



LIFE Matters

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Autumn/Winter 2020

From the CEO

Welcome to the final LIFE newsletter of 2020. Here you will read an uplifting article from our Chair about the importance of gratitude as we come to the end of 2020. You will also read about the incredible work of our staff and pupils who have remained resilient, agile and positive in the face of the most incredible challenges.

Our beliefs of courageous optimism, boundless creativity and heartfelt compassion are now absolutely central to everything we do and everything we are as individuals and as a Trust. We hope you feel that our schools and staff have got the balance right this year despite all the challenges.

This term we welcomed Ford End Primary School to the Trust at a fantastic event and are now developing the Rural Primary schools so that they each offer a unique experience whilst benefiting from the support of the Trust.

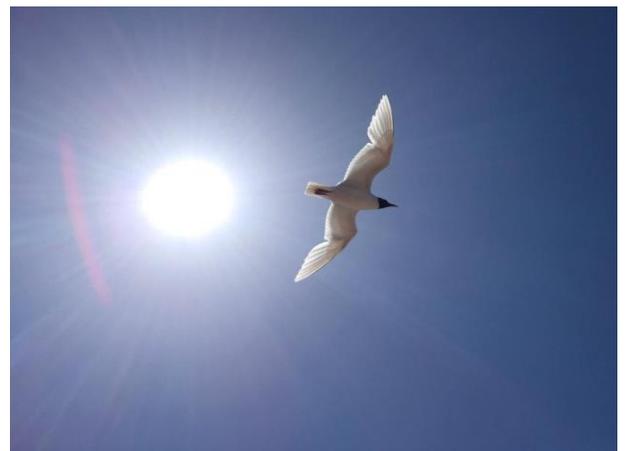
Katherine Hart has managed her first half term as headteacher really well including coping with the challenges of a large number of staff testing positive at the same time.

We have had major building work in every school. Denise Broom masterminded the successful bids and many are now complete or drawing to a conclusion. In particular the new Bridge building is complete in its own grounds next to FBA.

Benhurst School was shortlisted for the TES Technology School of the Year and Melissa Bryan was shortlisted for Primary Teacher of the Year: both amazing achievements. For me, possibly the most exhilarating time this term was spent running a mile alongside Fatima Whitbread at Margarettin cheered on by staff and pupils as I flashed past the finish line....just behind about 40 children.

From all of us at LIFE, a big thank you and our hope is that you can have a restful Christmas with some sort of normality.

**Best Wishes
Julian Dutnall, CEO**



The winning photograph from Maire O'Regan depicting 'Hope'.

From the Chair

Well, what a year 2020 has been and what a term we have just had! My thoughts, as we come to the end of the term, are those of gratitude.

I have gratitude for our wonderful pupils and students who have had to adapt to so much change and uncertainty. I think this term has been particularly difficult for them as the run-up to Christmas has been so different from the normal traditions and events that we know and love. We have a wonderful body of young people, ready and willing to learn, who are learning resilience and adaptability.

I also have gratitude for the parents and carers who have, once again, been so supportive amidst the disruption that has been imposed on us. They have nurtured, cared for and encouraged their children to continue to learn and engage. This has been a difficult term for so many parents and carers and I want to acknowledge how hard this is for many.

My gratitude is also for the amazing staff team that we have in all of our schools, and within the Trust. People who have consistently gone above and beyond, supporting, encouraging and nurturing the minds of our pupils and students. I am thankful for them on a daily basis, as I see the incredible levels of dedication demonstrated across the Trust, in the midst of disruption and difficulty.

I am grateful for the volunteers in our schools and the Trust for all that they do and for how much they care for each and every child that we educate. These incredible groups of individuals give of their time and talents, often in the evenings and weekends after work and much of what they do goes unseen.

Finally, my thoughts of gratitude are about how fortunate I am to have the opportunity to serve the Trust and its schools. It is a wonderful community on an exciting journey and I am thoroughly enjoying every aspect!

