



May 2024, issue 6

Trust newsletter

An update for parents and carers, from the First Federation Trust



A note from our CEO & Trust Lead

It feels like it was a while ago now, but I hope everyone had a restful Easter break and children are enjoying the summer term and all the fun and learning it is bringing. In this May edition of the termly newsletter for parents and carers, we'd like to take some time to reflect on all that has happened across the Trust recently.

We're very pleased to share some great news from [Bere Alston Primary](#) and [Newton Ferrers CE Primary](#), who have both received a Good Ofsted report. This is testament to the hard work and dedication of the staff but couldn't be achieved without both the pupils' discipline and continued support from parents and carers - thank you to you all.



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Bere Alston Primary School, one of the oldest village schools in the country, joined the Trust in 2019 following a managed partnership. Since joining, the school has benefited from collaboration with other primary schools in the Trust and from the comprehensive support and guidance from our experienced leaders. Rapid and significant improvements were made to the curriculum, teaching and learning, behaviour and SEND and I'm happy Ofsted recognised this.

Pupils have been identified as being respectful, polite and well-mannered, 'enthusiastic about learning' and attentive, working in an environment which is nurturing, safe and calm. They are able to undertake a range of enrichment activities and have a variety of important leadership roles, both of which develops their interests and 'undiscovered talents'.

Gareth Bemister, Head of Bere Alston Primary said, 'Inspectors were impressed with the feeling of family and community within the school - they thought our Early Years and Nursery provision were very special, labelling them 'the jewel in the crown'. Inspectors understood we are on a journey and bought into a greater vision of growth, what our aspirations are, and how at the centre of all of our plans is the personal development of the children.'



Bere Alston Primary School

Newton Ferrers CE Primary School and Nursery was the third school to join the Trust over 15 years ago and over the years we have worked hard to support the school with training and development, and school improvement. Together we developed the on-site Nursery in 2019 and the school now accepts children from the age of two.

The latest Ofsted report, which is Good overall and Outstanding in Personal Development, highlights the considerate and calm pupils who are positive about learning and active in the local community. Leaders across the Trust and school have created a curriculum that is ambitious and engaging, and there is a key focus on phonics from when children enter the nursery. A passion for reading is injected from an early age, with 'pupil librarians' supporting this.

Penny Bishop, Head of Newton Ferrers said, 'We are fortunate to be part of a very special community of pupils, parents and staff who work together to fulfil our vision of 'Flourishing Together In God's Love'. Teachers have worked extremely hard to develop the curriculum over recent years making it ambitious in all subjects, something which the report positively observed.'



We are very proud of the safe and nurturing facilities for those children with SEMH needs and SEND, and we will continue to support this school and all others with the relevant professional development opportunities required to help all children now and in the future.

Thank you to everyone involved in the Ofsted visits at Newton Ferrers and Bere Alston - I know both schools are looking forward to continuing on this positive journey where they will help the children to aspire, flourish and achieve.

Wishing you and your families a successful summer term,

Paul Walker

FFT Times Table Rockstars

Many of our primary schools were involved in the annual Trust competition last term, the 2024 Battle of the Bands Times Table (TT) Rockstars Competition. All schools involved worked extremely hard with lots of engagement.

Congratulations to [Aveton Gifford Primary School](#) who were overall winners and to [Year 3/4 at Brixington Primary](#) who were the Top Class with 9,253 questions correct - both have received a fabulous trophy and maths book for their tremendous efforts.



Chudleigh Knighton Primary School

Well done to [Chudleigh Knighton Primary](#) who came second and [Bere Alston Primary](#) who came third, both winning a fun and engaging maths card game.



Excellent SIAMS Report for Lady Seaward's CE Primary

Lady Seaward's CE Primary School in Clyst St George, Devon, is 'living up to its foundation as a Church school' according to the most recent SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) report by the Church of England.

The report offers much praise, saying the school 'provides a stimulating learning environment in a very special building' with 'a strong Christian vision' supported by the Trust; outstanding pastoral care, and excellent outreach to families. Parents are said to 'speak enthusiastically of the Church school ethos and its impact in terms of [being] a caring community and moral guidance.'

There is much acclaim for the pupils of Lady Seaward's who are recognised as being 'confident, reflective learners' who 'behave well and are very considerate'.

The report highlights the support on offer from the Trust with 'strong leadership enabling staff to flourish and feel valued', enabling the development of wrap around care and the new nursery provision which now accepts children from two years old.

“ We are very proud of this latest report - we are lucky to have wonderful, caring pupils who fulfil our Christian values on a daily basis through initiatives such as the local food bank, the 'friendship bench' which ensures no-one feels excluded in the playground, and extensive charitable work.

