

# LINK ACADEMY TRUST

## SUMMER 2021 NEWSLETTER



FROM NICKY DUNFORD  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Dear Parents, Carers, Trustees, Governors, Staff and everyone,

I have just looked back to the newsletter I sent out to you this time last year, which was focussed on the first and most difficult of lockdowns we faced, stretching from March right to the last few days of term and have realised what a long way we have all travelled. We were one of the only Trusts that insisted that all children had the opportunity of at least two weeks return to school before the summer break. That period had a really positive impact on pupil's learning as parents had been really stretched to manage their children's learning and staff needed time with their pupils to gauge the learning position their pupils were in. We had faced something we had never tackled before and we were all experiencing a very steep learning curve!

This year has been equally as difficult in terms of lockdowns but I do think, having listened to your responses to our survey we were able to support you and the children far more successfully with our online learning provision which was resumed in January and only ceased in April. We have been very aware of children's wellbeing and the mental health implications this whole pandemic period has caused. Children were eased back into their 'in school' learning just before the end of the spring term with an extended Science experience week and picked up a really effective and balance Recovery Curriculum thereafter. I think it is really important that you know that while progress and attainment may not be where we would like to see it in an ideal world, children have made significant progress this term and in the majority of cases have equalled or outstripped their position from December. Pupils and their teachers have worked so hard to achieve this.

The pupils across the Trust were very quick to return to their learning and were highly excited to see their friends. It was lovely to see, especially as we were able to start to cautiously engage with stimulating learning experiences and plan all the things we normally do in the summer, albeit often with restrictions. I think probably you have suffered more than the children as a result.

The end of term, however, has been a really difficult one, as the whole 'opening up process' has led to many schools unable to enjoy the usual end of term fun activities as a result of isolation measures, which have had a devastating effect on Leavers celebrations, in particular- which is so sad. Those schools where this has happened are opening up for belated fun and assemblies etc., the Academy Heads will be informing parents of such arrangements.

Let's hope things are back in a good place for September 8th when we return to school!

Once again thank you all, for all your support which has been so positive I am sure you will join me in thanking staff for their hard work and extensive additional hours of work to do the very best for pupils across the Trust- they are a very dedicated bunch and do everything they can to deliver the best learning experiences to our children.

This year I have asked each Academy Head to send a snippet of what they feel has been their greatest success this year- something they are really proud of, so I hope you enjoy their reports and pictures in alphabetical order.



## News from the individual Academies

### Bearnes Primary School

So the end of another term and another school year is upon us. It's been a different kind of year but this hasn't stopped us having some amazing experiences and showing off our talents. From creating some amazing Greek pots out of papier mache, learning about The Very Hungry Caterpillar and exploring the outside world to even putting on a museum inspired by Ancient Egypt (social distanced of course) it has been a thoroughly successful and busy term!

The second lockdown wasn't easy for anyone but on their return the pupils at Bearnes have excelled themselves by showing resilience and a real determination to learn and achieve. I am extremely proud of everything they and our dedicated staff have achieved this year.

We look forward to September when we hope to have our own bespoke outdoor learning space up and running for all of our pupils to enjoy and make memories.

Have a great summer break from everyone at Bearnes!



### Broadhempston Primary School

At Broadhempston we have worked hard to ensure all Sporting and Forest School events have continued to take place this year. The children have made excellent use of the Beacon Woodland area, experiencing whole days of bush craft, den creations and team building Mr Tanner has supported excellent PE developments across the year. We have run a traditional sports day for the children as well as having an amazing day of sporting celebration on 29th June... we had football coaches, archers, Exeter chiefs, professional dancers and a variety of other sports on offer. It was fantastic effort by the staff to ensure we didn't let opportunities be dampened due to Covid but had a full and exciting programme of events for the children.



### Cheriton Bishop Primary School

The children showed real resilience and adaptability this year, coping with endless changes and Covid rules and routines. They returned from Lockdown very positive and ready to learn and have had a really super summer term. There have been trips out, exciting sports, great science and even an earthquake or two. There has also been a real focus on helping children to 'bounce back' and make great progress in reading, writing and maths! The PTFA have been busy too, organising leaver's hoodies, waterplay days, towels and raffles. Many thanks to all of them.

A great year at Cherry B, well done everyone.