I do hope that you can have a time of rest over the coming weeks and I look forward to next term and all that we will achieve together.

**Louise Douglas,
Chair**

Director of Operations

The Autumn term has very busy for the Finance teams across the Trust with the introduction of our new financial system, PS Financials. There were numerous training sessions and although it was not without its problems, we got there in the end! As a cloud based system it will enable staff to access information at any location enabling flexibility which we have got used to very quickly during the pandemic. A significant advantage is that it will reduce the amount of paper used which is fantastic news as the majority of communications are by email.

We welcomed Ford End into our 'finance community' and look forward to working with them. Conversely, Daryl Kilner the Trust Finance Manager has taken up a position with a Trust nearer her home. We will miss her and thank her very much for her contribution to the team.

Five building projects, financed by CIF funding, were started in the Summer and are at various stages of completion. Replacement roofs, fire safety measures, replacement windows and boilers have been installed at our schools addressing a lot of the condition survey issues that our schools would not have sufficient individual budget resources to rectify. We look forward to a dry warm Winter! Projects for 2021/2022 submission are now being worked on so 'fingers crossed.'

This term has also seen the preparation of the site for the relocation of The Bridge from Albert Road. Constructed off site, at the beginning of August it arrived in sections on a fleet of 13 lorries to be craned into place. Despite gusting winds, all went well. The interior is of a very high specification which we hope the students will enjoy as well as the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) within the landscaped grounds. We are also informed that it is the most energy efficient building in Havering.

The pandemic has brought a number of challenges and the Trust HR team has supported staff in lots of ways to help them manage the situation in its many guises. Wellbeing has been a priority and there has been some very creative thinking about how staff could be helped through these unprecedented times.

**Director of Operations
Denise Broom**



LIFE Ethos in Action

The term began with all LIFE Ambassadors meeting over zoom in September with the CEO and Culture and Community Manager. Students discussed the Trust's beliefs and characteristics whilst sharing understanding of their own school values. This year's project is set around Trussell Trust foodbanks and helping those in our community who are presently struggling. By reaching out to the foodbanks we can practically demonstrate heartfelt compassion, one of our core beliefs.

Director of Education

They say that hindsight is always 20:20. So, what do I see if I look back at 2020?

It has been a hugely challenging year, but I have seen pupils and staff rise to that challenge with incredible resilience and flexibility; with **boundless creativity, courageous optimism** and **heartfelt compassion**. We have all had to make frequent changes to the way that we work and learn, in the face of ever-changing advice, rules and guidance; but we have continued to achieve great things.

Some achievements can be measured, such as the excellent GCSE and A Level results achieved by students at Frances Bardsley Academy and The Bridge, but this year, more than ever, many of our achievements are personal and cannot be quantified.

At Trust level, we have seen our schools go from strength to strength and, on December 1st, we welcomed Ford End Primary School to the Trust; and in November, we were proud to celebrate the achievement of Melissa Bryan, from Margaretting Primary School, who was a Pearson "Teacher of the Year" silver award winner.

As we look forward to 2021, it is with a renewed sense of optimism, not only as a result of the COVID-19 vaccines that are starting to be rolled out, but also because at Trust level we have great plans for the year ahead. Our mission is to "Build Great Learning Communities" and we are working with each of our school communities to help them to achieve more than ever, through collaboration with other schools within the Trust and beyond.

Finally, on a personal note, I'd like to thank all my colleagues for their hard work and support and to wish them, and all readers, a very Happy Christmas, restful holiday and great New Year.

Ian Gurman,
Director of Education



Ambassadors have been hard at work creating hampers and raising funds for their local foodbanks. The Ambassador programme is developing entrepreneurial leadership to make transformation happen within the Trust Community. Ambassadors have written about their experiences which can be found on the LIFE website.

There has been lots of activity at the Farm with the arrival of new bunnies and the development of horticulture. The farm is an area of discovery, embracing new challenges and learning in the great outdoors. A series of activities and worksheets are available for visits from all of our Trust schools, linked to the curriculum for unique learning experience.



