

THE LINK ACADEMY TRUST NEWSLETTER



EASTER 2019

By Nicky Dunford, CEO

Inspections!

This term we have seen all our original six Trust schools going through the Section 5 Ofsted Inspection process, except of course Landscope which remains outstanding. While it is always a bit of a worry being scrutinised by an external body and especially as four of the five schools had an HMI leading the process, it was very positive for all our schools as they all retained their 'Good' judgement and from the Inspection Reports you can see that the vast majority had only minor issues to address. Across the board Safeguarding was commented on very positively, as our attention to detail in terms of safeguarding has developed and improved. We now have robust systems of checking and keeping children safe, while staff knowledge, understanding and vigilance has deepened enormously. I am very proud of this as it should be at the core of all we do. This has been judged to be the case.

Alongside safeguarding was our inclusive approach to all families. The fact that children love learning in our schools and your very strong supportive messages ensured that every school was commended on the positivity of children's learning behaviours and their resilience and independence as learners. This is so important as it will ensure our children are ready for whatever life throws at them in the future. Similarly, the delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum, with our children having all the advantages of an experiential learning approach was clear in most of the reports, sometimes while acknowledged on the day, it was not included in the final letter to the Academy Head. Our Five Star Pledge supported the fact that we expect to give our children the very best experiences and this has led to an exciting and fun approach to teaching and learning. There were many more positive and exemplary practices identified in each school as they continue to retain their uniqueness- please read our great Ofsted Inspection Reports- remember that we only had one day to 'show off' and so anything Inspectors felt was positive they did not focus on and as a result many of our Early Years classes did not even get a visit; their brilliant practice was clear from the outset!

As always there are areas we need to work on and we initiated that after the very first visit! Our School Improvement priorities for 2019-20 are being mapped out in order to continue the improvement as this year's objectives are achieved. It is very satisfying though to know that our judgement of great practice in all our schools is fully endorsed by Ofsted. The SIAMS Inspection of Harbertonford was also a resounding success with a soundly good judgement and a very positive report, which shows that we have commendable practice in place and simply need to embed our approach a little more. A huge well done to everyone at Harbertonford. In all of these inspections our local governors have a very important role in learning from the schools, supporting their actions and challenging the Academy Head; clearly they have done a superb job for which I would like to say a tremendous 'thank you'. This is a voluntary role which holds a great deal of responsibility, commitment and dedication. While our Local Boards are all slightly different in the level of experience they show, they have all done a marvellous job of supporting our schools effectively and with enthusiasm- thank you, you make a real difference to the effectiveness of our schools.



Partnership Working

On January 1st we started working in partnership with the two schools of the Raleigh Federation, Drakes Primary in East Budleigh and Otterton Primary. They are two small schools with less than 100 pupils on roll each and have been working together for a number of years. Their Headteacher retired and they needed support, so we have stepped in.

Peter Halford has been seconded into the Executive Headteacher role at Raleigh, while Alex Waterman has been leading Yeoford for the period. We anticipate the schools will be joining the Link in the future, but need to go through various processes to ensure this is the best decision for everyone.

Broadhempston Primary have also joined the Link, initially in a Management Partnership from the beginning of March while we complete the process of them becoming an Academy and joining the Trust later in the year.

This is really exciting, working with the three schools this term has brought loads of benefits and a few challenges. Overall it is really positive to see how the reputation of the Link Academy is growing and is exactly what we wanted- a specialist Multi Academy Trust with an expertise in small schools and the ability to work together to provide a cutting-edge education in our local village communities.

Recognition by the DfE

We have also been involved with the DfE as part of their research into running rural primary schools efficiently- three of our financial processes/ practices were case studied their recently publication. Please have a look at the document at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/running-rural-primary-schools-efficiently>

This is a real accolade and is thanks to Matt Matthew and the Finance Team. Their level of financial scrutiny and foresight has been instrumental in our schools being financially managed in an excellent way. Our business reputation is alongside that of our educational provision.

The Local Board's met following their focussed visits and appreciate how very demanding the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENDCO) role is, they would like to extend their thanks to all the Trust's SENDCO's.

