

LINK ACADEMY TRUST

CHRISTMAS 2019 NEWSLETTER



A Merry Christmas to All

FROM NICKY DUNFORD, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Dear Stakeholders, Parents and Carers,
We have had a really exciting start to the 2019-20 Academic Year with Broadhempston officially joining us on 1st October to become an Academy, with Dan Turner as Academy Head. A brilliant addition to the Totnes Hub with governors joining the Totnes Local Board.

The two Raleigh Schools, Drake's and Otterton also joined the Trust on 1st December after a short delay for legal issues to be addressed. Pete Halford has been leading these schools for nearly a year on secondment from Yeoford Primary, ensuring they have become strong schools with strengths to share and excellent places to learn as you can see from all they have done this term. Pete will remain the Executive Academy Head at the Raleigh schools.

Congratulations to Pete and family on the arrival of baby Dara only last week!

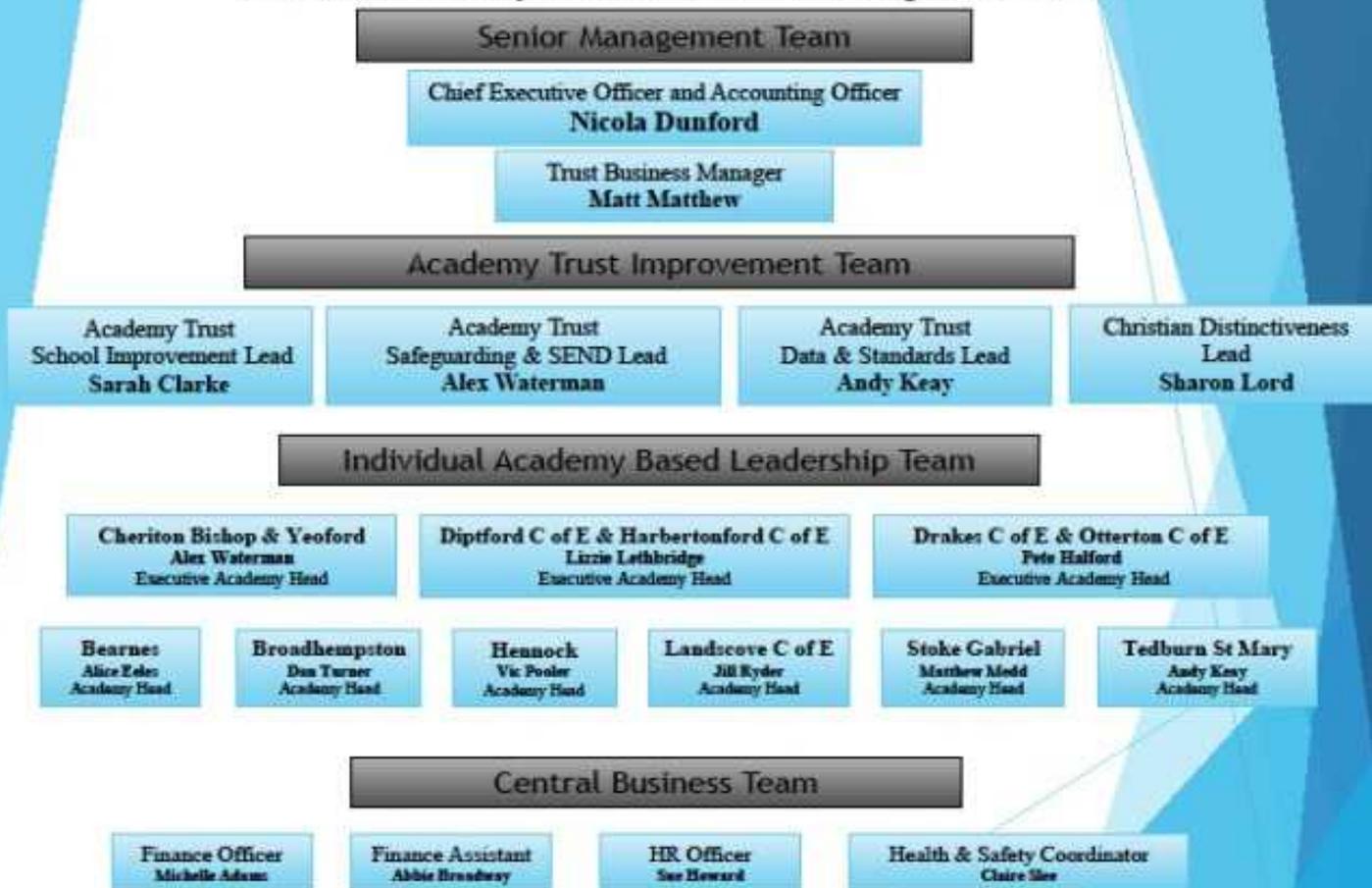
We are now therefore officially twelve primary schools, although we have been working as such for most of last year. We have more good news reflecting our reputation as a strong Trust. The Link Academy Trust has been selected by the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) to support and work with the three smaller primaries that were part of the South Dartmoor Trust: Ilsington, Widecombe-in-the-Moor and Moretonhampstead.

