

# LINK ACADEMY TRUST

## SUMMER 2020 NEWSLETTER



FROM NICKY DUNFORD  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Well who would have thought at the outset of this academic year we would have gone through the experiences we have with Coronavirus in our midst and schools locked down since March! The impact of this situation has been incredible, bigger than probably anything I have ever experienced in education before. However, there are some amazing things that have resulted from the position we find ourselves in. I have asked schools to focus on these for the final CEO Newsletter of 2019-20 Academic Year. Clearly, as you read through you will see how we as Community Schools have linked more strongly than ever with the local community around us and our children have become really thoughtful citizens.

We, as a Trust, have always tried very hard to keep these local links as an integral part of the Vision and Ethos of all our schools and at the forefront of what we try to do. So we have followed the government guidelines from the outset, opening our schools on the first day we were expected to, 1st June, to all the designated year groups and on a full time basis. Our staff came in during their half term break to ensure the schools were fit and ready to receive children safely. We understood how important this was for some of you to be able to start immediately while we respected the fact that others preferred to wait and watch a little longer. We recognised that many of you would be put in a very difficult position immediately with such a sudden lockdown, sometimes families with both parents businesses 'shut-down' suddenly had no income so we set up the Food Hamper run.

Throughout lockdown and right up until the last day of term we have provided basic hampers for those families within our communities that have needed support. I know of no other Trust that has recognised this need and responded to it with such a consistent approach. We want our families to be safe and well cared for, as well as learning effectively. Finally our staff, working from a standing start have had to provide remote learning which has been another 'first'. We have worked hard at this and your response to the survey has been so helpful in setting the direction for future development of the blended learning approach we will be pursuing in September ; more at the start of the year! We will be opening as safely as possible under government guidelines in September as my previous letter stated and look forward to a renewed focus on the provision of high quality online learning, working hard to support 'catch up' for pupils that need it and further extending our curriculum to inspire the children. Furthermore, over the summer, we have a number of exciting property refurbishments for which we have received a large amount of grant funding, these include a classroom extension at Bearnese, an upgrade of lighting, heating etc at Tedburn St Mary and a complete reconfiguration to better accommodate our youngest pupils at Ilsington. We are intending to also complete some maintenance work at Drake's, an upgrade to the Widecombe in the Moor reception area and offices as well as an upgrade to Hennock's kitchen so that we can bring catering 'in house' for another two schools. Lots to do as we keep improving our schools in order to provide the very best for our pupils and families. Please enjoy the contributions from all our academies.....



## News from the individual Academies

### Bearnes Primary School

The community at Bearnes has gone from strength to strength during lockdown and supported the mental well-being of many. As well as providing pupil, staff and family wellbeing support our school has been able to have a positive impact within the wider community. Through our strong links with The Avenue church we have provided comfort to those who were isolated during the Coronavirus lockdown. Our children wrote letters, made cards and designed rainbows to lift the spirits of those suffering loneliness. Many have written back and the church have been flooded with messages of thanks from their congregation. The kindness we have seen from our staff and families during this time has known no bounds; it has been a privilege to see our community hold one another up at this time.

Thank you all for your support.



### Broadhempston Primary School

During lockdown, children at Broadhempston have been looking at ways in which they can help the local area/community. Throughout our period of home schooling, all children have been engaged in weekly topics. In one topic 'All About Nature' our pupils had the opportunity to design and create hedgehog homes and bug hotels. In our topic 'All About Family' the pupils were asked to focus on their family history – it was fantastic to see and hear about how many of our pupils rang an older family member, many who were isolating, to have a conversation and learn all about

what life was like for them in the past, there were some amazing stories learnt. As well as this, many of our pupils have created images with rainbows to show their support of our NHS. Since being back at school our pupils have continued to look after our environment and learn about nature by growing produce in our vegetable garden. We also arrived at school last week to find two house martin chicks at our front door, unfortunately their nest had fallen. With the help of some of our Year 5 pupils, we set about a rescue operation installing a new artificial nest and placing the chicks back. The parents of the chicks returned and both chicks are doing well.



### Cheriton Bishop Primary School

During Lockdown, the children of Cheriton Bishop reflected on the things they were finding a challenge, such as missing friends, family and school. They learnt about the roles of the Key Workers such as carers, the police and shop workers and wrote letters to the NHS to acknowledge their dedication and to say thank you.

Emilia set up a plant stall outside the gates of her house to raise funds to help 'Animals Asia'. This charity is devoted to ending bear bile farming and improving the welfare of animals across Asia. So far, Emilia has raised nearly £100. A tremendous effort!





