St Augustine’s Forest School
The Forest School is very important to everyone at St Augustine’s Primary in Dunstable. As well as being used for outdoor learning, the Forest School area is also used for Wild Worship including Harvest, Wassailing and Pentecost. Recently, the school were delighted to receive a grant which has enabled them to plant over 500 trees and hedges in their Forest School area, and install irrigation piping to help keep them watered. With every child and adult having the opportunity to plant one or more saplings, their Forest School will thrive and they look forward to seeing it flourish as the plants grow and mature.

Clifton All Saints’ Pupil’s Climate Poem
Clifton All Saints Primary often talk about what can be done to help with climate change. One of the pupils who regularly contributes to these discussions is Year 4 pupil, Amy. She is very passionate about the Earth and has completed a number of different activities linked to making a difference over the last 12 months. Amy recently wrote a poem about her suggestions to slow down climate change and make a difference to our planet, which she has submitted to Blue Peter as part of their latest competition. You can read the poem here: www.stalbans.anglican.org/schools/news/amys-climate-change-poem-clifton-all-saints-primary-school

Masks for Malawi at Welwyn St Mary’s
Welwyn St Mary’s end of spring term non-uniform day raised an outstanding £400 for “Masks for Malawi”. The school received this wonderful news from Tamsin, the charity organiser:
Thank you to Welwyn St Mary’s for supporting Nansanto primary school in Mulanje, Malawi with the ‘Masks for Malawi’ fundraiser. We exceeded our target of £1000 and reached £1495! All pupils at Nansanto primary school have now received a face covering and bar of soap. This will help them avoid further disruption to their learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the excess money, it was possible to refurbish 62 damaged desks so now more children have an adequate study space for their learning. Thank you to everyone who contributed.

Christ Church’s Biggest Sing
On 15 June, Christ Church Chorley Wood Primary participated in Young Voices’ 25th Anniversary charity concert event, the ‘Biggest Sing’. In a time when music and singing could not be more important for the well-being of children, this event was the perfect way to support Children’s Mental Health Week. The school joined thousands of others from all over the globe as part of the ‘world’s largest choir’ singing ‘Lovely Day’ by Bill Withers. Not only did the children sing it, but they also learnt to ‘sign’ the chosen song. The event raised vital funds in support of Place2Be, Young Voices’ chosen charity for 2021.

Nash Mills’ Big Frieze Artwork
This year Nash Mills adopted the Understanding Christianity resource as part of their RE curriculum. The children have really enjoyed studying some aspects of the curriculum in greater depth, and having the opportunity to discuss ideas and thoughts between them. At the start of June, they held an Arts in RE week. One activity as part of this was to study the Big Frieze and really look at what it showed them, with each class then taking a section to redesign. Some amazing, detailed, and very thoughtful work resulted!

Vacancies Webpage
The Vacancies page on the diocesan website gives you an additional platform to advertise job openings in your school free of charge. Do send any vacancy advertisements to hpuddefoot@stalbans.anglican.org
St Andrew's Big Bible Story Display

Having completed the Understanding Christianity training with RE and Christian Ethos Adviser Ryan Parker, Josh Chesterman, a Year 4 teacher at St Andrew’s in Stanstead Abbots thought that it would be a good idea to develop a whole-school display around the ‘Big Bible Story’. Every class, from Nursery to Year 6, took an aspect of the ‘Big Frieze’ and represented it. The results are fantastic!

NATRE Competition Winner at Tring

Congratulations to Fern, a Year 9 student at Tring CE School whose poem was selected as a winner at the National NATRE Spirited Arts Competition in the ‘Where is God’ category! You can read her poem here: www.natre.org.uk/about-natre/projects/spiritued-arts/spiritued-arts-gallery/2020/lost-and-found-poem

Outdoor Worship at Silsoe Lower

On 1st July, the whole of Silsoe VC Lower School gathered on the playground for an outdoor service for the first time, having been unable to join together as a community for worship for so long due to COVID-19 restrictions. However, they recently decided to take their worship outside. Unfortunately, due to restrictions not lifting on 21 June, they were unable to invite parents as originally planned but they were able to celebrate, sing and worship together as a whole school and were joined by some members of the Governing Board.

Revd David Payne was invited to take the service, joined by children who lead the school in prayer. The worship songs were chosen by the children and hearing the sound of voices singing and rejoicing together again was an emotional moment.

The message of the service was ‘Jesus, Light of the world, leading us through darker times and giving us hope for the future.’ It was an extremely special occasion and wonderful for the children to be able to go home and share the message and the order of service with parents. As pupils left at the end of the day, they could be heard singing ‘Our God is a great big God and he holds us in his hands!’ He does indeed!

Potten End Care for their Community

Children in Year 1 at Potten End CE Primary School have been thinking about how they can look after their community. They decided to put this into action when they heard that Rob, one of the school binmen, had been seriously ill in hospital with COVID-19. They worked together to send to him a book of pictures, which he was delighted to receive.