It is anticipated that these schools will join us on 1st February. We are working with the RSC to ensure a smooth transition and the Academy Heads are already collaborating to develop best practice and share their strengths. We are really looking forward to them joining the Trust as they share our vision and ethos. With the extension of the Trust we have been able to develop an Improvement Team to support Academy Heads (see diagram) alongside the Central Business Team which continue to manage all HR, Financial and property issues.

I anticipate that this Improvement team will develop further after Christmas as Lizzie Lethbridge will take a two term secondment to focus on outcomes across the Trust Schools and Richard Charley will be seconded into the Academy Head role for two terms at Harbertonford. Additional staff will give him time out of the classroom to fulfil this role. Lizzie will remain the substantive Academy Head at Diptford during this period.



The Link Academy Trust Senior Leadership Structure



Andy Key will also be seconded for a day a week to support and mentor the three new primaries joining the Link, this is to ensure they are able to integrate more effectively as a result. He will remain Academy Head at Tedburn St Mary.

The New Ofsted Education Inspection Framework

This September saw the start of Ofsted Inspections based on the new Education Inspection Framework (EIF) and we have been working hard to ensure our curriculum continues to be both broad and balanced while also addressing the new requirements of the Inspection. There is a much greater emphasis on reading and children developing extensive and mature vocabulary, while Inspectors will be completing 'deep dives' into how the teacher's rationale ensures quality first teaching and the children develop learning skills and make good connections thereby building on their understanding and knowledge. Our schools work hard to ensure this approach is always at the forefront of everything we do, especially as children experiencing practical and exciting learning means they really enjoy it!

PTFA support for Income Generation

This term saw the first Trust-wide Income Generation Workshop for members of the PTFAs across the Trust which was highly successful as those that attended went off with a range of new approaches. A simple example of taking an innovative approach was by Friends of Stoke Gabriel School (FOSS), who put a books wish list on Amazon to replenish the library. It was picked up by Radio Devon - which helped even more.

We hope to support our PTFAs even further next term in another day of sharing the successful approaches we have all put in place for our super schools! All parents and carers are members of the PTFA for their school, often known as Friends of....so please support them to 'add the icing on the cake' and give all schools the additional extras that our PTFAs do so effectively.





Finally thank you to everyone that supports our Trust schools.

You, our parents who support all we do, and empty your pockets at this time of year!

Our Trustees who give hours and hours of their time voluntarily, especially Isabel Cherrett, the Chair of the Trust, who has worked her way through a huge range of documents this year ensuring they are up to date and fit for purpose.

Our Staff at every level, who always 'go the extra mile' to ensure our children get the best learning experiences, including much sewing, prop-making, supporting the learning of lines, singing and making to bring the festive spirit to us all.

Our children who have given 'their all' in productions, carol services, Christmas fayres etc, they have all been spectacular.

And the often unsung staff in the school offices that continue to keep everything 'in line', including Sue in the Central Office who juggles many different things and makes sure we all get paid at the end of it!

I hope you all have a really super Christmas, enjoying all the cheer and festive fun.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Nicky



Our really exciting start to the 2019-20 Academic Year Broadhempston Primary now joins the Trust as an Academy

It has been a fantastic start to the academic year at Broadhempston with lots of fun activities happening both in and out of the classroom for all of our children.

