

# Trust Termly Newsletter

## December 2024



Trust vision: To ensure that every child has an exceptional educational experience.

Thank you all so much for your incredible hard work, resilience, and enthusiasm throughout what has been a long and challenging term. I don't need to tell you that your roles require immense dedication and effort. However, I know that each of you is driven by the desire to make a difference for our pupils, and that makes all the hard work so rewarding.

From this year's staff surveys, it is heartening to see that 92% of you enjoy working in your schools, and in many, this figure is a perfect 100%. Our goal is to achieve 100% across the board, and we recognise areas where we must improve. In particular, you've highlighted the need for leadership to better consider workload when implementing new policies and procedures, and to use professional development to challenge, support, and encourage you.

So, how is the Trust supporting your schools to respond to this feedback, and what impact will it have?

We understand that nothing is more motivating than success. That's why we are prioritising your professional development, aligning it with our ambition to improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning across our schools. We know that for professional development to have an impact, it's essential to give you time to fully engage with it.

To support this, the trustees have approved the Executive Leadership Team's (ELT) proposal to add an additional PD day in February for the writing moderation. This will replace the proposed twilight session, providing more time for collaboration. This extra PD day will also give all staff the opportunity to engage in the MADE memory training, which was impactful for our teachers in June. Additionally, there will be another opportunity in May to build upon this training and embed strategies that support our pupils in retaining essential knowledge from the curriculum.

In response to teachers' self-evaluations against the EEF 5-a-day adaptive teaching strategies, we are also making strides to support metacognition. In January, Malcolm Reeve will meet with SENCOs to finalise plans for professional development aimed at supporting our work with the most vulnerable pupils.

Looking ahead to 2025-26, I'm pleased to share that the trustees have approved the ELT's proposal for further, additional PD days across the year. This is a tangible commitment to your professional development and workload, ensuring we provide the time and resources necessary to make a significant impact on the outcomes for all pupils.

These extra PD days are just one of the many substantial benefits of working for OMAT. In addition, the trustees have ensured that the set term dates provide full week breaks and all nationally agreed pay awards are distributed promptly. For example, teachers have already received their national pay award since September, while other trusts are only receiving their back pay at the end of December. Similarly, support staff received their anticipated pay award in October, before it was even nationally agreed.

Thank you for your extraordinary dedication this term and I hope you will start to feel the significant benefits of the changes being introduced. Please enjoy reading the stories from across our schools below, and take time to rest and recharge over the break.

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

**Alastair Heath-Robinson**  
CEO



## Grace Cook Primary School & Nursery



**First trip for reception class.** Photo from Sun class visit to Colchester Zoo for their reindeer experience and a chance to see Father Christmas too!



### Christmas Carol Service.

It was a delight to see families at our Service at St Peter's and St Mary's church, Stowmarket earlier this month. The children performed beautifully and it was a very proud moment reflecting on this as their Headteacher



### Whole class music

Earth class with their first performance sharing their Ukulele skills gained from the Autumn term - with a few festive tunes thrown in!

## Springfield Infant School & Nursery



At Springfield, this term has a pattern of events that always end the final week with all things Christmas; jumper days, Christmas lunch, discos, Christmas fayre and a service at church. This week we have had our school nativity, 'A Warm and Fuzzy Christmas,' and some of the children have sung for the local community at the church.

But we have had a very busy half term, we welcomed three new members of staff. We have had trips to the park, local walks and history days in school. Some of our past students and staff were very excited to receive a pair of 'Converse Play' pumps following a film collaboration with Jamie Hawkesworth who attended our school as a child. We have also had workshops for year 2 as part of the



Wolsey 550 project, the children have worked alongside Lily Hammond. She is a local artist who is helping them design and paint a mural for our outside shelter. The theme for our project is 'Play and Friendship,' I am sure the finished project will be an amazing addition to our playground. We also purchased a music shed with funding from Tesco's and equipped it with lots of different instruments for the children to use at playtimes and lunchtimes. Who knows, we may have a budding Ed Sheeran on our hands!



**WHERE LEARNING IS UNSTOPPABLE AND ASPIRATIONS HAVE NO LIMITS**

# Brooklands Primary School

Fundraising is often a theme that comes to the fore at Christmas especially as our thoughts turn to others. Brooklands is delighted to have had several recent successes with a number of its grant applications and I thought you might be interested to hear a little bit more about some of them and how we are putting these awards to effective use.