### Diptford CofE Primary School

At Diptford we have all talked a lot about the people involved in keeping us safe throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Many of our parents, families and community work for the NHS or are critical workers so the children decided that they wanted to show their support, particularly for the 'clap for carers' and 'thank you NHS' movement. Both at home and at school, they designed special rainbow messages to show how thankful we all are and sent a special message out to our community. Our younger pupils sent a special message to each other and all of our families during lockdown to help them stay positive. It says "we wanted you to know that we all miss you - stay safe and remember to have fun and smile".



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

The summer term has certainly been like no other we have experienced, and do not want to experience again! During lockdown the staff and children have been exemplary, with only a few days' notice they went from classroom teachers and learners, to online educators and parents have taken on the role as teachers. The children have been sharpening their 'key skills' whilst learning at home and all of the children have been working on whole school topics; Family, Music, Food, Sport, Nature and Famous People to name a few. The children and parents have been very creative in their work using their gardens and homes to create some 'master-pieces.' The community has helped with people offering unused laptops to support families who have one or more sibling at home to allow them to access their online learning.

Through times of challenge it really shows what fantastic staff, parents, community and children we have attending our schools. I feel very privileged be Academy Head of two very special schools.



### Harbertonford CofE Primary School

This year at Harbertonford, we have been focusing on engaging our local community further. We began our Forest Fledglings community toddler group which meets outdoors in our Forest School area. The group braved all weathers to take part in sessions led by Ali Hockings (our Forest School Lead) to learn new skills and enjoy spending time outside in nature. One of our year 6 pupils organised donations from pupils to the Food Bank in Totnes. We have welcomed members of our extended school community to deliver interactive and insightful classroom sessions with our pupils, such as a local doctor. An enthusiastic and creative group of parents ran workshops during our hugely successful Arts Week. Local volunteer group, Open the Book, have led Roots & Shoots sessions with our Year 5&6 pupils throughout the year. We organised a cake sale for the PTFA which was open to, and attended by, members of the village. Just prior to lockdown, our School Life group were planning to launch coffee mornings at the school for elderly residents within the village.





During lockdown, staff have donated food and clothes to produce packages for some of our vulnerable families. We have provided regular contact with all of our vulnerable families to offer support for a variety of needs. Families have been provided with numerous well-being and positive mental health links and activities during lockdown. The children have used a variety of art skills to produce rainbows and NHS Thank You posters to take home during their time in school. One of our families digitally 'mapped' a run in the shape of NHS on a map to raise awareness and gratitude towards NHS workers. We have continued to celebrate children's learning during lockdown through positive feedback and announcing Star Home Learners of the Week on our website and facebook.

### **Hennock Primary School**

During the summer term whilst our school was closed, we wanted the children at Hennock School to retain a sense of family and community so we set them the task of "how can you help someone that needs a helping hand?" All the children took this in their own direction and it was heart-warming to see a range of responses that really had an impact within their family homes and for people around them. Children in Willows class helped their mums and dads at home by learning how to do small jobs such as weeding the garden, loading the dishwasher and even baking snacks for people in the village to take if they needed it. Children in Birch class took a different approach and looked at the environment by thoroughly investigating the waste their family made and making sure as much as possible was composted or recycled. Our oldest children in Ash class looked at their wider community and one of our pupils spent a lot of time helping out at a local stables, ensuring that the horses were looked after if their owners were unable to visit every day. Well done to all the children of Hennock School for taking your time to think of others who were in need!



### **Ilslington CofE Primary School**

During lockdown, the children at Ilslington Primary have been really thoughtful and have considered a wide range of special helpers in our local area. They wanted to spread some joy to the wider community, in particular to the postmen/women and delivery drivers who might be visiting their homes. They designed their own special rainbow pictures and messages which they put up in their windows to lift people's spirits! We have all started to talk about the effect of Covid-19 on our well-being and mental health – not just ours, but how it has affected our friends and families too. To give other people ideas about how to manage anxieties, they designed their own dream catchers to catch their worries – what a great idea!



### **Landscape CofE Primary School**

Community spirit during these challenging times has never been needed more! Here at Landscape Kindness week, during Mental health Week, saw us setting the children a challenge to carry out an Act of Kindness. These were wide ranging; baking cakes for neighbours, cutting lawns for elderly folk who were shielding, cards and pictures for family and 'my lonely neighbour', shopping for milk and bread for those who were worried about getting to the shops and a 'chasing rainbows, craft activity to put in windows for families to spot when walking and in support of the NHS.