At the beginning of the year, Year 6 went on their residential to Pixies Holt and spent two nights and three days taking part in activities and learning new skills. They all had a great time rock climbing, orienteering and weaseling (squeezing through extremely tiny gaps), they even had the opportunity to try their hand at archery. It was an incredible way to start the new academic year.



As part of their topic on World War II, Class 3 and 4 had a day trying to experience what it would have been like to be an evacuee during the war. Everyone dressed up in period attire and took a steam train ride on the South Devon Railway. As well as their train ride, they also explored a real life Anderson Shelter.

During the second half of the term Class 2 went to Paignton fire station to see what being a firefighter was like. They linked this to their topic on The Great Fire of London. All enjoyed the day; they even got to knock down targets using a real fire hose and explore the fire truck.

Community plays a large role in the day to day running of our school. This term the school was privileged to be able to get involved in planting trees in the new Community Orchard.



Every child in the school, over a two-day period, helped plant a fruit tree for all to enjoy. The days were a huge success and it was brilliant to see every child being involved in such a worthwhile and well thought out community project. We all look forward to spending time in this community space, as it develops over the coming years.



Raleigh Schools, Drake's and Otterton CofE Primary Schools join us

It been such a busy term and the children, as always, have been magnificent in the way they have approached their work and in their behaviour.

The term started in earnest with lots of new initiatives being introduced across both schools, with the biggest change being homework! Children have embraced the new expectation on how many times they need to read - 5 times a week! Children across all classes have been doing their 5 reads almost all of this term and they have been entered for a special prize at the end of term. As part of our drive to improve reading, the Book Bus visited both villages, which is a mobile bookshop - the children loved it - reading, sharing and buying books.



The children in Otters Class (YR, Y1 & Y2) in both schools visited Budleigh Salterton High Street as part of their Literacy sequence. The children got lots of good ideas to include in their writing.



The children from Dragonflies Class (Y3 & Y4) took part in a Cyclo-Cross race, which was the first time for some children. They all thoroughly enjoyed it and they were very muddy by the end!

Kingfishers Class (Y5 & Y6) visited Exmouth Community College and took part in a Maths Challenge. Both schools worked well together and they got to experience some 'secondary school Maths' which wasn't that hard after all!

Both schools have been re-vamping their libraries with Drake's moving their Library to a new room and Otterton going through their book stock. In the New Year both schools hope to have Accelerated Reader which will help all children challenge themselves with their reading.

The Christmas performances were fantastic with all of the children from both schools taking a role. At Drake's they performed the Little Fur Tree and Otterton performing Born in a Barn. The children will be ending the term with a trip to the Pantomime to see Snow White with the trip being paid for by both schools PTFAs.



The children and staff have worked tirelessly this term and they deserve a well-earned break.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



And in alphabetical order the remainder of our brilliant schools.....

Bearnes Primary School

It's been an exciting term at Bearnes with a lot of trips, events and changes. We have welcomed several new members of staff who have all settled in brilliantly as well as a number of new pupils.

Our Community Toddler group started in November and thanks to the dedication of our Early Years team, has been a huge success with growing numbers each week. Our aim is that this will eventually be parent led and numbers will continue to rise in this group and in our pre-school as a result.



This year's Christmas play 'Tinsel and Tea towels' was a hit with our families and the singing was absolutely outstanding. Our choir sang beautifully at the Light Up A Life service for Rowcroft which was our chosen charity for our school jumper day. They have also been invited to sing at local day care centres which is part of 5 Star Pledge to support the local community.

Year 5 and 6 encouraged the school to make plastic free poppies and contacted the Royal British Legion to request that poppies are not made with plastic in the future. As a result they were interviewed on BBC Radio Devon to discuss their reasons behind this.



We are so grateful that several of our children have been able to take part in Inclusion and Improvement Hub courses which have supported them to deal with various challenges and teach our staff new skills around emotional literacy.

All in all a great term!



Cheriton Bishop Primary School

It was a delightful start to the academic year when Cheriton Bishop Pre-school joined the Link and the school. The school has lowered its age range to 2 years old and the pre-school children have become an integral part of the school, often joining the older children for playtimes and story times. The school has a real family feel with older children helping to look after the little ones!

The classes have been busy! We have introduced our redesigned curriculum with Years 5 & 6 learning about Crime and Punishment; Years 3 & 4 learning about the Romans and our younger children studying a topic called 'All Over The World!'