We are extremely grateful to all those organisations who have awarded us funding and extend a huge Brooklands thank you. With their support we have been able to provide opportunities for our children to experience and learn in new and innovative ways as well as developing the schools' facilities in ways that we would not have been able to do without their generosity.

Brooklands' Sensory Room (and children) have benefited significantly from The Toy Trust's £2500 award which has enabled us to buy items including: weighted animals, interactive wall panels, sensory swings, bubble tubes and tactile flooring. Additionally, Universal Music UK Sound Foundation have funded us with a further donation of £500 towards our Sensory Room to help us purchase musical resources including a guitar wall board and a chimes wall board.

Funded by a £600 award from the Armourers and Brasiers' Gauntlet Trust. Networked (VR) headsets will bring our science curriculum to life in an immersive learning experience. Our Year 5 children will also be experiencing the wonders of Ancient Greece thanks to Virtual Reality workshops funded by a £300 award from the Hellenic Society.

We have been lucky to secure £1600 funding from The Asda Foundation to provide weekly animal-assisted therapeutic sessions across the Spring and Summer term for selected children with wellbeing and emotional needs.

Sea-Changers, a marine conservation charity, recently awarded us £400 to support marine wildlife identification. With this funding we have been able to purchase binoculars and wildlife identification guides. Our children will have the opportunity to use these new items during their Beach School sessions at Manningtree and along the Stour estuary. A National Landscape grant of £650 has also enabled us to fund an additional teacher to complete Wild Beach training.



With twenty more applications in process, we are hoping to share more successes with you in 2025.



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# The Willows Primary School



It has been an exciting term at The Willows as we have delved into the past and learned about how to be a great member of our school community. The term began with a week designed to support children's wellbeing, encourage a growth mindset and develop a tribal classroom culture where teamwork is key in every class.



We then journeyed back in time to explore an historical period in depth and answer key enquiry questions such as 'Can one person change the world?', 'What makes a great leader?' and 'Is anything worth dying for?' The children have loved finding out about great historical events, people and civilisations with themed days and visits contributing to an enriched learning experience which has inspired engagement.



We are also proud of our new partnership with Ipswich Town Foundation and the Literacy, Numeracy, SEMH, PSHE and PE programmes we are working on in partnership with them, which are further enhancing our journey of improvement.



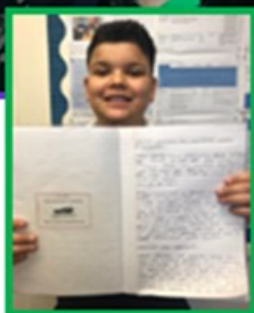
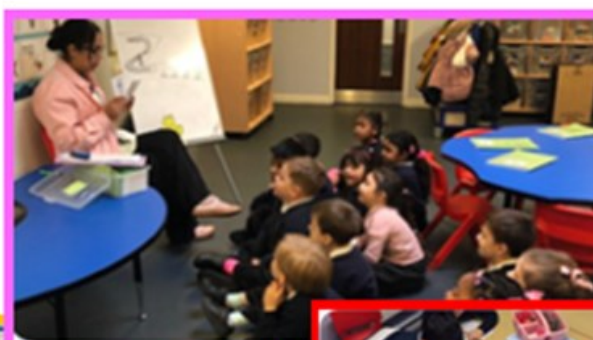
There have been many highlights this term but watching two of our children walk out as mascots at Portman Road, witnessing a beautiful retelling of the Christmas story by Reception and welcoming many of our families to two 'Together' events are the ones that have really stood out as exemplifying everything that is great about our school and the incredible determination of the staff to make every day magical for every child.



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# Handford Hall Primary School

Handford Hall is a place where everyone loves to be!



What an exhilarating start to the academic year we've had at Handford Hall! We are bursting with pride as we reflect on our remarkable school community, which continually pushes boundaries to provide the very best for our children. Our unwavering commitment ensures that learning at Handford Hall is not just a process, but an adventure - exciting, memorable, and deeply meaningful.

