor learning each term and the Forest School area, as well as the school grounds, have been given a revamp thanks to our Green Team (a group of volunteer parents and pupils who have come in at the weekend to achieve this). Our Kestrels class also had the chance to work with a volunteer from Sustainable Harbourne Valley to help redesign the village park area. The project, which has been approved by the Parish Council, gave the children the opportunity to investigate the types of trees that would thrive in local conditions and create plans for the site, which will provide edible fruits that can be accessed by everyone in the village.



Hennock Primary School



Introducing extracurricular clubs and competitive sport again must be the highlight of the term for us at Hennock Primary School. There's nothing better than representing your school with pride and passion, and that is certainly what we have done on several occasions this term. Firstly, we were invited to compete in the Teign Valley Football Tournament where we revealed our new sports kit. Looking the part, we played it too! We were victorious and walked away champions. On another occasion this term, we were invited to compete in a basketball tournament, hosted at Bearnas Primary School. Donning our new kit with honour, it was another group of children that came back to school with the basketball accolade. Winners are gridders! Finally, this term we have introduced our Roles & Responsibilities Committees. These roles will continue to evolve during the year and will see children given a wide range of opportunities to develop their leadership skills. Children and staff have been working together to identify and develop leadership potential, which benefits both children and the day-to-day running of the school. These opportunities have been some of the ways we have developed our school values of Individuality, **Mastery**, **Belonging**, **Empowerment**, **Inclusivity**, **Nurture**, and **InGenuity**. #IMBEING

Islington CofE Primary School



Happy Christmas from the children and staff at Islington CofE Primary School. This has been an amazing term for Islington as we have come back together again as a whole school with the completion of the building work and the opening of the new EYFS unit. Children from ages two to five now share the wonderful facilities and enjoy learning through continuous provision inside and outside, whatever the weather. Our older children have benefited from having the responsibility of "buddying up" and supporting the youngest children which they were unable to do last year due to the split site during the building work.

All of the children have enjoyed learning in newly refurbished, light and airy classrooms this term. We have also been lucky to have new IT equipment and improved high speed internet access too. The new class structure now allows children in upper and lower key stage two to be taught separately and avoids the need to mix key stage one and key stage two in classes together. At present, the children in Honeywell are currently enjoying rehearsing their Nativity and all of the children are looking forward to next week's virtual visit to Finland and to their special Christmas lunch. An exciting time for the children at Islington CofE Primary School and more to look forward to in the new year!



Landscope CofE Primary School



This term has been a busy one! One of our main projects this year is the Global Neighbours project which links many curriculum areas together enabling some great learning and experiences. Love your school day ♥ was a HUGE success. Supporting the development of our Spiritual Garden, as well as sprucing up the playground, PE shed and woodland area. Our Arts week this year was linked to the impact we have on our natural world and so Class 3 went on a beach clean to find out more. The children found hundreds of pieces of litter, ranging from small pieces of plastic to a large barbecue. We then booked an amazing artist who helped the children creating sculptures from plastic waste & recycled materials. The power tools handed to the children had me in a bit off a spin!! The children loved it and the result is a super beach tree in the spiritual garden. Our open evening & Art exhibition on 10th November was the first time we've had parents back into school - there was a real buzz, which was great.

As part of our project a cultural champion also visited school to discussed diversity, tolerance and respect for people of different faiths and cultures.

The term has ended with Christmas and all the joy it brings- who could ask for a better place to work & learn?

Morichard Bishop CofE Primary School



The school had great plans for the spring and summer of 2020 as we had planned to build a spiritual garden for the pupils and community of Morichard Bishop CofE Primary School. Unfortunately, COVID came and the plans were put on hold. As restrictions lifted this term we were able to put our plans back on track. This term we have held three "Garden Days" where parents, friends, children, staff and volunteers have worked together to start creating the garden. The project has been fully supported by Friends of Morichard Bishop CofE Primary School (FOMBS) who not only helped with the labour, but also supplied some amazing cakes to keep the workers going. On day one of the project the grounds were cleared and the land was levelled, day two comprised of marking the pathways and forming the borders and day three included digging over the borders, adding manure to the beds and planting some bulbs. So far it has been a lot of hard work as we prepare the ground for the planting in the spring. The challenge for the school is to complete this project by the summer in time for the villages 'Open Gardens Weekend'.



Moretonhampstead Primary School



We have had a wonderful term. The school has been buzzing with excitement with the children and staff really enjoying their lessons and playtimes especially with the 'Covid bubbles' removed! We have been fortunate to have several visitors coming to school to enhance the children's learning even further. These have included: Animal Magic, who helped to inspire the children into their Rainforest topic; and actor, story teller Steve Manning who arrived as a Viking and then time travelled over lunch and returned as a WW2 Air Raid Warden. The older children are currently working with MED Theatre to write plays and perform them linked to the history of WW2.

The children have been able to venture 'off site' once again. Our Year 2 children visited the Sentry and planted a heap of bulbs which we hope will provide lots of colour in the Spring time. Other children enjoyed a residential at Heatree, experience a plethora of outdoor activities and had a thoroughly marvellous, if muddy time! We have a lovely 'festival type' Harvest and Christmas performances with parents and guest bringing their own chairs and the children performing outdoors. Hearing children sing again was an absolute delight. We are not beaten by the wind and rain at Moretonhampstead!