During a year of great restrictions, many have learned to enjoy things in a new way. The LIFE Passport was launched to pupils this term, enabling pupils to record their adventures in the booklet keepsake. It has been designed for pupils to have fun whilst developing skills and building confidence. Once completed and submitted, the pupils will receive a certificate for their endeavours. We look forward to next term and seeing some of the completed passports!

Rachel Grimwood,
Culture and Community Manager



LIFE Education International with EAL

In September we started our Language of the Month across all the LIFE schools. Over this term we have been learning some words in Yoruba, Igbo, Albanian and Romanian as well as learning some facts about the country where each language is spoken. We also enjoyed virtual assemblies to mark European Languages Day and International Education Week.

Roxwell started the school year with the great news that they had been awarded the International School Award at Foundation level. Comments back included: "It is admirable to see that you are taking steps towards internationalism and appreciate the importance of preparing children to be good citizens," and your "established partnership with another school which is a big step towards internationalism and developing collaboration in the future." We expect to hear a response on Margaretting's application very soon.

Travel and international visits are not going to be able to happen this year but thanks to the wonders of technology our schools are working hard at keeping their international partnerships going. Margaretting continues to find ways to develop their Erasmus project looking at legends from different countries. Frances Bardsley also continues to develop their Connecting Classrooms link with Pakistan working to find creative ways to keep the project and the link moving. At the same time FBA are also continuing to move forward in the early stages of their Erasmus project. The Roxwell link school in Kenya is still not back in school due to Covid, so they are still waiting and planning for their video link once they are able. This also helps the students understand the global impact of Covid.

The disruption to school and challenges to learning have been hard for all during this pandemic, but there is an extra dimension for our EAL learners. Some of them struggle to understand in class and this is even harder when you are on a Zoom call and have no one around you to practice or question your English with. But an EAL Zoom call this morning had the added benefit of the student's mum joining in with the learning from the background. A Covid win! This term FBA has seen a number of students join with limited English. These amazing students are working hard to understand the British school system, to embrace a new curriculum, and deal with a pandemic, all while also trying to learn English. It is hard for them and we need them to swim and not sink, but I believe if we can continue to support them well these students will actually have a more robust foundation to build on going forwards.

FaithSpinks
Internationalism and EAL Manager

Ford End

We are thrilled to now be part of The Life Education Trust. When we met Julian and learned more about the Trust and their Beliefs, we knew that it was the best fit for our school.

We held a socially-distanced service in the hall to celebrate, where we enjoyed handing out cakes to the children as they passed under our balloon archway consisting of the LIFE logo colours which was ably held by two of our pupils, Erin and Arthur. Mrs Saiters, one of our MDAs, played the piano for us and Ben Marrington played the cello. It was great to have such fantastic live musicians.



We spoke about the school's 'Hopes for the Future'. 'Hope and a Future' is our new school motto and refers so well to our Vision.

All the staff and governors are excited about the opportunities that our pupils will have now that we are a part of a larger organisation and the support that we will all be given.

We wish everyone a very happy and safe Christmas.

Maria Rumsey,
Headteacher

Roxwell

The Autumn term 2020 has been an exciting and at times, a challenging term. The staff and children returned to school very pleased to be with their friends again. Staff supported children to fill any gaps that they had in their learning and the school settled into the new term calmly. The Chelmsford Food Bank is our charity this year and we organized a marathon to raise funds for this worthy cause. We raised £735 altogether with the older children and parents all running a mile each. There was a great atmosphere at the event and we are very proud of our Year 6 Sports Ambassador, for her amazing organization.



We held a very successful McMillan Coffee morning and social distanced to make sure we were all safe. The Mayor of Chelmsford and the Deputy Mayor attended the event and there was a great atmosphere and a wonderful selection of cakes.