This term has been another highly positive one proving that our small schools are operating at the top of their game and the children are having a fantastic education. A huge 'thank you' to everyone that supports us in this and to parents too that see what we are trying to achieve and work so well alongside us to achieve the best for all

Have a great Easter Break- let's hope the sun decides to continue to shine!
Nicky



Give Back Day

This year we have had a focus on improving the work/life balance of our staff, however, we soon realised that we really need everyone to continue to 'go the extra mile'. We therefore decided that each year, every one of our staff would have a day that they could organise with the Academy Head to do something 'special' for themselves.

Please read some of the opportunities below that our staff have been able to take up as a result.

Sarah Luxton at Bearness - I am using my give back day to compete in The World Pilot Gig Championships being held on the Isles of Scilly. I have competed in the event for many years with great success, last year coming 10th overall. The sport of Gig rowing has grown substantially since I first competed back in 2005 and now the high level of competition requires crews, wishing to finish in the top 12, to dedicated all of their time throughout the winter and weeks leading up to the events to training. We train up to 5 times a week as a crew with the rest of the days dedicated to land based training on our own.

In previous years, logistically, finding a flight slot late enough that gives me enough time to travel to Lands End Airport straight from work to attend the championships has been quite tricky and at times stressful, which has caused not only anxiety for just myself but for my crew as well who, being in jobs where they can ask for a day off, have arrived earlier in the day. There has been many a time where my crew have been pacing up and down the beach unsure as to whether I would catch my flight to the islands or not and therefore what would happen if I didn't arrive. This has also on occasion put my place in the A crew in jeopardy. Fortunately, so far I have managed to arrive on every occasion.

However, this year because I have a 'give back day' I have been able to fly out with my crew members at the same time as them, which not only means I am part of the team spirit I am able to relax and focus on my racing and competition rather than the perpetual worry of will I get there on time, which will hopefully translate into an even better performance! So thank you very much!

Lyndsey Burke at Yeoford - participated in the Barcelona Marathon.
Linda McCracken at Cheriton Bishop - attended her son's wedding.
Sophie Harry at Cheriton Bishop - preparations for her wedding day.

Examples from Harbertonford and Diptford include attending a son's graduation, preparation for the arrival of twins, travelling to Venice for long weekend, a date with her husband for a walk on the moors and pub lunch and, finally, attending a Spice girls concert.

Landscape staff have used their days to attend a presentation at the Exeter Maths School, visit a daughter in Canada (flights not an issue due to the give back day) and sitting a 3 hour law exam as part of a law degree undertaken by one of their TAs).

What an amazing use of a day, from a simple day to catch up to running a european marathon. Excellent- we will definitely keep this initiative in place!



Bearnes Primary School

By Alice Eeles, Academy Head

Bearnes has had another busy term including a successful Ofsted inspection which highlighted the commitment of the staff to the children's learning as well as the 'positive vibe and buzz of learning' around the school.

We took part in an exciting science day where all of the children accessed a huge range of exhilarating experiments. This has led to some excellent writing which is now displayed in the school corridor for everyone to see.

World Book day was a vibrant day as we celebrated the 30th birthday of Elmer with a whole school reading of the book, visits to local book shops and a colourful fancy dress theme. The children's love of reading is continually sparked through such events and our up and coming interactive story session launch is exciting!

Sycamore class were invited to display their outstanding artwork in the local surgery waiting room, these look wonderful.

Redwoods took part in a woodwork workshop with the DAISI foundation. The children created classroom signs using the wood taken from their class tree. They spent two days designing, sketching and creating these with our friends at Hennock. It is wonderful to see the children's friendships growing across our schools through collaborative projects.

Coach Ben from Saints South West has been working with us each Thursday teaching Tennis and running over subscribed after school clubs. Ben has provided the staff with excellent CPD in dance and tri-golf.

We are looking forward to more exciting projects in the Summer term.



Cheriton Bishop Primary School

By Alex Waterman, Executive Academy Head

We have had a wonderful Spring term at Cheriton Bishop with lots of exciting events going on alongside lots of engaging classwork. Year 1 and 2 visited QE school to take part in a multiskills tournament where they used their skills of throwing, catching and teamwork.

