

December 2024, issue 8

# Trust newsletter

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



## A note from our CEO & Trust Lead

With the holidays fast approaching, we hope families are looking forward to the festive break. This is a joyous time of year but for some it can be difficult. In this edition, we've shared some cost-effective gift ideas with a slightly educational but fun focus for all who celebrate Christmas.

We would like to welcome eight new primaries to the Trust from Acorn Multi Academy Trust in East Devon and West Dorset, and Chickerell Primary School in Dorset, who joined in September this year and are settling in really well.

Congratulations to Colyton Primary and Mary Dean's CE Primary for their recent Ofsted inspections, and to Blackpool CE and Aveton Gifford CE Primary who have had Good SIAMS reports. Well done to all and thank you to everyone involved.

We hope you have a merry Christmas and good New Year and we look forward to welcoming you back in January 2025.

*Paul Walker*



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# Welcome to our new schools

A very warm welcome to our eight new member schools who joined the Trust on 1 September from Acorn Multi Academy Trust in East Devon and West Dorset, and Chickerell Primary School in Dorset this September.

As always, each school will bring its own unique identity and we're looking forward to finding out more about each of them while sharing our experience, and providing support, inspiration and ideas.

## Welcome to the First Federation Trust family:



### Axminster Academy, Axminster

Axminster opened in 1960 with a new extension in 2023. It currently has 291 pupils and they speak **15 languages** within the school community and now offers places from the age of two at the pre-school.



### St Andrew's CE Primary, Chardstock

Established in 1712, St Andrew's pre-school and primary now has a fabulous new building which offers forest school, an outside classroom and airy rooms, with a positive ethos, family atmosphere and good behaviour.



### Mrs Ethelston's CE Primary, Uplyme

Named after Mrs Anne Ethelston, born in 1799, the wife of Rev. Charles Wicksted Ethelston. After her death in 1854, Rev. Ethelston erected a building in her memory. They now have a school rabbit called Ethel!



### Loders CE Primary, Bridport

Loders has a lovely original Victorian building and two units built in 2004. It boasts two outdoor playgrounds, a grassy garden with forest school and a view of the hills. They also use the village hall and playing field a few minutes away. Places available from two years old.



### Marshwood CE Primary, Bridport

The Marshwood building is dated 1842 making it one of the oldest primary schools in Dorset. We also think we have one of the best views from the playground of any school in the country!



### Thorncombe St Mary's, Chard

Founded in 1876, Thorncombe is one of Dorset's longest established primary schools just a few miles from Chard, Axminster and Crewkerne with extensive outdoor grounds and access to countryside. Now offering a nursery from two years old.



### Membury CE Primary, nr Axminster

A small school and pre-school at the heart of the village in rural East Devon with close, supportive relationships with children and families, high expectations of behaviour and small class sizes allowing them to tailor learning to meet needs.



### Chickerell Primary, Weymouth

Chickerell is a pre-school and primary school in Weymouth. Jody Harris, Head of school, is a proud Welsh woman who's been in post for 14 years. Before she taught at a big middle school in Dorchester. In Jody's 'spare' time she loves walking her three spaniels and supporting the Welsh rugby team.



## Christmas Present Ideas

Christmas is a great time to switch off, relax and enjoy quality time with the family but of course children love the excitement of receiving the 'all important' presents. If you would like to buy some gifts which are cost-effective and have an element of education, here are some fun ideas.

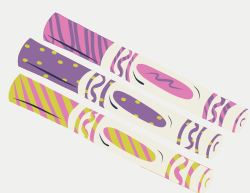


### Simple Science

The possibilities are almost endless with science, and with the variety of kits out there kids can create their own earthquake tables; make putty, slime and bouncy balls; grow crystals, conjure smoke, play with colours and even raise a floaty ghost!

### Card Games

Card games and packs of standard cards are great fun at Christmas and all year around. There are so many options with Happy Families, Snap It Up Maths & English, Uno, P for Pizza, Happy Salmon and much more at affordable prices.