Our school exists because of the aspiration of Lady Seaward and the local church to support parish children in their academic and spiritual development. We are very aware of our history and the legacy that the local community is still benefiting from today. We are constantly exploring how we support and develop spiritual growth across all subjects.



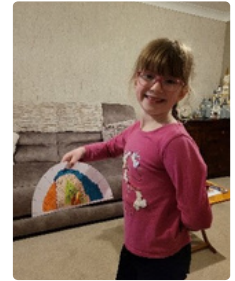
Michala Firth,
Head of Lady Seaward's



FFT Science Day

Schools across the Trust had a lot of fun engaging in practical, hands on science activities to celebrate this year's Science Week around the theme of 'time'.

[Willowbank Primary](#) in Cullompton started with an assembly listening to Haydyn's Clock Symphony and then learnt about how scientists have changed the way we measure time over the years. Children entered the BSW poster competition and conducted research into time and clocks. They continued their learning at home by making clocks and sundials, and also put 'time' into smashing stereotypes in science, and looked at science across the world and how different scientists work. The children had an amazing time.



Willowbank Primary



Children flourished in the opportunity to work collaboratively across different investigations at [Chudleigh Knighton CE Primary](#). Highlights included a crime scene investigation where pupils were played an extremely authentic video message from the local Neighbourhood Police representative, PC Piper, and then pieced together clues so they could identify the member of staff guilty of committing a truly heinous crime - eating an entire chocolate cake!

The children investigated with great gusto, using methods such as fingerprinting, footprint sampling and chromatography to isolate whose handwriting pen had left the guilty note found at the scene. It was revealed that Mrs Preston was the guilty person, but all is now forgiven!

Pupils also enjoyed a virtual visit to space and the wider solar system via a magnificent Wonder Dome which was installed in the hall. This was an awe-inspiring experience for all classes to enjoy and resulted in Year 1 children writing their own postcards from space.

At [Aveton Gifford Primary](#), children took part in four different experiments:

- How a pendulum swings, if you can slow it down and if you can explore different types of swing?
- Do different methods of preparing jelly slow down the setting process?
- Can you make a water clock that measures time?
- How do different-sized particles interact with our respiratory system?

The children had an amazing week demonstrating many scientific skills.



Aveton Gifford

Rocket Day at Gatehouse Primary

At [Gatehouse Primary](#) in Dawlish, pupils had lots of fun working on building and launching rockets as part of their Steamco activities in March, teaming up with non-profit community enterprise, STEAM Co. STEAM Co strongly believe in the power of creativity to help children be inspired through engaging in creativity days.

Children took part in a number of activities from logo design, cardboard modelling, paper rocket design, launching, and more!

“ We spent the day as a school completing activities around a dynamite rocket launch, starting with an assembly for KS1/KS2 which inspired and engaged the children. They then made their own rockets and some pupils completed a giant sea monster in the library.

The day culminated in the whole school coming together to launch a rocket at 70 mph into the air from the school playground! I can safely say the staff had as much fun as the children. It was wonderful seeing the awe and wonder in the children's faces and listening to their animated conversations. Thank you to all the parents who supplied materials for the day.



Leila Naldrett,
Head of Gatehouse Primary



Netball News from Chudleigh Knighton

After winning two qualifying rounds, [Chudleigh Knighton](#) Year 5/6 netball team attended the Devon County Netball finals at Paignton Academy Hub in March and eventually came **FOURTH** overall.

After a hard-fought loss in the first match, the team went on to win their next two matches and initially secured a Top 8 position. After one close loss and one win, the team knew they had to win their final group match to qualify for the semi-finals - they dug deep and came out as eventual winners by two goals.

The semi-final saw a closely fought out match in which Chudleigh Knighton narrowly lost.

“ I am so proud of Chudleigh Knighton for coming fourth - this is a huge achievement for a small village school. The team showed true resilience after coming from behind in closely contested matches. Their determination never wavered, and their amazing result was due to their ability to play as a team, encouraging each other and never giving up! (Kathryn Hartigan, Netball Coach) ”



Fiver Challenge at St. Budeaux CE Primary



Pupils from [St Budeaux CE Primary School](#) near Plymouth held a Fiver Challenge earlier this year. Children were tasked with buying materials and ingredients for only five pounds and using them to cook or create something they could sell for a profit. The five pounds was lent to each participating child from the PTFA, and in total the children raised a total of £810.50 which was returned to the PTFA pot.

Children were very creative with their supplies with some buying strawberries which they dipped in chocolate, decorated and sold for 70 pence each; others sold cake pops, sweet and milkshake cones, jewellery and keyrings, decorated pebbles, squishies, or held raffles.

Lottie Wildman successfully managed to raise £94 from her five pounds which was the most money raised by one pupil - well done to Lottie and all the children involved.