There has been a lot of outdoor learning for our children, which has included Class 1 joining pre-school for weekly 'welly walks' to the Scout Field. Our wider curriculum has included collecting items for the Foodbank during our Harvest Assembly, a Remembrance Service (with a rendition of The Last Post played on the bugle), a Friendship Week and even a visit from the Air Ambulance mascot 'Ambrose the Bear'.



We joined the other schools in the Link for an exciting Climate Change Day with lots of learning and questioning and a focus on Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. The children also enjoyed a Big School tidy to make sure their own environment was well kept.

The run up to Christmas has been joyous. We have enjoyed our Christingle Service, Carol singing at a local residential home, parties and pantomimes. The real highlights were our Preschool Nativity and our school performance of 'Rock Around The Flock' in which every child was included and the performances watched by around 400 people!

A big thank you to our PTFA, who did a tremendous job, serving everybody with mince pies and a festive drink.

Merry
Xmas

Diptford CofE Primary School

Diptford children have shown outstanding sporting prowess and teamwork this term. The children have been fortunate to work with Mr Tanner and to take part in inter-school competitions with the Ivybridge CC group. Events have included football, rugby and athletics, and they even had the opportunity to attend Super Saturday at Plymouth Albion. One amazing achievement was to qualify for county finals in cross country, where two of our pupils come first and second.

Equally impressive was our KS2 netball team who won every game in their pool, went through to the finals and won against Stowford. This meant they have qualified for regional finals in the new year! What incredible achievements, particularly when you consider that we are a small school competing against some much larger ones.



Trips so far have included a wonderful Early Years/Year 1 outing to the theatre in Torquay, a Year 2/3 trip to Merrivale and a Year 4/5/6 visit to a solar farm.

Pupils also took part in the local church's Festival of Angels where they designed angel feathers to add to the display. Their beautiful art work was a fantastic addition and pupils even got to be an angel for a moment!



Our brilliant PTFA have organised a number of exciting events to raise money for new playground equipment. Children really enjoyed the Spooky Disco and Christmas Crafts, and adults took part in a quiz night - including a staff team (who didn't win...!)

As part of our Global Climate Day, we planted a new Magnolia tree in school grounds, with the help of an ex-pupil and his wife who once worked at Diptford. Our oldest and youngest pupils started and finished the planting and we can't wait to watch it grow and thrive like our other magnolia tree that was planted in 1965!



We have definitely earned our Christmas break and wish you all a merry time!



Harbertonford CofE Primary School

We have had another incredibly busy term at Harbertonford CofE Primary School. Some of our highlights include the exciting events organised and supported by our PTFA, including 'Movie and Pizza Night', 'Sausages and Sparklers' and our ever-busy Christmas fair (including a surprise visit from Santa himself!).



Earlier in the term, we officially opened our fantastic new sensory garden called 'The Roost', which is a calm, sensory, reflective space for children to use when they want to escape the bustle of the playground. Parents, families, friends and pupils were there to help cut the big, red ribbon and say a collective 'well done and thank you' to those involved in making it happen - particularly our amazing PTFA who not only raised the funds, but also created this amazing space. The children absolutely love this new playground.



Our Art and Design week was a great success and was supported by some of our exceptionally talented parents. Children had the opportunity to investigate a range of new and exciting 'never tried before' arts, crafts and design techniques, including weaving, clay work and printing. Their beautiful art work was on display in school for our open day and remains there for all to see.



This term has culminated with our wonderful Christmas service, leaving us feeling very festive and ready for a break with our families.

We wish you all a very merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



Hennock Primary School

Our Year 2, 3 and 4 children are now taught in Birch class as we've grown in size from two classes to three and it's been brilliant to see how this space has been transformed from a spare room and hall into a classroom full of learning. It is currently decorated with Roman shields of all sizes and varieties and all of the children have been fascinated by this topic, particularly when they had their Roman experience day with the children from Bearnas Primary School.



Our pre-schoolers and Willows class have been enjoying the great outdoors this term, especially through our forest school sessions and making dens for hibernating creatures - they even prepared some healthy treats for each animal.