Class 3 have had an adventure, geography and history focus. They have been learning about the Stone and Iron ages. They took part in a climbing and orienteering event and have been practising map reading skills in preparation to attend a guided walk at Bellever on Dartmoor.

Class 4 have been learning about the Ancient Mayans. They learnt about Maya writing, known as glyphs and made this super codex—a folding book on bark paper. As the Mayan civilisation was the birthplace of chocolate, they made Mayan hot chocolate which includes chilli and cinnamon, rather delicious! Class 4 will be visiting the Eden project soon to find out even more!

We had a marvellous World Book Day. Author Amy Sparkes visited school and helped us to open our new library which the PTFA have raised over £6000 to help revamp.



Diptford CofE Primary School

By Lizzie Lethbridge, Executive Academy Head

What a busy time we have had at Diptford!

We have been really excited to try out some new and challenging sports this term including fencing and archery with Premier Sport. Both have been a big hit (literally!) and have introduced us to new skills. We have taken part in some exciting inter-schools competitions, including basketball, handball, tennis and multi-skills at KEVICC. We were also very lucky to have an inspirational visit from David Hill, Paralympian, who taught us all about the challenges of training, competing and staying fit and healthy. We raised lots of money to support up-and-coming athletes and to buy new resources for school. We have taken part in some fantastic theme weeks this term: Mental Health week was a great success in highlighting how important it is to look after our body and our mind. Science week was great fun, and included some exciting discussion around journeys, including icebergs and the Titanic!

Some of our visitors have included the Fire Service, who taught us about fire safety, and The Dog's Trust who taught us how to stay safe around dogs and be responsible owners. One of our parents is a dentist and came for a special visit to teach us how to look after our teeth.

Outdoor learning continues to be our passion and has taken place in many different ways: forest school, outdoor art, orienteering, problem solving and maths to name but a few.

As we go through spring, you will see some exciting gardening projects taking place around school with blooms popping up and vegetable patches emerging. Each class has their own area to tend so watch this space!



Harbertonford CofE Primary School

By Lizzie Lethbridge, Executive Academy Head

We have packed in so many exciting experiences that have supported our curriculum and given us some lovely memories.

Our mosaic project started in January and resulted in 3 beautiful panels that are displayed proudly on the front of our school. Every child laid tiles and had an input into its design.

Another project underway is our new sensory garden which is being created by our fantastic PTFA. We can't wait until it is finished and we can use our new, calm space at break times.

Sporting adventures have included dance, tennis and multi-skills – we have even had some new clubs this term, such as Tri-Golf, Gymnastics and Football with Torquay United. We are so lucky to have had an inspirational visit from Helen Symons and Chloe Harvey who recently returned from the Talisker Whiskey Atlantic Challenge; a 45 day row across the Atlantic Ocean raising money for Devon Air Ambulance. The all-women team had some amazing stories to share and were very pleased that we had tracked them as they made their tough journey.

Other visitors include PC Vaughn and Dr Nute who visited us to talk about 'people who help us'; the children were particularly excited to investigate the police car and to learn some first aid essentials!

Our winter disco that included music, dance, tattoos (fake of course) and hot-dogs, was enjoyed by all. We also snuggled-down in our pyjamas for a Bedtime Story evening with some of our PTFA and parent helpers reading to us - hot chocolate and cookies helped us to get cosy and we brought our favourite teddy along too!

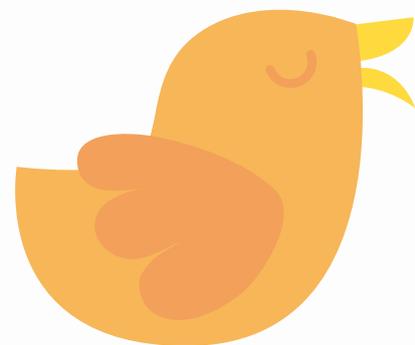
All that plus a SIAMS inspection and visit from Ofsted!