We have had a successful CIF bid, thanks to LIFE and so we will soon have a perfect new roof on our school. Princess Anne visited Roxwell village this term and we were very pleased to meet her, talk to her about our school and present her with flowers. It was the first time the children had met a, 'real princess!'

Our Christmas Nativity was different this year as we could not have a live audience. So we decided to film the Nativity story instead. We had a fantastic experience and filmed in a perfect setting in a barn on a farm close to the school. We were pleased that Paddy; our school horse, was willing to act in this special Christmas story.

Thank you to LIFE for all their amazing support and help, during this unusual time. Thank you to the parents and the community for supporting the school also. We have had a great term.

Maire O'Regan
Executive Headteacher

Dame Tipping

The pupils at Dame Tipping bounded back into school on the 7th September and they have continued to do so ever since. **Love to learn; learn to love** is our new school motto underpinned by the bible verse, 'As I have loved you, love one another' (John 13:34). We started the new year by introducing our new Vision and Values and adopting the LIFE Education Trust Values of '**Courageous Optimism, Boundless Creativity and Heartfelt Compassion**' all of which have supported the transition back to school for staff and pupils. Thinking creatively, showing compassion and understanding and most of all remaining hugely optimistic in a time of such uncertainty has provided the perfect opportunity to see the values in action.



We have welcomed new pupils and staff this year and have also opened the door to forging closer links with the rural primary schools within the LIFE Education Trust. We are looking forward to building on and strengthening the links throughout this year to offer more memorable and enriching experiences in and out of school.

While there have been many changes this year we have still continued to find opportunities to support our local and wider community. Already this year, we have raised money for Children in Need and supported St Francis Hospice by participating in Christmas Jumper day. Working alongside our church to create a full size nativity scene has allowed all of the children to work collaboratively to create something that our whole community can enjoy. We're not letting a global pandemic stop us.

Amy Holmes,
Headteacher

Frances Bardsley

As Heads of School, we have spent some time reflecting on what has been a very unusual and challenging term for everyone. Our main feeling at this time is immense pride in the school community, which we lead. The students and staff at FBA have demonstrated great resilience and courageous optimism and have embraced the new norm: new classroom layouts, new times of the day, windows being open at all times, a new hand washing regime and mask wearing. The students have been absolutely phenomenal, their maturity and behaviour have been incredible and they have been a pleasure to teach.

Our parents and carers have been a great support with kind emails sent to the school when we needed reassurance. We have been forced to make very difficult decisions to keep the school community safe whilst trying to provide the best teaching and learning for the students. We would like to thank you all for your continuous patience and understanding in these very tough times.

Above all we would like to commend the staff at FBA. No words can fully express how grateful we are for not only the hard work and effort they have put in every day in supporting our students but also for the adaptability and perseverance they all have shown.

As we end the term with heartfelt compassion, our thoughts and prayers go to all our families especially those who are facing difficult times ahead. Sadly not everyone will enjoy the Christmas break. As a school and Trust we have supported the Trussell Trust with donations from staff salaries and also with the Christmas Jumper Day. We are also very fortunate that Katie Knibbs, one of our Year 11 students, initiated a food collection for our families. Staff and students have donated a large amount of items and we would like to thank them all for their support.

We wish everyone a Happy Christmas and New Year

**Emilie Darabasz & David Turrell,
Heads of School, FBA**

Benhurst

It was wonderful to welcome the school back in September and hear the sound of children playing in the playground once again! The children have shown such resilience in their return to school life and we are extremely proud of them. We have quickly adapted to new methods of teaching including Google Classroom, live lessons and blended learning which have been well received by pupils and parents. Our families have been extremely supportive of our new measures during an extremely challenging term.

The children wanted the opportunity to thank the wonderful work of the NHS and in response to this, we held a NHS superhero 'thank you' day before half term. The children dressed as superheroes or in rainbow colours for the day and donated £1. We raised over £400 which we used to purchase luxury food hampers and Amazon vouchers. These have been donated, via one of our parents, to a ward at Queen's Hospital where they will be raffled to raise further funds for the ward.