Ash class have also been busy with swimming sessions and learning more about the Victorians. They visited Morwellham Quay to find out what life was like for children in the past and this knowledge was used perfectly in this year's Christmas performance of 'Ebenezer', based on A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens. I couldn't have been more proud of our children this year. They performed fantastically and showed their audiences all sorts of skills - acting, singing, rapping, jiving, comedy... and the list goes on! As well as this, each child's growth in their confidence to perform and their ability to be resilient in overcoming hurdles, whether it was learning their lines or perfecting a solo, is such a valuable part of their personal development and is why our performance is a highlight of the school year for me.

Well done to all involved!



Landscape CofE Primary School

An artist in residence, Anita Batson, joined us for our annual arts week, Based on "Our Natural World". The children studied mosaics, learning techniques for design and creation of art. We gained a real insight into how an artist begins and the strategies she uses for design. In addition, we were also inspired by (BBC's) wildlife artist and entomologist John Walters, who brought a selection of bugs for children to observe and sketch. Our Art Exhibition & Open Evening took place in October ~ a great opportunity to share and celebrate fantastic, artistic creativity.

(Faith and Beliefs) FAB, HARVEST IN A DAY really did live up to its name, with children fully engaging with the four workshops all based on the story of Creation. They demonstrated a great ability to work together, with the older ones supporting the younger ones and a creative time was had by all. The produce collected was taken by children to the Buckfastleigh foodbank ~ they enjoyed sorting, weighing and packing away the produce.

Class 4 had a fantastic time as they stepped back in time with a visit to Morwellham Quay. Everything they experienced helped to bring their Victorian topic to life and was topped off with a lesson in the Victorian classroom - Miss Barlow reports not being too sure on how long the children would have lasted back in the day!



Classes 1 and 2 visited the South Devon Steam Railway learning about transport and trains from the past. They then boarded the steam train and travelled to Totnes where they alighted for the Rare Breeds Farm. The opportunities to get up close to and handle animals were many ~ the children were buzzing!

Year 6s had a jam-packed afternoon in Totnes at the annual Life Skills event. With the help of trained experts, the children learnt how to recognise potential danger, deal with emergencies and be socially responsible. The aim of the event is to help develop the children's awareness and understanding of potentially dangerous situations, to equip them with the skills to assess situations quickly, to respond appropriately, and to help build their confidence and raise their self-esteem. Great life skills!

Finally, at the end of this term Classes 2 & 3 spent a day at Buckfast Abbey where staff and children marvelled at the story telling part of the day... "we were transported to another time and place." Of course, there were also many Christmas crafts and a tour of the Abbey.

We were also visited by local Paralympic swimmer and triathlete David Hill who put the children through their paces. Each class had a circuit training session before coming together for a whole school assembly. David talked about how we are all different and the importance of perseverance and resilience. Whatever you want to improve on - whether it is sport related or academic - the key message from his visit was never give up! Song Machine was reignited by an enthusiastic parent, Una McGovern, who offered to support and lead Song Machine for KS2. They have been busy practising for their 'gig' during the school fair and they were also asked to sing at the Ashburton late night market ~ they have worked hard and are sounding great!



Did you know the Link Academy Trust does opera? Executives and Trustees of the Devon Opera and our Trust approached our Trust schools to take part in a competition to design some artwork for the opera, The Barber of Seville. Three children were lucky winners and attended the opera and a reception with one of our Trustee, Mrs Fiona Walters. Ms Dunford and I also attended and had a real treat alongside the children! Finally, we have visited Bethlehem 3 times in the penultimate week ~ Both KS1 & KS2 did brilliantly and entranced the congregations with their antics and beautiful singing. The performances always touch a nerve inside me and, for a few brief moments, something of the real spirit of the festive season comes sharply into focus. After a final carol service on Thursday 19th December I think we could say it's been a full and fun term



Stoke Gabriel Primary School

We have had another term of fabulous learning and enriching experiences at Stoke Gabriel Primary School. We have had a big focus on the environment and plastic pollution which has been woven into all of the learning across the school. Spiders class worked with Gary Jolliffe of 'Till the Coast is Clear' to learn about the impact of plastic pollution on the coastline.



Gary Jolliffe,
from
Till The Coast is Clear,
talking about
Plastic Pollution
with Spiders Class.

Stoke Gabriel School.