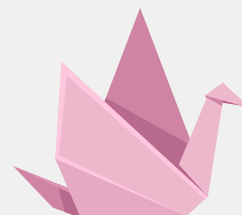


### Arts and Crafts

Arts and crafts will always be a winner and there's always something new on the shelves with Harry Potter Clay Charms from Klutz, colour-in cardboard houses, make your own snow globes, paint your own plates, water markers and more - the possibilities are endless.

### Origami

Origami sets are great stocking fillers and offer a brilliant way to sharpen children's creativity and concentration skills. There are many different levels available from very basic to more advanced, with all the colours and themes you can think of.



### Needlework Kits

There's never a better time to get children into sewing, crochet, knitting, cross-stitch or any needlework. Find an easy kit or buy separate supplies with colourful ribbons, thread and wool. There are many craft magazines or books with useful tips as well.

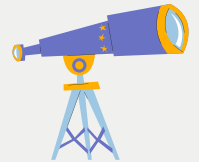


### Preloved

Vinted and Ebay offer some excellent gift opportunities with pre-loved (and often brand new) items you can haggle over - with clothes, toys, books, bath and body items, hair accessories and more, all of which won't cost the earth!

### Microscopes and Telescopes

This may seem like an indulgent suggestion but there are options on the market which aren't overly expensive including Pocket Microscopes and Discovery Telescopes - excellent for viewing stars, discovering wildlife and investigating the world.



### Grow Your Own

Garden related gifts can range from small pots of seeds to mini greenhouses and sets with tools - plant some colourful flowers, veg and fruit and watch them grow together throughout the year.

### Fun Books

There are so many great books to give as presents with fiction and fact and always something new. The Book Trust, Waterstones and Penguin have good lists with lots of ideas for different ages.

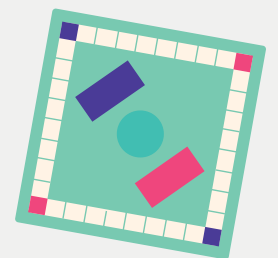


### Tickets and Experiences

Sometimes children already have what they need! So giving tickets or experiences can not only be a good present but offers a way to spend quality time together throughout the rest of the year.

### Board Games

Christmas is a great time for giving board games and spending time playing them. You'll be spoilt for choice with everything from classics including Cluedo and Monopoly, to something newer including Herd Mentality and What Next.



### Memory Games

Kids can sharpen their minds with a variety of memory games including classic card games in many themes, or the electronic Simon toys which have evolved over the years to include Simon Air and comes in stocking filler size as well.

### More ideas

There are lots of websites with many more ideas out there including on [Bright Minds](#), [Learning Resources](#), [Twinkl](#) and more.



## Colyton Primary Academy celebrates Good in all areas of recent Ofsted

Ofsted rated Colyton Primary Academy in East Devon Good in all areas, with high praise for the quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development, leadership and management, and early years provision.

Staff, pupils, parents and carers are said to belong to a 'friendly community', with children who 'arrive each day with smiles on their faces and an eagerness to learn' and have been recognised as having a 'deep sense of kindness and empathy towards each other'.



With a well-designed curriculum in ALL subjects and a particular focus on reading, pupils have been shaped into extremely perseverent, 'confident, independent learners' who meet 'the high expectations set for them in their learning'.

Mrs Mills, Head of School for Colyton Primary said, 'We're extremely pleased to have received this report from Ofsted and feel delighted that the inspectors can see the hard work and significant progress we've made over recent years. We have worked tirelessly to ensure the school is the best it can be. I'm so proud to have been part of this journey. I love our school and community and this is excellent recognition for us. We always strive for excellent behaviour which our pupils embrace as they aim for 'Thursday Shout Outs' and 'Pride of Colyton' awards. We're proud of our close links with the local community and we maintain strong relationships with parents and carers who have described the support from school as 'excellent', making 'school a positive experience'.

Colyton Primary joined the Trust in January 2020 - 'staff value the effective support from wider trust networks and feel their workload and well-being are fully considered'.