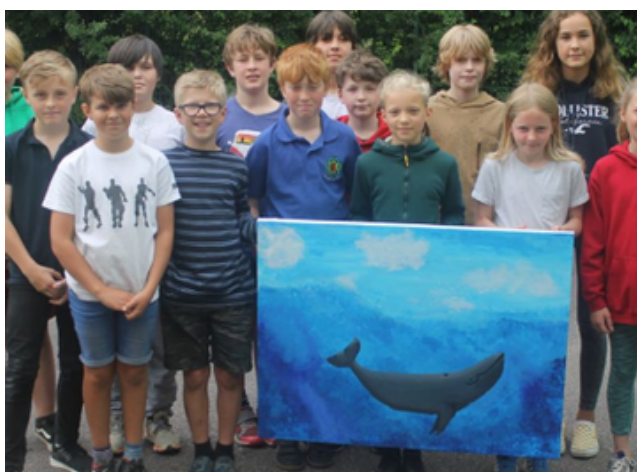
The Landscape staff have also taken part in weekly well being challenges across this period - we've had lots of laughs and moments of reflection, sharing things from stories, to playlists and competitions in a bid to further support each other and our sense of 'team' - it's been lovely and the display of these challenges in the staffroom continues to provide lots of chatter and happiness! I have also been privileged to be part of the Trust wide Family Food Box support, spearheaded by Matt Matthew. Ellie, Linda and myself help Matt each fortnight to co-ordinate supplies and pack up to 45 boxes to deliver across our Trust. Matt's role needs to be recognised and celebrated!



He has been tenacious in gaining support from local supermarkets, Devon grants and from the Trustees to enable this to happen; delivering an amazing 336 boxes. Living out our core values and reaching out to our community has been at the centre of these times. Great job everyone!

### **Moretonhampstead Primary School**

We are proud that, through team effort, Moretonhampstead Primary School has been able to support our community by remaining open for vulnerable children and for those of key workers since March. We have also been open full-time to all our pre-school, reception, year 1 and year 6 children since the 1st June and have welcomed back children in years 2, 3, 4 and 5 too, for one week each and it has been fantastic to see them. Over 86% of our children have attended school at some point since lockdown. Our children and school have been working closely with and celebrating our community during these difficult times. They have written cards to many key workers including refuse collectors, our postman, care-workers and local retailers to thank them for helping us all during COVID. The children have made decorations for the town as part of VE Day celebrations and took part in a big thank you clap outside our local residential home, displaying large messages and rainbows for the residents.



Our school has helped deliver food hampers every fortnight to local families in need. Our year 6 children have organised a cross-community Enterprise event to raise money for their Leavers Books; they have involved local traders such as the butcher, greengrocer and Co-op and one child has even made and sold 44 cakes around the town! Not only have the children paid for their Leavers' Books, they have made an additional profit of over £200 which they have put towards a shared BBQ. They are busily preparing a Leavers Assembly for a socially-distanced and celebratory event this week to which parents are invited and we have also enjoyed whole-school 'Fun Fridays' with a different theme each week. When the world was told to keep apart, we stayed together!

### **Stoke Gabriel Primary School**

Community is one of our school values here at Stoke Gabriel and our year 6 children have been creating a legacy project for all the children in the village. They have been building willow dens on the school field which will be here for years to come. All the children in the village will be able to enjoy the dens as we leave our field open for the benefit of the whole community. The willow was locally sourced and is already starting to take root.



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

A big thank you to all the parents who have supported the school and your children throughout these strange times. You have all done a fantastic job in helping all the children tackle the work they have been asked to do and kept them as motivated as possible. A huge well done to all the children across school who have been amazing throughout, whether it's been making your own tornado, becoming a weather forecaster, exploring different parts of the world, producing super art work. The work you have managed at home across this time has been brilliant and



staff have loved seeing all your efforts each and every week. Thank you to the Trust who have supported the school throughout, to all those in the academy schools who worked continually across their holidays to keep our Hub school at Cheriton Bishop open for the key workers.

To those who have put food parcels together, which have been delivered all the way through this time. I know how much these have meant to the families and supported them even more. A final thank you to all the Tedburn staff who have been incredible throughout, who have worked tirelessly both from home and at school. The effort they have given has been second to none and I know all their hard work has been much appreciated by everyone.



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

Throughout the lockdown period, one of our wonderful parents at Widcombe ran virtual yoga sessions on Zoom and these were greatly appreciated by the whole community as they all got to partake in some yoga, see each other and have a good old chat! The whole school were set the 'Widcombe Rocks' challenge of painting a pebble, writing a message and leaving it somewhere in our local community for others to find and bring a smile to their face! And, for the first time ever we hosted a drive-in Year 6 Leavers' Ceremony in the school field. Parents, grandparents and relatives attended and it was a beautiful 'Widcombe style' send off for the children.



#### **Yeoford Primary School**

As part of their home learning, Yeoford children found out about Britain's NHS, how lucky we are to have it and how it is unique. They realised that many other countries and people do not have access to hospitals and doctors like we do. The children wrote letters of thanks to the NHS and created some super pictures and posters.

The children also learnt about the Nightingale Hospitals and then designed additional ones out of a range of construction toys. The older children were given the challenge of making people smile and sharing their talents with the community. This included a wonderful recital on the Banjo by one of our very talented Year 6 children.



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

Kind regards,  
Nicky  
CEO