St Nicholas’ Ten Keys to Happier Living

St Nicholas Primary in Elstree have introduced the Ten Keys to Happier Living framework since the children have come back to school after lockdown.

The Ten Keys to Happier Living have been developed by Vanessa King and the Action for Happiness team, based on an extensive review of the latest research evidence relating to psychological and mental well-being.

The first five keys (G.R.E.A.T) are about how we interact with the outside world in our daily activities; they are based on the ‘Five Ways to Well-being’.

The second five keys (D.R.E.A.M) come from inside us and depend on our attitude to life.

Evidence suggests that these ‘Ten Keys’ consistently tend to have a positive impact on people’s happiness and well-being.

St Michael’s Reflect on their Vision

Since returning after the Easter break, St Michael’s Primary in Woolmer Green have been thinking about their school vision. The school council representatives talked to their classes about the ways in which they live out their Christian Vision at St Michael’s. They had four questions for their classes:

How do we shine physically? Emotionally? Spiritually? Educationally? The children had some fantastic ideas;

‘We shine physically at playtimes, using all of our equipment, we show good sportsmanship, we play well together and we enjoy the variety of sports that take place at school; we shine emotionally by taking part in mindfulness, by making others happy, by knowing and using our zones of regulation; we shine spiritually when we reflect on assemblies, when we pray, when we answer big questions and when we learn to trust others; we shine educationally showing perseverance, cooperation, interacting during lessons, keeping focused, trying hard, enjoying our learning and always doing our very best.’
**News from Our Schools**

**Clophill St Mary’s Community Postcards**

At the end of the first half of the summer term, St Mary’s Primary in Clophill, sent out postcards to the elderly residents of their village community to share with them an important message. During the Covid-19 National Day of Reflection on 23 March, all the children had been given the opportunity to design a postcard based on the theme ‘Looking forward to a brighter future!’ Six designs were then chosen and printed with this message on them, as the COVID-19 restrictions began to ease. They were hand delivered by a member of St Mary’s staff and the school received many wonderful comments back – the postcards were certainly well received and appreciated. The school are now aiming to produce even more postcards, to ensure all the families from school receive one too.

**St Michael’s Easter Artwork**

On the return to school after the lockdown last term, all the classes at St Michael’s in Bishop’s Stortford took on a ‘Salvation’ unit of work based on Understanding Christianity. Many classes also took part in an interactive trail to explore the Easter story further.

As part of Holy Week and the 40 days of Easter, children across Key Stage 2 then went on to create artwork which was displayed around the local church.

These artworks were on display inside and outside the church and offered much joy to both passers by and the community at a time when the church could not offer all its normal celebrations.

**Pearson National Teaching Awards**

A huge ‘congratulations’ to the two church schools from our diocesan family who have won a Pearson National Teaching Award, both in the Silver Lockdown Hero Award category!

**Sarah Gray, St Mary’s Primary, Northchurch**

Sarah Gray is an outstanding teacher whose humour, kindness and desire to achieve the best for the whole community make her a ‘legend’. From initiating a ‘Lockdown Library’ to introducing Google Classrooms to staff, parents and children, Sarah goes the extra mile with a smile on her face, a love of learning and a real understanding of what it is to be a child at St Mary’s.

Sarah approaches learning as a wonderful journey of discovery where adults and children work collaboratively to investigate and discover. She is generous with her knowledge, working with colleagues to develop their skills and encouraging them to take a risk and try new approaches.

**St John’s Infants, Radlett as part of the Poppy Academy Trust**

Proactive preparations at the Trust began early, to plan what lockdown/home school might look like for the pupils and how to facilitate the best remote learning experience for each school community and ensure the children’s positive outlook during an unsettled period. Google Classroom was set up and children went home with learning packs and a craft kit. Each child planted a sunflower seed to take away with them as a reminder that they were all still growing together. Vulnerable families were provided with huge care parcels weekly and the school collaborated with the community, including the church and a local bakery.

The schools’ trademark proactive attitude continued and the team carried on to make significant achievements with daily uploaded timetables, guides, live lessons, assemblies, intervention groups and support. Parents collected the weekly packs which mirrored online learning, reducing the additional stress of parental preparation and, importantly, children had ownership.

Trust events for the children included virtual zoo trips, celebrating International LEGO Day, an Aspirations Week, and even a virtual gig for parents!

**Hertingfordbury’s Little Days of Kindness**

This term Hertingfordbury Cowper primary had two ‘Little Days of Kindness’, which had a well-being focus. The children took part in a range of creative writing, art, mindfulness and drama activities to focus on the messages of being kind to others and being kind to yourself. The days were based on the book ‘The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse’ by Charlie Mackesy, and the school were very excited to receive a personal message from the author himself!
NEWS FROM OUR SCHOOLS

Kensworth’s Spiritual Arts Reflection
Following the return to school after lockdown, Kensworth’s Rainbow Curriculum took the spiritual path using images, symbols, drama, movement, textiles and pictures to share their stories of the past year. By telling the stories through the spiritual arts, they sought to find a way to reflection, health and wellness, emotional reparation and recovery.