Hennock Primary School

By Sarah Clarke, Academy Head

We have had a wonderful art explosive term at Hennock. We completed our djembe drumming sessions with Elfyn from Babcock music. Our children will be taking part in a concert at Teign just before the end of term, which feels like a very fitting completion to what was a thoroughly enjoyable number of teaching sessions. Not truly art - but thanks to a concerted effort by our preschool leader (which involved us getting all our family members and their family members and further extended family members etc etc to vote!) Hennock won a Lego workshop through a Facebook competition this term. The workshop itself was fantastic and involved the children making lego volcanoes linked to their topic, including a lever which made the volcano explode Lego bricks. World book day was a wonderful success too, with author and illustrator Sam Boughton spending the day with our children and teaching them about her process of writing and illustrating her books. This proved very aspirational for many of our children and we now have a beautiful piece of artwork just inside the main entrance, which has left me frantically searching for a piece of Perspex large enough to cover it with, so it doesn't get over touched and spoilt. We are planning to visit Sam's exhibition in Exeter over the coming weeks to further their understanding of life as an author/illustrator. Mylo's message (year 6) summed it up for me. "It was such a fun thing to do! I learnt that it doesn't need to be perfect first time and you can use other things such as collage to make your work come to life. Writing and pictures evolve as you practise." We also joined Bearnese to complete an art project using our DAISI funding. The children in years 5/6 worked with artist Cara Roxanne to create door signs for the classrooms. Although slightly larger than we expected, they are beautiful in design and the children grew from spending time with their hub school partners.



Landscape CofE Primary School

By Jill Ryder, Academy Head

It's been a busy term so far. Well-being Week provided lots of opportunities for the children to reflect on the 10 a day choices! The impact of this will hopefully be that children are more aware of their own mental health and wellbeing and that of others. This was supported with workshops led by Alice from Big Foot Education which were very beneficial ~ the children really embraced the activities. The NSPCC also visited Landscape during Wellbeing Week as part of their Speak Out, Stay Safe programme. Both KS1 & KS2 had a little help from Buddy, to give them information about how they can keep themselves safe from harm and get help if they have any worries. These were very valuable sessions and enjoyed by everyone.

Landscape Littlies has taken off! Mrs Lord & Mrs Field have been leading art, music, movement and wild woodland learning sessions with preschoolers as well as parents running their own Friday morning sessions.

KS2 are really enjoying the opportunity to have a go at playing pocket trumpets with music specialist Elfyn Jones, from the wider opps programme). PE maintains its high profile. Children at Landscape have taken part in: tennis lessons, handball lessons, KS1 multi skills festival, CV Soccer league, gymnastics club, handball competitions & festivals, basketball club, a cross country event at Haldon forest, and finally, dance club are working towards two evening performances at SDCC Let's dance 2019 event. Coming up we have maypole and country dancing, ready to support our local community May Day event and our High 5 squad will be in a 'friendly' tournament against parents in the last week of this term.

Safer Internet Day Workshops. Parents attended Mrs Woods' safer internet workshops~ discussions proved informative and useful.

The Performing Arts Department at KEVICCs staged a Schools' Edition of the musical Billy Elliot and Class 4 had the opportunity to see just what the performing arts might look like when they are in secondary school. Here's what Rosie had to say: "The dancing was inspirational ~ it shows us that anyone can do anything!"

STEMKids have led workshops during science week; engaging children in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). With parents joining in, the children were able to make and take home Steady Hand Games, Catapults and Vibrating Bugs ~ a great time was had by all!

And finally...thanks to FOLS as our own school mini bus is on its way!



Stoke Gabriel Primary School

By Matthew Medd, Academy Head

The term started with all the children in the school working with the charity, Child Assault Prevention (CAP), learning how to keep themselves safe and what to do if someone or something makes them feel uncomfortable. CAP also ran a workshop for parents on how to help your child stay safe in this ever changing world. As always, the children took part with a wonderful attitude and the facilitators from CAP commented on what a pleasure it had been to spend the week in Stoke Gabriel Primary School.

Our year 5 children have been flying the flag for us at the monthly tea and cake afternoons for older residents of the village, fulfilling our pledge for every child to work with the older generations during their time at the school.

Lovely Ladybirds our reception class have been on their first ever school trip to Dinosaur World in Torquay. They behaved impeccably and can look forward to many more enriching experiences during their time with us.