In an extensive personal development programme called 'Colyton extras', children learn important life skills including managing budgets and ironing. They 'learn about equality, diversity and discrimination from a young age'. This, and Colyton's unique careers curriculum, ensures that children are ready 'for their next steps in education and life'.

The report highly praises the focus on and passion for reading and approves of the school's teaching methods in this, and other areas. 'Well-targeted interventions successfully support any pupils who need additional help with their reading' and 'as a result, pupils become confident, fluent readers.'

Mrs Mills continues, 'I want to say thank you to the parents, carers, pupils and Trust - the support we receive has been an instrumental part of this important journey. We now continue with our work to be 'a school to be proud of in the heart of our community' and we look forward to building upon the progress we've made.'

## Mary Dean's CE Primary deemed as ambitious for all with a 'high quality' KS1 curriculum in recent Ofsted report

Mary Dean's CE Primary on the outskirts of Plymouth, Devon has been deemed ambitious for all with a 'high quality' curriculum design and implementation for early years which 'provides a strong model for the whole school' according to the recent Ofsted report.

Children in Key Stage 1 are said to 'flourish', receiving a 'strong start to their learning and development' and being 'well prepared for entry into Year 1.' The team of hard-working staff are said to 'implement the phonics curriculum well' following an 'agreed and consistent approach to teaching' which benefits all pupils 'particularly those who struggle' and allows children to 'read with confidence and fluency'.



Children 'enjoy coming to school' and are praised for having 'respect towards adults and one another' and for learning and playing together well. They're 'proud of their sporting achievements in the locality' and benefit from a broad variety of interesting experiences, clubs and activities which develop character and confidence.

With changes to the Ofsted reporting scheme no longer giving an overall single grade, Mary Dean's has been recognised as being Good in Personal Development, Behaviour and Attitudes, and Early Years Provision.

Donna Wilson, Head of School, said, 'I'm really pleased to see recognition of our recently improved behaviour policy – we can see how much pupils have embraced this and the new rules and how this is having a positive effect on everyone overall. We're continuing to support those who struggle more in this area.'

Mary Dean's Primary is part of First Federation Trust, a multi-academy of 29 primaries across Plymouth, Devon and Dorset. The report highlights the Trust's 'clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school' and says the improvements are 'beginning to be seen in a number of areas.'

Angela Jenkins, Director of Performance and Development for First Federation Trust, said 'We've been supporting Mary Dean's for just over a year now, working together to prioritise areas in need of development, investing in training and development for staff, and strengthening the curriculum. We are committed to continuing to drive positive changes in education and leadership with a strong focus on safeguarding and inclusion as well.'

The report acknowledges Mary Dean's strengths in inclusion highlighting the school's ambitions for all 'including those who are disadvantaged and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)', with SEND needs being 'accurately identified' and individual learning plans being 'better tailored to help close gaps for those pupils'.

Praise has been given for pupils' understanding and celebration of 'different cultures and faiths' with teaching staff working hard to ensure children 'know that tolerance and fairness are important values in modern Britain.'

Donna Wilson continues, 'I want to say thank you to everyone for their hard work and dedication in getting the school to this stage. Together with the Trust, we will continue making positive changes and improvements where needed.'

## Blackpool CE Primary celebrates positive SIAMS report

Blackpool CE Primary School in Liverton, Devon, is 'living up to its foundation as a Church school and enabling pupils and adults to flourish' with a Christian vision that 'provides focus, meaning and direction' according to the latest SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) report by the Church of England.

The school has been recognised as being 'deeply inclusive' and 'outward looking' offering a calm and 'safe environment'. Staff are provided with up-to-date special educational needs and disability (SEND) training and a dedicated family support worker provides support to families in need.



Parents are included in creating personal learning plans for pupils with SEND establishing strong relationships. As a result of the enhanced vision, the school 'prioritises living well together' encouraging everyone to 'become their best selves' with 'a tangible culture of mutual respect amongst staff'.