### **Diptford CofE Primary School**

It has been a year of ups and downs but here at Diptford it has been amazing to see the resilience and enthusiasm from all of our pupils and staff. Thinking back to last September we hit the ground running with learning how to use Teams, this meant that when we were put back into Lockdown, learning could continue at home and the children were ready. Personally, I feel this was a massive achievement and it allowed the children to stay connected, interact with their class and feel like they were in lessons even though they were not in school.

We have been so lucky at Diptford to have such a supportive FODs group, due to their extensive fundraising efforts we now have a fantastic play area for all the children to use. This is a big part of Diptford and I know that FODs are already planning their next fundraising mission.

Thank you so much for all your continued support, I feel very privileged to have stepped into Mrs Lethbridge's shoes and I am looking forward to seeing what September brings.

Miss Churchward



### **Drake's & Otterton C of E Primary Schools**

The highlight this year has been coming back together as a school community and using our local environment.

Both schools have fabulous facilities and access to an amazing local environment. We have allotments and easy access to countryside, open space and river walks. We have utilized these wonderful assets a lot since returning in March.

Sports Day at Drake's and Otterton were a huge success along with our Sports Community Day which brought both schools together and the children enjoyed expert coaching from various sports - TAG Rugby, Archery, Cyclo-cross and Dance.

The allotments have been enjoyed by all of the classes and at Otterton we have had a crop of Onions and Peas picked by the children and then taken home for their tea!

As part of our Toilet Twinning Charity work both schools took part in sponsored walks along the River Otter and in our stunning local area and raised a staggering £1000 in each school!

To have the children back together and hearing the 'buzz' of the school is what everyone has missed and we have enjoyed being back together. We wish everyone a happy and safe summer break.



### **Harbertonford CofE Primary School**

This year has seen us take our first steps on our journey to developing a Global Awareness culture to ensure that our children gain a picture of world culture, events and challenges. Our World Explorer Days have taken us to America, Spain, China (Chinese New Year), India (Holi), England (St George's Day) and France (Bastille Day). They have given the children the opportunity to "explore" the geography, history, traditions and cultures in other countries, as well as sample different food with specially themed menus prepared by our wonderful team in the kitchen. They have proved to be an enriching addition to our existing curriculum and have gone ahead even during lockdown periods.





### **Hennock Primary School**

At Hennock, we are particularly proud of our enrichment week this year. We organised a range of experiences that would broaden children's horizons, particularly after we haven't been able to have different trips and visitors in recently. We had Elfyn Jones in for a brilliant music day with an Afro-Caribbean theme, where the children learned different West African songs on the ukuleles, djembes and other percussion instruments, as well as some samba rhythms. We took the whole school to Teignmouth for many children, it was their first experience of a double decker bus! KS1 took a cruise around Torbay and we went right up to the cruise ships that are harboured out at sea while KS2 learned how to stand-up paddleboard and kayak in the harbour. Sports Day was a fantastic experience for the whole school community and it was great to see the older children supporting the younger ones in their very first races. We also got to paint a whole-school mural, make our own clay pots and canvas portraits then we ended the week with some amazing outdoor learning and each child got to make, cook and eat their own pizza on our brand new pizza oven. It was just brilliant to see the whole school come together to try our new things. I am so proud of the children for their behaviour and attitude with having a go, supporting each other and making the most of the opportunities. What a brilliant way to end the school year too!



### **Illesington CofE Primary School**

This year Illesington staff have been involved in creating exciting learning opportunities to bring interest and meaning to the study of History and Geography, through a focus on our local environment. We worked successfully with local historians, park rangers, families and experts in Geology, History and Botany within our local community. Together we were able to bring to life the lives and ambitions of those involved with the Granite Tramway on Dartmoor. The children developed a real understanding of and admiration for the people who transported tonnes of granite along the tramway to the canal. Then on to London where the granite was used to build St Paul's Cathedral and Nelson's Column. Our pupils were inspired and engaged by their experiences, and it fed their desire to write and to share their understanding of all that they had discovered. Next year we plan to build on the success of our outdoor learning and to continue to draw on the expertise within community.



### **Landscape CofE Primary School**

A 'normal' year at Landscape is peppered with traditional festivals and events that mark the passing of the year, usually celebrated as a whole community – children, staff and parents. Determined not to let this be interrupted by COVID we got technical! Harvest was recorded and shared, foodbank visits were made with our produce; Christmas was a full on professional film courtesy of a parent with the skills and know-how; little bags of thanks were delivered to every family in February; Mothering Friday was held via TEAMS and our daffodil posies warmed Mum's hearts; Easter was celebrated via TEAMS and Facebook and finally our leaver's assembly will be part in person, part on TEAMS! Let's hope we can be together a bit more in 2021/22!