Brilliant Butterflies have been studying mountains this term and have had the opportunity to put their rock climbing skills to the test at Dart Rock climbing centre; all funded through our sports grant.

Our Fantastic Fours went on their Winter One Nighter residential to Dartmoor in March, spending the night away from home and learning to fend for themselves.

As part of our programme of events for World Book Day, the whole school took part in a sponsored read and book fair with Usbourne Books, raising hundreds of pounds which enabled us to fill our library with books linked to the topics for our new two year rolling curriculum. We all know that children who read, succeed!



Tedburn St Mary Primary School

By Andy Keay, Academy Head

Once again our school has had a busy and exciting term, with lots of new learning happening and new challenges for all our children.

Forest school, led by one of our staff is up and running with lots of exciting outdoor learning taking place. A successful lottery bid to enhance this provision, will undoubtedly help build on this within school.

Our sports partnership with QE school has seen our youngest children visit the high school for a multi skills event and our Gifted and Talented attend a fitness day, we look forward to even more events in the summer term.

Our most recent Science week has been hugely successful, with lots of exciting experiments and activities taking place, culminating in a Science fair which many of our parents attended. The children had a fantastic week and it also coincided with Red Nose day and the children all came dressed as 'Mad Scientists'.

Other focuses this term have been Internet safety week, extreme reading challenges and outdoor learning. Accelerated reader is becoming well embedded across school and has certainly focused children's reading effectively, our children can't wait to reach their next book or reading targets. As we move towards the end of the term our children will once again be representing the school at the CLC Music event at the Great Hall in Exeter. This year our children will be taking part in 'Celebrate in Style' and can't wait to perform their song and dance routine for everyone.



Yeoford Primary School

By Alex Waterman, Executive Academy Head

Yeoford Primary school have been enjoying a busy Spring term. Our school is really lucky to have fantastic grounds which the children in Hedgehog class have enjoyed finding signs of Spring in. We are soon to begin building our outdoor classroom which we have gained Lottery funding for. Many thanks to Tam Russell for helping with this bid.

Miss Mumford joined the school in January and has been teaching across the school. She taught Hedgehogs and Squirrels about Shrove Tuesday and then they made, flipped and ate pancakes! Delicious!

Hedgehogs enjoyed a day out at QE school taking part in a multiskills tournament. They practised running, jumping, kicking and catching balls and used lots of team skills.

Owl class have been learning about forces in science. They made parachutes and experimented to find out which worked the best. The Year 5 children have also been working on their ABC in the form of air, brakes and chains and were looking very proficient by the end of their Bikeability sessions.

The whole school enjoyed a fantastic World Book Day. The children's costumes were amazing and the staff all dressed as characters from Julia Donaldson books which included the Highway Rat, the Gruffalo and Stickman.



Raleigh Federation

By Pete Halford, Executive Headteacher

From January, the Link Academy Trust have been working in a management partnership with the Raleigh Federation, consisting of Drake's C of E and Otterton C of E Primary Schools. They are two small village schools situated in East Devon with both having 3 classes. Both schools share very similar values and ethos to the rest of the Link Academy schools. They have a caring, child-centred ethos, valuing each child as an individual and catering for every child's individual needs. Both schools have allotments that they have been developing over the last few years and grow fruit and vegetables as well as use them as an extension to the classrooms to do Maths, Literacy and Topic work. They both have outdoor classroom spaces and fire-pits so they are able to go up to the allotments in all weather! Since Christmas the children have had visits from Birds of Prey as well as visits to Living Coasts as part of the Conservation topic looking at how wildlife is being effected by the amount of plastic in the ocean. Both schools are part of Exmouth Learning Community and have been taking part in netball, hockey and football tournaments with tag rugby and athletics coming up in the next few weeks. The Parents have had an opportunity to share their views in the school in Parents Forums this term and have suggested marketing the schools to ensure we have a higher profile in the local community and beyond. They would also like a Toddler group to attract more numbers of pupils into the schools. Following the forum meetings we have now set-up individual school Facebook pages to be used as a 'good news' channel and share all of the good things that are happening in the schools. This is already proving to be a success! Over the next term we are hoping to start a Toddler group in both schools.



Have a lovely Easter