Russell Pearson, Head of Blackpool CE Primary said, 'I felt it was important to refocus and broaden the former Christian vision when I joined at the start of 2024, and it's great to see recognition of this in how it meets the needs of our school and wider community and encourages pupils 'to look beyond themselves'. We like to offer our pupils the chance to uphold leading roles including being members of committees, digital leaders, or being part of the vision group and school council making decisions about fundraising and other initiatives. We also have the 'Blackpool Spirit Award' where Year 6 students can design and deliver projects to meet the needs of others, encouraging 'a culture of justice and responsibility', and the 'flourishing schools programme' where we take a lead role in Church school development within our governing body, First Federation Trust.'

The report highlights the support on offer from the Trust, a multi-academy of 29 primary schools across Devon and West Dorset, which is said to have 'a deep understanding of Blackpool as a Church school'. It is said, 'leaders weave together the trust's values with the school values to support the development of the school as a flourishing community'.

Collective worship is an integral part of daily life for Blackpool, playing 'a key role in deepening pupils' and adults' understanding of the Christian vision.' The school's vision and values are entwined into worship with selected stories and themes, and pupils are invited to pray and have time for quiet reflection. There is a strong relationship with the local parish church, St Michael's, who hold regular worships at the school.

In designing and developing the curriculum, 'content has been carefully selected and sequenced to reflect the context of the school and the needs of learners' and RE is 'led with confidence'. Pupils 'speak with confidence about the range of religions and worldviews that they study' and 'teaching staff understand the role of RE in the life of a Church school.'

Leaders have ensured there is significant opportunity to learn about 'differences and develop an understanding of life beyond the school's immediate location' with a focus on 'three pillars of raising aspirations for all, deepening understanding, and making powerful links.' Spiritual development is 'an intrinsic part of this curriculum' with an emphasis on 'looking inwards and outwards and asking deep questions.'

## Positive SIAMS report from Aveton Gifford CE Primary

Parents at Aveton Gifford CE Primary School in South Hams, Devon view it as being ‘the heart of the village, where staff flourish and adults are happy to stay’ according to the most recent SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) report by the Church of England.

The school near Kingsbridge, which is seen as having a ‘culture of acceptance’, is ‘living up to its foundation as a Church school’ with a Christian vision that ‘shines through school life’. The ‘Visionaries,’ a group of older pupils, help to inspire younger children and ‘recognise the importance modelling the values’.

Fern De Beer, Head of School, said, ‘Our values are compassion, joy, friendship, perseverance, thankfulness and trust and our vision is:

“ **Sowing the Seeds for Success** ”

We’re proud of our pupils for recognising Bible stories about ‘seeds’ and how they ‘link to everyday experiences’.

Fern continues, ‘We have a strong relationship with the local vicar and church where we connect via many joint events and worship, and have great connections with parents and carers with excellent two-way communication. We’re proud of our strong behaviour and attendance routines and thank everyone for their support in this, and we’re especially proud to see recognition for our pupils who stand up for each other and undertake significant charitable outreach work.’

The report acknowledges the staff who are seen to ‘flourish in their roles as they know they are valued and nurtured’. Governing body, First Federation Trust, supports the school with leadership and training opportunities and ‘knowledgeable governors and directors provide expertise and challenge, ensuring that the vision is a priority.’

Worship routines are ‘deeply embedded within the fabric of the school’ supporting pupils in ‘making good choices and encouraging them to care for their environment and others’. Enthusiastic staff have ‘strong subject knowledge’ in RE due to excellent training, resulting in children who thoroughly enjoy the subject and ‘deepening their comprehension across the wider curriculum’.

Children are ‘curious learners’ who ask and answer ‘thoughtful and thought-provoking questions’ with a curriculum which also offers ‘opportunities for pupils to reflect and develop spiritually’ with a ‘calm and focused’ learning behaviour and ‘stimulating learning spaces both inside and out’. Pupils are encouraged to have their own opinions and are given a physical outdoor space where they can ‘reflect on what it means to have religious faith’.

Paul Walker, Chief Executive Officer of First Federation Trust, said, ‘Aveton Gifford is particularly strong in supporting pupils who are vulnerable or disadvantaged and seen to have an ‘inclusive learning environment’. We work alongside leaders at the school to examine individual needs and determine any gaps which we seek to improve.’