We have had technology free Fridays where all the teaching and learning has taken place without the use of any laptops, computers or i-pads. The children have learnt about the small things that they can do to reduce their carbon footprint. We have continued to make use of our fantastic surroundings. Dragonflies began the term with an enquiry journey based around their homes and surroundings. This included visits to the building sites in the village and an ascent of the historic bell tower in the church, which many parents never even knew existed! Butterflies spent the day in the woodlands as Saxons; making tools, cooking on an open fire and creating shelters.



Spiders travelled further afield and had an amazing trip to 'We the Curious@Bristol'. They were inspired by all the hands on science opportunities and the planetarium show is always so impressive.



Our School Council are also enjoying their new found status and had their first meeting with the school governors to discuss ways in which they can make a real difference to the school. We can't wait to continue with our exciting and enriching learning in the New Year.



Tedburn St Mary Primary School

This term has once again been busy with lots of exciting learning going on each week within school. Oak class started the year with a residential at Runnage Farm on Dartmoor.



Ash class visited Westpoint for Farmwise and the Fire service were visitors into school. Well being week was a week to remember in school as toast and a read started each day off, followed by a whole variety of activities across the week including Art work based on 'The Dot', cooking up healthy dishes, a get active morning and a try something new day.



We have also welcomed new staff and Miss Arnold is enjoying teaching in Birch class. We continue to work with Queen Elizabeth school in our sports partnership and Oak class took part in a rugby tournament, with more events to come over the year. Our new School council have been really active and organised lots of events within school, including fundraising days, bikes and scooter days and table tennis competitions.

Our New Eco council have also been busy, working alongside parents to help the school achieve the ECO Bronze award and carry on the recycling that the school started last year. We hope to move onto the Silver Award next term.

Christmas activities ended the term and KS1 performed the Wriggly Nativity and KS2 with the Choir performed a Carol concert in the church. The whole school were taken to the theatre and the children all enjoyed Snow White.



Yeoford Primary School

There was an exciting start to the term at Yeoford when the school moved from a 2 class structure to a 3 class structure. The children met their new teachers and quickly got used to new routines and classrooms! The classes have been busy! We have introduced our redesigned curriculum with Owl class learning about Crime and Punishment. They took a trip to Exeter Crown Court to see how the justice system works. Fox class have been learning about World War 2 and went by train to Crediton Museum.



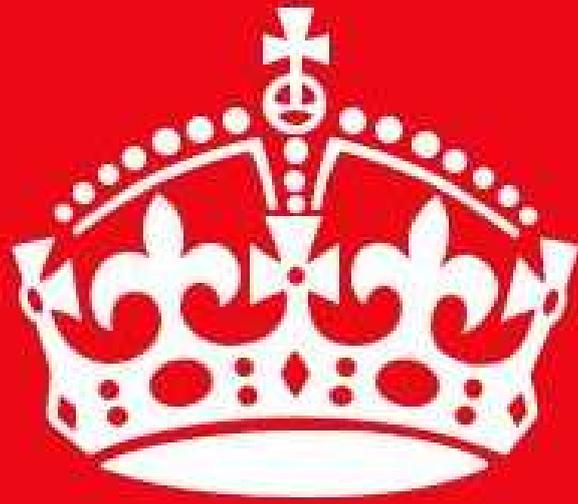
They then set up their own World War 2 museum on their classroom and invited everyone in to view it and to have tea and cake.

Our younger children in Squirrel and Hedgehog class have enjoyed lots of stories and there has been all sorts of mischief in their classroom. Escaped gingerbread men, eaten porridge, unusual footprints and even a naughty elf taped to a cupboard by toy soldiers. It is endlessly exciting in Miss Marsh's classroom! Our links with the community have been strong. We collected items for the Foodbank during our Harvest week, held a Remembrance Service (with a rendition of The Last Post played on the bugle) and enjoyed a Friendship Week.



We joined the other schools in the Link for an exciting Climate Change Day with lots of learning and questioning with a focus on Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. The children also enjoyed a Big School tidy to make sure their own environment was well kept. We have had a lovely run up to Christmas with the children performing their production of 'Bethlehem News' in the village hall. The hall was packed full, the audience enjoying some seasonal refreshments prior to the performance, provided by our marvellous PTFA. We have also had Christmas parties and lunches, the pantomime 'Sleeping Beauty' and a Christmas Jumper Day.





**KEEP
CALM**

AND

RELAX...

IT'S CHRISTMAS

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