News from Brixington Primary



A visit from Illustrator Korky Paul

[Brixington Primary Academy](#) in Exmouth were very fortunate to have a visit from the fabulous illustrator, Korky Paul in March. He shared stories with children in Years 1 - 4 and then created a fantastic piece of artwork which will soon be on display in their school library.

Korky Paul is the genius behind the wonderful pictures in the much-loved series about the mad, bad and hilarious adventures of Winnie and the Witch and her black cat, Wilbur. The Winnie and Wilbur series has sold over seven million copies worldwide and has been translated in 25 languages.

"Thanks to the Budleigh Salterton Literary Festival for organising this visit. We were very inspired!" [Stuart Dyer, Head of Brixington Primary](#).

Art Inspired by Aardman Animations



Children at Brixington recently spent a day creating artwork inspired by Nick Park's work with animation.

Pupils, parents and carers visited after school to celebrate the inspirational art learning, with children from Nursery to Year 6 having all joined in to create colourful plasticine models, innovative story-boards and even movie-making!



Therapy Dog at Gatehouse Primary

Gatehouse Primary School in Dawlish are thrilled to introduce the newest member of their team - welcome to Blossom, a 2-year-old Labrador therapy dog!

Blossom had comprehensive training along with assistance from KC registered trainers and assistance dog specialists to prepare for her role at the school.

She completed her KC citizenship in bronze, silver, and gold levels and has been engaged in learning task-based activities to support children.



Leila Naldrett, Head of Gatehouse Primary said, "We are confident that Blossom's presence at the school will greatly enhance the pastoral support we provide here. She has been behaviour tested and is known for her calm and loving demeanour, she thoroughly enjoys games and exhibits remarkable acceptance of challenging behaviours."

Benefits of having a therapy dog

Research has shown that school dogs significantly contribute to the development of pupils' reading skills, behaviour, attendance, and academic confidence.

They play a vital role in fostering empathy, nurturing skills, and social responsibility among students. Studies have also highlighted numerous positive effects of therapy dogs in schools, including teaching empathy and appropriate interpersonal skills, helping individuals develop social skills and increasing self-esteem, providing a soothing and calming effect, improving children's ability to pick up on social cues, supporting emotional regulation, increasing motivation for learning, and assisting children with social and emotional learning needs which can also facilitate literacy development.

Leila continues, "We firmly believe that Blossom's presence will not only bring joy and comfort to our students but will also significantly contribute to their overall well-being and academic success."

Blossom will be supervised at all times with the children, and during her down time she will be located in the Deputy Head's office. She will always be accompanied by a trained adult and on a lead.

As part of the process of becoming a certified therapy dog, Blossom visits the vet regularly for general health check-ups and for regular required vaccinations. There is also a risk assessment and other relevant documentation in place.



Governance

We'd like to say a **big thank you** to all our **governance volunteers** who give their time for free to support our schools.

We'd also like to introduce the **new parent council** members who have joined us at various schools this term. Welcome to:



Katie Carter
Chudleigh Knighton Primary



Piers Cleaver
Chudleigh Knighton Primary



Vikki Norrish
Rockbeare CE Primary



Becky Chinnock
Mary Dean's CE Primary



News from Sidmouth CE Primary

Reception children at **Sidmouth Primary CE Primary School** took part in the department for transports 'bikeability' learning scheme in March. The children learnt how to balance following different obstacle courses, the parts of a balance bike using correct terminology, and the steps in how to ride a balance bike.

The progress from day 1 to 4 of learning was invaluable with all children being successful in their progress from their starting points! They had four 45 minute sessions spread over four days.

The course leaders made the learning fun and engaging for all the children, with them all looking forward to their next session.

This is something Sidmouth would like to continue annually and would recommend to any school!

Donated books for Sidmouth



The children at Sidmouth CE Primary have received the first batch of books from their new book subscription which was organised by the PTFA and funded by the Sidmouth Community.

The Year 6 librarians were very excited to get their hands on the books and enjoy recommending them to the rest of school. They also received new posters and stickers for the library at Woolbrook Road, to enhance the reading environment.



We are extremely grateful for the generous contribution from our brilliant community for our new books. This will have a really positive impact to develop a love for reading. We will receive a box of brand new books every term, featuring a selection of the best new titles including a diverse mix of fiction and non-fiction, incorporating different text types and a wide range of authors! (Mr Weir, Deputy Head)



Sidmouth Easter Egg competition



As part of our Easter celebrations, KS2 children were asked to decorate an egg with the theme being favourite books and stories. The standard of competition was incredibly high with the panel of judges finding it very difficult to choose overall winners across the school.

A huge thank you to all our children and families for putting in such an egg-cellent effort this year!



Mr Weir, Deputy Head of Sidmouth Primary

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