Have a happy and safe run up to Christmas.

Ottertton CofE Primary School



The Autumn term at Ottertton has been a busy one! The children came back to school in September full of energy and enthusiasm for their learning and this hasn't stopped. They have worked really hard in class and have attended a number of sporting events run by the Dartmoor School Sports Partnership. We opened the doors to our pre-school in September and it has got off to an amazing start, we are looking forward to welcoming more children in the new year. Our school council have run a shoe box appeal, putting together present boxes for children that are being helped by a local charity and have also done fundraising for 'Just One Tree' and 'Children in Need', it's always wonderful to see the compassions and empathy that the children in our school have for those not so fortunate as they are. Christmas preparations have been in full swing, our performance of Ned's Christmas Discovery was wonderful, a real credit to the staff for putting it together and the children for being absolute superstars! It was great that we were able to welcome parents to watch, it's felt like a very long time since we were able to do that.



We hope you have a wonderful and safe Christmas break.

Stoke Gabriel Primary School



The Autumn term at Stoke Gabriel has been a very busy one indeed and unlike any other term we have had in while. It has been wonderful to remain in school for face to face learning where we have been able to take part in a host of enriching experiences through our Enquiry Journey learning. We've had vintage fire engine visits, been back in time to meet Samuel Pepys, been joined by Young Parliament for assembly and hosted International days to name a few.

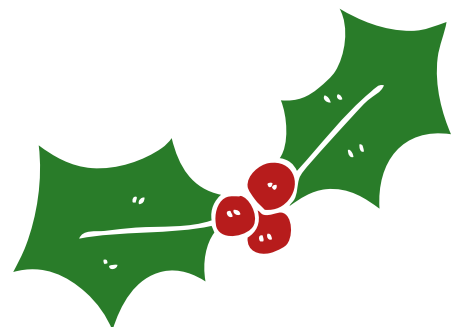
The school has been so supported by our families and on Love Our School day some volunteers replenished our planters at the front of school and built our reception children a new water wall to go in their new outdoor space. Our PTFA have achieved incredible fundraising totals with a very creative approach. Thank you to everyone who donated their time and supported us.

Happy Christmas!

Tedburn St Mary Primary School



Another busy term comes to an end at Tedburn St Mary with Christmas celebrations across school. It was lovely to see our Willow and Birch classes perform on stage once again and KS2 singing carols on the playground. Well done to all our children who have all been working incredibly hard across the term, the children have shown a real desire to learn and improve in all aspects of their work. With lots of exciting and fun ways learning being explored in classes, from Roman and Egyptian days, Forest school, Art days and sporting competitions all being enjoyed by the children. Resilience has been a strong focus this term and our children have certainly embraced this and shown huge amounts of positivity and determination to succeed and challenge themselves. We would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



Widecombe-in-the-Moor Primary School



During the autumn term, we have been using our Forest School skills to further our learning using the outdoor environment. We would like to thank the Friends of Widecombe Primary School for gifting us with a trained Forest School teacher and to local parents for allowing us to use their land. Our youngest class, Webburn, learnt many essential Forest School skills, such as using hand drills and bow saws, and put this to good use in their Design Technology lesson to design and make appealing wooden necklaces. They also used leaf recognition in maths to develop their number bonds.

Lower Dart have enriched their literacy and Roman topic by researching the history of pigments and dyes before making their own natural dyes using lichen, alder nuts, gorse flowers and bracken around the forest fire.

Upper Dart have used their outdoor learning sessions to further their topic and design and technology. They have followed ancient Roman recipes, making Posca and Punic porridge over the fire. They also designed Roman coins in the classroom, made clay moulds then melted pewter to cast their own coins at the forest school site.

We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Yeoford Primary School



This term has been full of excitement! With a whole school focus on resilience, the children (& staff) have certainly been put to the test but we haven't let Covid dampen our spirits! The whole school have been exploring the question 'Would Yeoford survive an invasion?' and armed with catapults, castle walls and shields, we are ready for battle!! The younger children have reinvented classic fairy tales and put a modern twist on them. Children in Fox class combined their art skills with poetry expertise and created a virtual gallery. With a new class teacher, the Year 5 and 6s have reflected on the importance of identity, exploring the life of a Roman Gladiator and in contrast, a day in the life of a Yeoford Primary School pupil. As well as inspirational learning opportunities, our children have taken part in activities for Children in Need, Roald Dahl Day, Maths day and sports events. We are incredibly proud of all our students but would like to highlight the altruistic attitude of children in Owl Class who fronted a venture to get families to gift advent calendars rather than send Christmas cards. We have now donated over 100 advent calendars to Crediton Foodbank!!

Happy Christmas from all at Yeoford Primary School



**KEEP
CALM**

AND

RELAX...

IT'S CHRISTMAS

*Finally, we wish you a
very Merry Christmas and
a Happy New Year.
Please stay safe.*