13 pupils from Year 5 and 6 have undertaken the Brilliant Club project this term. The children have been working on a University style assignment about English literature

This term we have launched our new writing scheme of learning: The Write Stuff which brings clarity to the mechanics of teaching writing through clear approaches and systems. The children are thoroughly enjoying the new approach and now feel empowered as authors across all genres. We look forward to see how their writing develops over the coming months.

**Katherine Hart
Headteacher**

Margaretting

Despite Covid-19, Autumn 2020 has been an exciting time at Margaretting Primary School for both staff and pupils. It was wonderful to reopen on 3rd September and the children enjoyed seeing their friends and meeting their new teachers. Staff were highly motivated and embraced the chance to support the children in catching up with the learning that they had missed.

On 16th September we received the fantastic news that Melissa Bryan (the Head of School) had won Silver in the Primary Teacher of the Year category of the National Pearson Teaching Awards. She was only one of eleven primary school teachers in the country to receive this accolade. The Mayor of Chelmsford (Jude Deakin) and Sharon Hague from Pearson came to the school to officially present Melissa with her award and there was a fantastic celebration which the staff and pupils enjoyed.

We have been successfully supporting the Chelmsford Food Bank this academic year. On 23rd October, the children and staff in Key Stage 2 ran a Food Bank Marathon. The event was attended by Jude Deakin, Julian Dutton and Fatima Whitbread (MBE). Fatima Whitbread gave an inspirational talk to the children and supported them all of the way. The event was a huge success and the school raised £1350! This is an achievement that we are really proud of.

Although we were not able to go on educational visits this year, the children have enjoyed fantastic learning opportunities in school, such as a visit from 'Snakes Alive' to support Year 3/4 in their rainforests topic and Victorian Day in Year 5/6. Our new EYFS children have settled in very well and enjoyed throwing a Birthday party for Barnaby Bear and Year 1/2 have also had a party to celebrate learning about themselves as well as Year 2 participating in Forest Schools.

Christmas was a little bit different this year but we made it special for the pupils and staff! EYFS, Year 1 and 2 performed a short nativity (with no audience) with confidence. We enjoyed having our yearly Christmas Dinner, in bubbles. All children watched a virtual pantomime which the PTFA provided and enjoyed making Christingles with Reverend Sally. We also had a fantastic Christmas Fun Day at the end of term! Thank you to LIFE for all their amazing support during this challenging time. We have had a great term.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from everyone at Margaretting Primary School!

**Melissa Bryan,
Head of School**



The Bridge

It has been an extraordinary first term, but staff and students have risen to the challenges, and quickly adapted to a routine of answering COVID related questions on a daily basis and sanitising their hands after every lesson.

In September, students welcomed the change to their usual curriculum, engaging with our COVID Recovery Curriculum, participating in fun, creative, school community based projects. Our students were also given much needed 1:1 support with staff members, to talk about their lockdown experiences, explore their feelings upon returning back to school, and share their views on the "new normal". Equally important, were the 1:1 lessons timetabled for all KS4 students, to support their learning as they embarked upon or continued their GCSE journey.

As a small school we have been operating as one bubble, which has meant we could continue with some of our whole school activities, such as; Hello Yellow for World Mental Health Day. The students created well-being bunting and decorated the school hall, baked cakes and participated in the whole school quiz. Despite the event being a much smaller affair than in previous years, The Bridge raised £160.00 for Young Minds.

We also held a two day work shop on the Importance of Developing Emotional Resilience. Students received a level 1 accreditation. The response from students was overwhelming, sharing they had gained invaluable information and insight on self-help and tips on maintaining a healthy mind-set.

On Monday 7th December, we enjoyed our last Christmas Dinner at Albert Road. As always it was a fun filled event, full of fine food and laughter.

So, as we say a fond farewell to this much loved building, we very much look forward to new beginnings in our fabulous new building.

**Toni Cox,
Head of School**