# Non-Pupil Day Inclusion

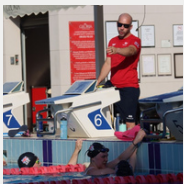
Training and development is an important part of the Trust and as such there is an annual training day every October, which this year focused on **Inclusion**.

We recognise that Inclusion is one of the biggest challenges that faces the education sector at present and we have listed 'Being a fully inclusive trust' as one of the key strategic priorities in the strategic plan for 2024 – 2027.

As part of this year's training day we were pleased to host some national figures who spoke to staff about this important topic, and together we examined how we are all placing this at the heart of our practice in schools.



## 2024 SPEAKERS



**Rob Aubury, Head Coach of the Great Britain Paralympic Swimming Team**

Breaking barriers and achieving excellence



**Natalie Packer, Independent Education Consultant**

The Five Principles of Inclusion, what this means and how we may consider this in our day-to-day work within our schools.



**Gary Aubin, Education Endowment Foundation's SEND Associate**

'THE 5-A-DAY'



**This was a very good day. We've been challenged and inspired in how we further support all our children to flourish.**

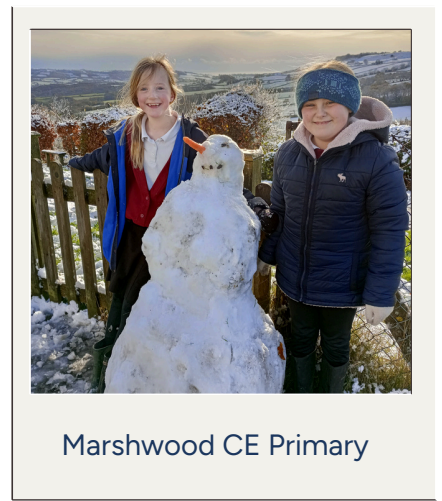
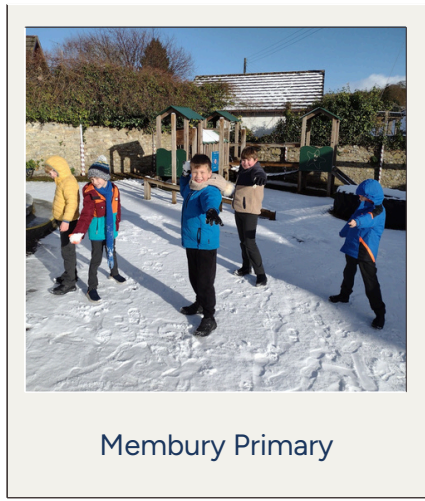
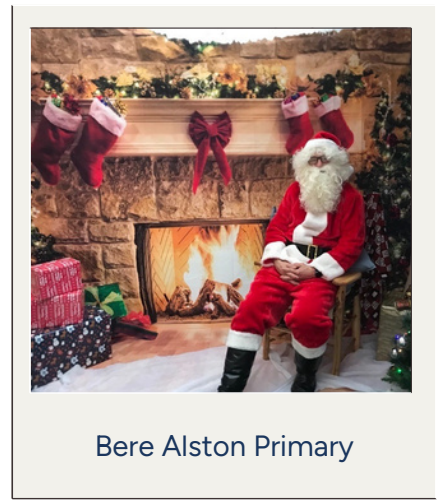
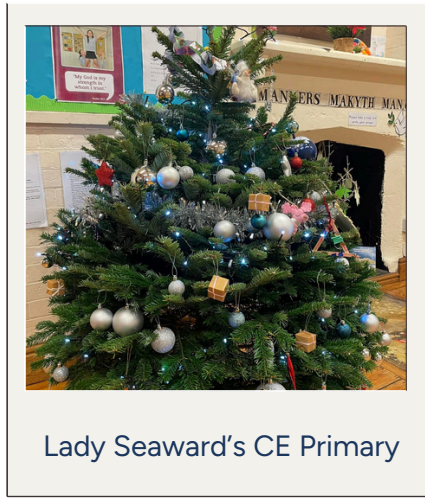


*Peter Beare, Head of School at Marshwood Primary Academy*



# Xmas Images

Here are some Christmas images from some of our schools to spread some festive cheer!