Outdoor Praise at St Andrew’s
Since the Easter break, and when the weather has allowed, the staff and children of St Andrew’s CE Primary School in Much Hadham have welcomed the opportunity to gather together outside for worship and celebration. Assembling as a whole school again has been wonderfully joyful and being outside means that they can sing and say their prayers loud and proud!

NEWS FROM THE SCHOOLS TEAM

Focus on Governance
Thank you! Firstly, a huge THANK YOU to all governors and clerks in our church schools - thank you for rising to the additional challenges of governance over this academic year, with patience and goodwill. We greatly value the investment of time and energy from governors and clerks, which makes such a difference for our schools.

Expired foundation appointments: We know these practicalities have been difficult locally over the past 18 months. I am still receiving questions about why application forms and formal approvals are needed for foundation places, including reappointments. There is an explanation of the legal basis for our foundation appointment processes in my March 2021 newsletter article. (www.stalbans.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/Newsletter-March-2021.pdf)

If I contact you about an expired appointment, I’ll appreciate your help with the update, and am always happy to talk you through the process.

Foundation recruitment - additional support: Foundation governor recruitment has been very difficult for many schools for the last 18 months. We are planning some additional recruitment support for schools for this coming autumn, for example signposting to extra sources for potential volunteers beyond immediate parish communities, and sharing success stories of what recruitment strategies are working well for governing boards locally. Meanwhile, do get in touch if foundation vacancies are a concern for your governing board – I can often help with ideas for new points of contact. Look out too for a relaunch of foundation governor induction training for 2021/22. I look forward to developing this range of support further next term.

Belinda Copson
Governance Officer

Headteacher Changes
A warm welcome this term to new substantive headteacher Belinda Canham at Essendon Primary

Our thanks and best wishes for the future accompany those who are leaving their school this term: Joanne Fradd, St Michael’s, Bishops Stortford; Judi Johnson-Clarke, John Donne Primary, Blunham; Lee Pointon, Caldecote Academy; Carol Ward, Clifton All Saints Academy; Tom Potter, Essendon Primary; Bridgid Dyson, Furneux Pelham Primary; Clare South, Long Marston Primary; Shirley Wales, Northaw Primary; Keith Smithard, St Giles’ Primary, South Mymms; Emma Fenn, Abbey School, St Albans; Paul Burrett, Studham Village CE Academy; Helen Langeveld, Watford St John’s School.

Our appreciation also goes to all those who have, or are about to, step in as interim or acting heads.

Schools Team Twitter Account
Do follow us on Twitter at @stalbansdioedu
Thoughts for the End of the Year

Dear Colleagues,

As we approach the end of what has been a tumultuous school year, at times brutal in its intensity, I want to thank you for your contribution to your school in the midst of constant challenges. Each of us, as we have exercised our calling to serve in education, have drawn on different sources of inspiration from which to gain strength and inspiration. As a visual thinker, I find myself attracted to images, especially those that repeat or re-occur in what I am reading or see in the landscape or in nature. As part of my daily wind-down routine, I have been reading through the Psalms using Malcolm Guite’s wonderful work, David’s Crown, which has created a poem to accompany each psalm. This has re-introduced me, at a time of great personal challenge, to the repeated image of taking refuge in the shadow of God’s wings.

Psalm 91

91v1 You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,
2 will say to the LORD, ‘My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.’
3 For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence;
4 he will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge;

The image of resting, taking refuge, in the shadow of God’s wings is a deeply powerful one. Its use in scripture can reveal to us some simple but deeply meaningful messages. As you enter the summer holiday, may you hold close the image of you and your school community resting beneath the wings of a loving God; a God whose protection is available to all (Ps 36v7), who can be our refuge through whatever we face (Ps 91v1-4), a God whose presence enables us to sing for joy in the midst of the deepest challenges (Ps 63v1-8).

With my best wishes and prayers for you and your school community,

David Morton
Director of Education

InspiREd

A huge ‘congratulations’ to the first cohort of RE subject leaders who completed the InspiREd subject leader development programme. It has been a privilege to journey alongside you and see you thrive as ‘strategic, impactful and flourishing leaders’. The second cohort is currently journeying together, going deeper into the strands of the Church of England Vision for Education and using it to reflect upon a ‘vision for me’ and a ‘vision for RE’.

The programme is aimed at leaders who want to develop their subject leadership skills to ensure it is strategic, has an impact on the whole school and is driven by the school’s distinctive Christian vision.

If you’d like to be join the third cohort of InspiREd leaders (starting January 2022), or hear more about the programme, contact Ryan Parker, RE and Christian Ethos Advisor (rparker@stalbans.anglican.org).

We wish you all a restful and relaxing Summer break.

Living God’s Love in Education: Enabling Life in all its Fullness

Distinctively Christian ● Community Focussed ● Serving the Common Good

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