



# LIFE Matters

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## Spring/Summer 2020

### From the CEO

We have come to the end of the strangest, hardest and most challenging year that many of us have ever faced. Some of us have lost loved ones, some of us have been ill and all of us have been affected by Covid-19 in ways we would never have expected.

As Trust leaders we are incredibly proud of the way in which our headteachers have worked with senior leaders and governors to try and make sure that learning can continue at home and more recently through lessons or visits to school. It has been extremely hard to follow the constant and changing government guidance, to make sure that all staff and students are safe, and to keep teaching and learning. Our pupils have also been fantastic. They have kept working from home, got used to completing school work, extra challenges, and started returning despite some obvious fears and concerns.

It is great news that we will be able to welcome everyone back in September. It will not be school exactly as normal. Detailed risk assessments have been completed by all schools and checked by governors and the Trust Board to try as much as possible to help everyone remain safe whilst returning to some sense of normality.

We have written to you a few times to explain changes in the last few months and have issued a statement which shows our commitment to change for the better moving forward. We call this; Building a Better LIFE Together and it is below:

#### How we will lead well

- Having **big dreams** and lofty goals for what can be achieved
- Showing **heartfelt compassion** in all things
- **Listening** first and to everyone
- Not assuming anything
- Seeing structure and order as part of a return to normality

- Being **agile**, adaptable and **boundlessly creative**
- Building togetherness
- **Communicating** frequently, clearly and widely
- Showing **efficiency** in our use of time, money and resources
- Investigating new working practices

#### How we will teach well

- Using a range of techniques and modes
- Constantly **recapping**, reviewing and **reflecting**
- Recognising the value of face to face contact
- **Using technology** effectively

#### How we will be healthy in body and mind

- Maintaining clean and tidy premises
- Promoting and supporting good personal hygiene
- Ensuring everyone is **well fed** with access to healthy food
- Encouraging the use of counsellors and support groups
- Understanding and **discussing loss**
- Allowing space for conversations about our feelings
- Sharing ways of making work manageable and pleasurable for everyone
- Teaching and demonstrating **resilience**

#### How we will build better communities

- **Listening** to each other
- Taking time to **really understand** the views and experiences of others
- Talking about the importance of **culture**
- Embedding systems and approaches at all levels to show that **Black Lives Matter**
- Understanding how unconscious bias affects each of us
- **Celebrating** together
- Deliberately **building systems** and structures that help us grow together
- Relentlessly and **courageously** choosing to be **optimistic**

Despite the challenges of the past few months, there are many successes. We have been successful in receiving £700,000 from the Department for Education for building work in our school. We will also be building The Bridge school on the FBA site, extending the Sixth Form building and developing the Benhurst site.

We congratulate Miss Bryan at Margaretting who has been shortlisted for Primary School teacher of the Year.

One of our big changes next term will be that we say goodbye to Mr Denchfield, Headteacher at Benhurst and Executive Headteacher at Dame Tipping. Benhurst was one of the two founder Trust schools and Mr Denchfield has worked in a number of roles to support the Trust growth since 2016. He has been promoted to Executive Headteacher at Learning federation in Havering and we wish him all the best. Mrs Hart at Benhurst and Ms Holmes at Dame Tipping will each act as headteacher for the coming year and we know they will each do a brilliant job.

**Best Wishes  
Julian Dutnall, CEO**

## From the Chair

As this academic year closes and I reflect on the events of the past few months, my overriding feelings are those of pride in our Trust and the people within it (including our parents and carers), and of gratitude for all the hard work that has gone on throughout the year.

As a parent, I appreciate how difficult it will have been for so many parents and carers to support their children with learning from home. I am aware that many of you have had to make large sacrifices in order to ensure your children have kept learning. From the conversations I have had, and the plans I have seen, I am really confident that our amazing staff teams will be able to get things back on track in the autumn term. I have seen first-hand the exceptional work of our leaders and staff in managing the ongoing Covid-19 situation, whilst maintaining an unstinting focus on the needs of pupils and students. I have also witnessed the outstanding commitment of the volunteers who govern our schools and the Trust and their dedication to excellence in every area of education and school life.