### **Morichard Bishop CE Primary School**

During the Autumn Term, three girls from year 6 Ruby, Evelyn and Olivia set the school a challenge to run 5 laps over 5 days which would total 5K. This brought the whole school together at a time when we were trying to get to grips with the pandemic. Initially we thought this would raise a few hundred pounds for the Crediton Food Bank. Once all the money was in the figure reached an impressive £2332.20 which was greatly received by the food bank just in time for Christmas. This is a really good example of pupil voice combining with the School's values to do something worthwhile at a time of great need.



### **Moretonhampstead Primary School**

At Moretonhampstead, we are exceptionally proud of the amazing events we have worked so hard to organise, despite the difficult circumstances. We are very lucky to have the amazing grounds and space to spread out, and we really made the most of it! All of our children took part in sports day and we could even invite parents to sit in groups and spectate. Our pre-school, 'Little Tors', had theirs this week too. The summer fair, although we were unable to invite our parents, was a huge success thanks to the amazing 'Friends of Moretonhampstead School'. The children got to experience the delights of the bouncy castle, Mr Bumble the entertainer, stalls, ice creams, face paints and more. The colour-run was part of the fair and originally the idea of the Year 6 children. It was a great success!

Fortunately, our Year 6 children also got to experience their residential trip that was hanging in the balance for so long. Although it wasn't the year we had planned, together we overcame many challenges to make sure that the children missed out on as little as possible - none of which would have been possible without the amazing staff team, FOMS and community. What a year!



### **Stoke Gabriel Primary School**

This year has been one of significant change and I am incredibly proud of all that we have accomplished despite the challenges.

Enrichment week was a wonderful way to bring the year to an end and celebrate all we have achieved. Our international day saw us explore France and its rich culture and we even had a visit from Mr Smith's French identical twin who hosted our French Cafe..! Spiders went adventuring, rowing, making, foraging and cooking in Dittisham where they pushed themselves to new limits with the zip wire challenge! Forest school sessions throughout the week enabled us to get back to nature and unpick some of the big emotions we have felt over the last two years. Later in the week we all took part in sports day which was a huge success much like our community sports day where a host of professionals joined key stage two for workshops. The children showed exceptional sportsmanship during both days. Our whole school art project taught us a host of new skills with our beautiful birds going on display around school. Stoke Gabriel Primary School proved, yet again, to be an incredible place to learn alongside the community.





### **Tedburn St Mary Primary School**

Another crazy year has come to an end and everyone in school can be proud of all their hard work and efforts. Recovering from lockdowns and ensuring that all our children's have continued to have lots of fantastic opportunities to support their well being, has been a huge priority this year. Whether this has been through outdoor learning, class, team activities the children have always responded positively. All the children can be proud of how resilient they have been across this past year. We hope that everyone has a lovely summer and we look forward to hopefully a less disruptive year.



### **Widcombe-in-the-Moor Primary School**

Widcombe has achieved so much this year! Our attendance this year is the highest it has been for many years and that is not just down to our children being healthy, but because we are delivering a balance of a fun and enriching curriculum which children do not want to miss! We aim to make our curriculum purposeful and here are some of the activities we have done this year to achieve this: Visits from the RNLI to support our water survival skills using our school swimming pool.

Immersed ourselves in the Bronze Age with a trip to Heatree

We have been geographers and traced the River Lemon from source to sea

Year 5 & 6 went on a 2-night residential trip to Dittisham

In a year where we haven't been able to share all of our wonderful achievements in quite the same way, it was wonderful to be able to invite our parents to our Sports day this year. All of the children participated in races to the delighted cheers from their parents.



### **Yeoford Primary School**

We have had a really super year. We are so proud of how well all the children coped with online learning during the Lockdown with every single child engaging! Many thanks to all parents for their support with this. The children returned to school 'full of beans' and have worked extremely hard to 'bounce back' in their lessons and learning. There has been loads of excitement, from Teddy Bear's Picnics to recording films in 'Hollywood', to wonderful sporting activities and trips out and about. The PTA have been busy too organising parties, ice cream vans, leaver's hoodies and even a new shed! Many thanks to all of them.

Well done all at Yeoford for a tremendous year!



Have a super summer break and hopefully September will bring the start to a more normal year!

Kind regards,  
Nicky  
CEO