## HH Curriculum – ever changing 'body of knowledge and skills' led by our fantastic subject leads

At the heart of our success lies our ambitious and bespoke HH Curriculum. It's a living, breathing entity, constantly evolving under the expert guidance of our fantastic subject leads. We're not just imparting knowledge and skills; we're nurturing understanding and building the confidence to succeed. Our aim? To ignite a lifelong passion for learning in our pupils, broaden their horizons about diverse cultures and societies, and instil a deep respect for individual rights and responsibilities. Our school community is a vibrant tapestry of backgrounds and experiences, and our curriculum reflects this rich diversity. Our dedicated staff members skilfully adapt their teaching methods and learning opportunities across all subjects, ensuring that every pupil can make outstanding progress in their unique learning journey. And uniqueness is what we do the best!

But learning at Handford Hall extends far beyond the classroom walls. We're proud to offer a wealth of enrichment opportunities that spark imagination and nurture talents. From the grace of ballroom dancing to the precision of fencing, from the strength and flexibility of gymnastics to the magic of theatre productions - we're opening doors to new experiences. Our science and history workshops are planting seeds for future scientists, teachers, doctors, and engineers. We're not just teaching; we're inspiring the next generation of innovators and leaders.



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Handford Hall continued...

### HH Parents



None of this would be possible without our wonderful parents and community. They are our key partners in this educational journey. Together, we're fostering a strong sense of community, promoting educational achievement, boosting our children's self-esteem, and cultivating a deep sense of pride in our school and community. Their engagement has been nothing short of phenomenal - from the 100% attendance at our Parent Consultation Day to their enthusiastic participation in school events, workshops, and the myriad enrichment opportunities that have become our hallmark.

## Grange Community Primary School



Our new starters at Grange Community Primary School in the Robins class have had a great start to the term and settled well into their new routines. Lots of new friends have been made and they are making good progress learning new sounds. We enjoyed sharing some of this work with parents at our open afternoon.

Year 4 enjoyed a visit to Sutton Hoo, with a guided tour, woodland treasure trail and exploring the exhibition hall and Tranmer House. A perfect end to their unit on Anglo Saxons.

After travelling on the Foot Ferry from Felixstowe to Bawdsey; Year 6 had a fantastic week on their residential, lots of personal challenges met and plenty of team building skills learnt.

We have been able to end the Autumn term with carol singing in the local community, visiting our local residential care home to share Christmas crafts, a musical performance from our Year 4 students who have been learning the cornet and an EYFS and KS1 Nativity collaboration that helped us to remember the true meaning of Christmas.



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# Halifax Primary School

## Celebrating Democracy and Community Action at Our School

This term, our focus on *Democracy* within British Values has provided children with valuable insights into the importance of making their voices heard, understanding the responsibilities of voting, and respecting democratic decisions. The children eagerly put their learning into action when we held a ballot to elect our new school council members. After listening carefully to the candidates' speeches, each pupil cast their vote to help choose their representatives.



Our newly elected school council wasted no time in identifying ways to make a difference in their new roles. They were passionate about supporting a local charity and, after discussions, began working in partnership with our local church, St Mary at Stoke, to support the *Stoke Pantry*. The Pantry is a vital community food bank that opens its doors every Sunday to assist local families. Each year, the Pantry serves over 500 families—around 40 households every single week—and plays a key role in promoting environmental sustainability by collecting surplus fresh food from supermarkets that would otherwise go to waste. However, the Pantry still relies on purchases of staple dry goods, such as pasta, rice, and tinned food, to meet the community's needs.

Inspired to take action, our school council wrote to all families, asking for donations of dry food items to support this cause. The response from our families throughout November was remarkable. The school council was overwhelmed by the sheer generosity and number of donations received, which far exceeded their expectations. These contributions have now been carefully boxed and delivered to the Stoke Pantry.

The school council was delighted to receive a message of thanks from the Pantry, acknowledging the hard work, dedication, and kindness shown by our school community. The donations have had a hugely positive impact on the lives of local families, demonstrating the power of teamwork, compassion, and the democratic values we have been learning about this term.

## Finally, it's Quiz Time!



- 1) What is the most secure way to store your work passwords?
- 2) What should you do if you notice damaged electrical equipment in the school?
- 3) What should you do if you receive a suspicious email that claims to be from your manager but has unusual requests?
- 4) Why is it important to keep fire exits and evacuation routes clear at all times?
- 5) What does the term phishing mean?

Find out more about protecting yourself from fraud [here](#).

Click [here](#) to view the National Cyber Security Centre's top tips for staying secure online.

