

Trust Executive Leader Newsletter February 2020

Despite being the shortest month, February has proved very busy with a wide range of activities and developments across the Trust, as well as 3 Ofsted inspections, the outcomes of which will be available shortly. Whilst the Ofsted visits have been intense and challenging experiences, the professional dialogue and learning that has emerged from the 3 visits has been very helpful in sharpening our practice. Everything is focused on ensuring that the Quality of Education is spot on for our children, that the curriculum is appropriate, personal development, wellbeing and behaviour is effective and the schools are led well. You will see below examples of how we do this in practice across the Trust.

In terms of examining the curriculum, Ofsted use an approach called 'Deep Dives' where they review subject areas in depth and breadth to make sure these are thought through and sequenced to secure the very best learning. It has been my privilege to do some 'deep diving' in our schools - most recently in Science at Mullion School, in Maths at Helston and in Reading in some of the primary schools. Talking to staff and children, reviewing lessons and books, helps us to draw a really clear picture of the strengths and areas for development in our subject areas. Thank you to the teams who hosted these visits. Hopefully the visits have been helpful feedback to shape future planning.

The Assistant Headteachers' Network Group meeting in January, led by Lucy Wandless and myself, was very well attended from all schools in the Trust. It was an excellent opportunity to discuss our roles and responsibilities as well as developing our skills with regard to leadership and management, through the Leadership Matters resources provided. We were all able to take actions away to work on and apply them to our school settings.

As always there has been a great deal of training taking place to support the work of our staff. Several of our primary schools are involved in a new initiative: the Oracy project. Cury School have provided a summary of their work so far arising from this training:

'After the initial day's training, I returned to school excited with the possibilities that just a few tweaks to our planning could make to our pupils. Sold by the idea there is a clear connection between a child's language ability and attainment at the end of Key Stages, we have introduced "Talking Lunch" on Wednesdays. The children are given an open ended question to talk about and debate during their lunch session. We put the question for the week on each newsletter in the hope that parents can discuss it at home - helping to develop children's understanding, vocabulary choices and sentence formation. Our first question was "Which is more important, being right or being nice?" The children are seated in mixed aged, ability and gender groups and the so far the sessions have been really positive. We seat an adult at each table to initially "chair" the discussion but our aim is to hand this over to the children as soon as we can. We are planning to use other strategies such as using Lego blocks to record the pattern of discussion on each table.

We use an oracy toolkit designed by Voice 21 to support pupils during all oracy lessons. These are a set of guidelines for partner and group discussion that help to maintain a safe, effective and respectful environment for talk.

Although our oracy work is still in its infancy, we are already noticing a positive impact; there is a new excitement about learning throughout the school and an increased confidence among pupils who are more willing to make their voice and ideas heard. At Cury, we believe that the Oracy Project is a fantastic vehicle to ensure that our children really do live "life in all its fullness".'

On the theme of oracy, several of our schools have been very successful in the recent Rotary Youth Speaks public speaking competitions. Crowan, Parc Eglos and Porthleven all won through to the area finals. Crowan's girl's team of Lilo, Evie and Scarlett impressed the judges with their passionate and well-researched delivery on the topic of global warming and climate-change.

Our School Kids in Partnership [SKIP] meeting saw pupils from across all of our Trust schools coming together at the beginning of February for a discussion around the current 'climate emergency'. Freddie Nancholas, from Crowan Primary School, delivered a speech all about the importance of pupil voice and the children were led in a discussion about what the individual schools could do to support a green agenda. Many of the schools have devised an action plan already for achieving the different eco school standards and were able to share what they have already achieved and their next ambitions.



Oracy takes on a wider context in secondary school with pupils learning a new language and experiencing other cultures. Helston Community College's Languages' Department have been involved in the second year of a fantastic exchange programme with Instituto Fernando de Rojas, as a result of their successful bid for Erasmus+ funding from the British Council. College students welcomed their exchange partners from Salamanca, Spain, into their families, to give them a first-hand experience of life in Cornwall. Helston's Museum for Cornish Life also welcomed the students, who thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to pose for photographs in a real old school setting whilst finding out about the area's rich history. Students spent the next day at the Eden Project, where they also went ice-skating! Visits were made to our beautiful Cornish beaches and to places such as St Michael's Mount, the Minack Theatre and the village of Porthleven. The College would like to thank the local businesses for their support in making this trip so successful. The students are now looking forward to their return visit to Salamanca, so that they can renew their friendships and continue to practice their Spanish. Opportunities like this are so rewarding - not only for those who participate but also for those around them. Families have created international bonds, and students have gained knowledge and experiences that only visiting the exchange country can bring.

Mullion School students have also been venturing abroad, visiting France and Belgium to see the Battlefields, Memorials and Museums dedicated to those that had fallen during WW1 and WW11. Although very sombre at times, students were able to experience some of the conditions the soldiers faced. Jess Nicholl, one of the students, wrote



"Seeing the scale of the battlefields and cemeteries and being able to remember the soldiers in the place they fell was a truly eye-opening experience. Although at times it was quite sombre, it's important to appreciate the legacy that all of the soldiers - living and dead - have left us. Witnessing the sights of cemeteries like Tyne Cot and Langemark really put into perspective the extent to which lives were lost and, by focusing on some of the most significant poetry of the war, we were able to

experience the emotions felt by the writers in the place they felt them. Watching The Last Post at the Menin Gate, a place where thousands of ordinary soldiers went to access the battlefield, was captivating and to see the names of soldiers who never came home to their families was even more poignant."

Our pupils benefit greatly from their learning in the wider community and they also contribute to it in many ways. One example of this is Jess Whitehouse, from Helston, who is a run director for the Helston Park Run. She is also a member of the signing choir. It is good to recognise and celebrate the positive contributions our pupils make so well done to Jess.

We will be hosting our first Trust Celebration Event in April to celebrate the achievements of pupils right across the Trust and to recognise some unsung heroes. Watch this space.



Finally, I wanted to share this lovely follow up event from Breage School who have certainly brought light to the darkness of these winter months! Having made lanterns for the Helston parade, cancelled due to such unsettled weather, children asked if it would be possible to have their own parade in Breage. So, earlier this month, the Lantern parade took place in one of the school's Church services. The children were fabulous and made the team proud. Children from Blue class planned and led the service with prayers, readings, a poem and everyone joined in with singing too. Although the weather, yet again, prevented an outdoor parade, the lanterns were paraded around the church in the darkness. It was a lovely end to the half term and their shining in darkness project, the focus for the half term's worship.

Hopefully it will not be too long now until the lighter evenings return and with them, we hope, calmer weather.



Kind regards
Donna