# Xmas Images



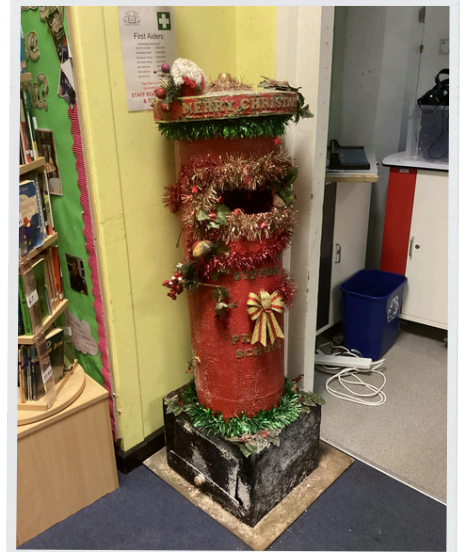
Here are some Christmas images from some of our schools to spread some festive cheer!



Hawkchurch CE Primary



Brixington Primary



Aveton Gifford CE Primary



Rockbeare CE Primary



Axminster Community Primary



# 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.

The purpose of governance is to provide **confident** and **strong strategic leadership** which leads to robust **accountability, oversight** and **assurance** for educational and financial performance.

## Parent Council Members

Parent council members represent the voice of **a parent** not the voice of the parents. Their primary expertise is as a parent and they play a vital part in our governance structure.

At least one parent council member is elected for each school, and at least one from each is a member of the governance Hub Board.

Their role is to undertake monitoring visits to their school and report the outcome of their Hub Board. The focus of the visits is set by the hub board, directors and parent council member.

## New Parent Council Members

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



Tamsin Frances  
Blackpool CE Primary



Charlie Green  
Newton Ferrers CE Primary

## School Governors

We were delighted that many of the former school governors who joined in September decided to continue in a governance role for the Trust - we benefit greatly from their knowledge of the schools.

## Hub Boards

The Trust currently has six Hub Boards. Each includes a member of the school improvement team, a chair, a foundation director or church representative, parent council members, and co-opted members appointed based on their skills. Thank you to the following people who have joined our governance hub boards as parent council members for their school:



Matt Roe  
Axminster Primary



Lucy Pearse and Helen Newton  
Membury Primary



Sarah Dolan and Sarah Wyatt  
St Andrew's Primary



Hannah Betchley and Paul Williamson  
Mrs Ethelston's Primary



Simon Newport  
Chickerell Primary



Georgia McMenemy  
Thorncombe St Mary's Primary



## Governance



### Governance Hub Board - Foundation Representatives

Thank you to the following people who have joined our governance hub boards as foundation representatives for Exeter, Salisbury and Bath & Wells dioceses respectively:



Carley Franke



Sarah Godfey



Sarah Cuff



Catherine Davis

Thank you to John Ryde who will continue to offer his skills around SEND. We were delighted that many of the former governors of the schools who joined in September decided to continue in a governance role for the Trust - we benefit greatly from their knowledge of the schools.

### Governance Vacancies

We currently have some governance vacancies on our hub boards. Please look out for information from your school and contact us if you are interested in applying for one of these positions - we always welcome new volunteers!

Searching for ways to develop yourself professionally this year? Wanting to contribute to your local community? Or wondering how you can support the education of children and young people? Becoming a governance volunteer could be the answer!

We always welcome approach from people interested in taking on a governance role. Please email [admin@firstfederation.org.uk](mailto:admin@firstfederation.org.uk) to register your interest.

Discover more: [www.firstfederation.org/governance/](http://www.firstfederation.org/governance/)



**Thank you to all our governance volunteers who give their time for free to support our schools.**

# Keep in touch

Follow us on social media and via our website to keep up-to-date with our latest news



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