

13th December 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

Winter is definitely upon us with snowy weather and temperatures falling below zero across Cornwall and the rest of the southwest on 28th November. Most of our schools were able to stay open and the children enjoyed playing out in the weather for the short time that is lasted.

The staff and children from Blisland also had the pleasure of a two-day visit from Ofsted. Andrew Smith (Head of School since September) and the team pulled out all the stops to show the school off at its very best. Staff from across the Trust were able to support Blisland, just as they do with all our schools. We are pleased with the outcome and look forward to sharing the report from Ofsted in the new year.

All the schools in the Trust have Christmas activities well under way. There will be some very proud parents watching the children perform Nativity plays, Carol Concerts and open afternoons to look at the beautiful work the children have produced. Please look at your school website, Facebook page and school messaging to go along and support when you can.



This is a picture of Brunel children enjoying the Saltash Christmas Tree Festival that was held at St Nicolas and Faith Church.

If you have had the opportunity to look at the Bridge Schools [website](#) you will see, we also have the Advent Calendar back again with Christmas contributions from all the schools [Advent Calendar 2023](#).

Premises

We continue to invest in our school buildings with an extensive programme of compliance management, capital works and maintenance. 10 applications for major capital projects at 8 of our schools have just been submitted to the 24/25 Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) totalling £3.25m. Minor capital works have been completed across all sites this year

totalling in excess of £135k including safeguarding and security improvements, redecoration, refurbishment of toilets, teaching, nursery and support staff spaces, decarbonisation surveys, tree safety works, formation of a catering kitchen with formalised dining area and play area improvements.

IT Services

Further investment has enabled us to continue to add to provision in schools. In terms of pupil ratio, we are now able to provide 1:1 iPads in small schools and 1:2 in the medium and larger schools. Our next focussed phase for investment will be to upgrade IT resource as it ages, keeping classroom access consistent.

Financial Squeeze

Although we are still facing added pressures to school budgets with ever increasing costs and reduced government funding per pupil, we are in the fortunate position of holding a 'reserve' to support the schools through any difficulties which may arise – a benefit of pooling our monies together. It will be tight again this year, but we will be able to sustain all activities in schools this academic year.

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Keeping fit and healthy

In November it was great to see our children join together for a Trust wide dodgeball competition at Callywith College. The children could see the opportunities that may be on offer for them as possible future students and also met some of the Callywith students who were assisting with the tournament as part of their Sports Leader Award. The children were an absolute credit to you all, showing a fantastic attitude towards fair play but still with a competitive edge. Some very determined children (and adults coaching from the side-lines!) gave it their all. A great opportunity for everyone to show off their talents.

Group games drew together for the quarter, then semi-finals, with Pelynt vs Wadebridge in the final. All children were presented with a certificate of participation and a big well done to Wadebridge for their win. All of us working collaboratively across the trust, means we can offer the children opportunities like this to come together, have fun and enjoy some physical activity along the way.



Partnerships between home and school

Many of us are encountering financial difficulties and we understand this can create pressure with keeping a family well fed, watered, warm and clothed; especially at Christmas. If you are having any challenges like this, please talk to staff at school as we can often help. We have links to many organisations that can support with food, transport, and other help. A big thank you to all families who are speaking to us regularly to keep their children attending school as much as possible. As of today, the trust wide attendance is 93.8% (better than this time last year) but still behind the national percentage. We are reviewing our approach to attendance and welcome you talking to us about what works well to support you.

Digital learning at school

An increasing number of our schools are using 'Seesaw' as a learning platform for some of the curriculum. This is a digital resource that inspires children of all ages to do their best by using creative tools to take pictures, draw, record videos and more to capture learning in a portfolio. It has shown increased engagement from children and is reducing workload for staff, in addition to saving paper and photocopying. Children have kept their English books and use pen/pencil to learn and develop the art of writing. We look forward to sharing more of this development with you in the future.

Animation to celebrate our 10th Anniversary

Alongside Christmas activities, all the schools have been celebrating the use of digital technology, something we have only been able to afford since joining together as Bridge Schools. Each school has produced a short animation which we will view as a whole trust using Microsoft Teams for us to celebrate all of the work the children have produced. The Trust was started ten years ago with Wadebridge and Looe, shortly followed by Delaware, Gunnislake and Brunel. Since then, we have definitely become 'stronger together' with three inadequate schools moving up to a Good Ofsted rating and three schools requiring improvement also moving up to an Ofsted Good rating. We have worked through many challenges over the years but all to share our best resource to help move children's education and outcomes to a 'Good' place.

End of the Autumn Term

We will close for the Christmas holidays on Tuesday 19th December and all schools will reopen on Thursday 4th January 2024. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for all your support for the schools and to wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

With all good wishes,

Adrian Massey and everyone in Bridge Schools