I really appreciate our wonderful parents and carers, and all they have juggled and managed. I am thankful to our governors and board members who have worked so hard behind the scenes to support our schools and staff teams. And finally, I am so thankful to all our wonderful staff members, whatever their role, for their commitment to our children and young people.

I hope that you manage to have a break over the summer holidays: no-one knows exactly what September might bring for any of us, but I know that together we will continue striving to achieve the very best outcomes for the children and young people that we serve.

**Louise Douglas,  
Chair**

## Director of Operations

In Finance and HR a lot of our work this term has centred around the introduction of new financial and HR software which will streamline these areas across the Trust. This will bring cost efficiencies as well as introducing a cloud based system giving finance and HR teams greater flexibility. The first stage was to move payroll 'in house' with 4 schools moving in April, and the other 2 schools migrating in September. The team worked very hard to ensure everyone was paid correctly and on time and this was very successful.

The construction of the Bridge is well underway at the factory in Yorkshire. Groundworks will start on the site at FBA at the beginning of the Summer holidays ready to receive the modular building which will arrive on a fleet of lorries at the end of August.

The Sixth form at FBA will also have an extension at the front of the building comprising of 2 classrooms to accommodate the increased number of students. Work on this will start during the Summer holidays too.

The Trust secured £700K of Condition Improvement Funding from the DfE which will facilitate the following projects –replacement boilers at FBA, replacement roofs at Benhurst and replacement windows at Margaretting. Although the outcome was delayed by the DfE we are putting plans in place for work to be done during the Summer holidays.

Our IT team has continued to support staff and pupils across the Trust upgrading hardware and networks as well as improving wi-fi. The team faced the huge challenge of enabling staff and students to access remote working when lockdown was imposed which they achieved really well. This experience has accelerated the movement to Google Suite platform for cloud based accessibility for the future.

**Director of Operations  
Denise Broom**

## Director of Education

At the end of each year, I look forward to the announcement of the Word of the Year to reflect upon which word is chosen to sum up that year, as well as hearing of all the new words and phrases that have been officially recognised, such as “selfie”, “binge-watch” or “hangry”.

For 2020, we will be spoilt for choice: “Coronavirus”; “Covid-19”; “Lockdown”; “Pandemic”; “Social distancing”; “Elbow bumping”; “Toilet roll shortage”; and “Zoom”, to name just a few.

In LIFE Trust, you might almost think we knew what was coming, choosing, as we did, our own key words of Creativity, Optimism and Compassion, which have all been embodied by LIFE staff this year.

The switch to online learning, which happened virtually overnight on March 20<sup>th</sup>, required **Boundless Creativity**. Creative solutions to how such learning could be delivered and what content it might include stretched the technical ability of our support staff and the planning of our teachers; but it happened, and our pupils were provided with continuous teaching and support for their home learning. Throw in such additions as our CEO’s Daily Challenge and it all adds up to a truly creative response to a hugely difficult situation.

At times over the summer term, it has been hard to see the light at the end of the tunnel in the face not only of a global pandemic but also frequently changing guidance regarding how schools were supposed to respond. Throughout this time our staff have shown **Courageous Optimism**, which has driven them to keep going, day by day, and to plan and be ready for a better future, despite the uncertainty of when that might be realised.

A notable feature of the pandemic has been how its impact has been so unequal, for children and adults alike, depending upon such factors as: your ethnicity; have you needed to shield? how big is your house and do you have a garden and good Wi-Fi? has anyone close to you become ill, or died? your family income?

One of the most encouraging things for me, has been to witness the **Heartfelt Compassion** shown by our staff, and especially our schools’ leaders, towards their colleagues, their pupils and their pupils’ families. To see the schools stay open over the Easter and half-term holidays, to care for the children of keyworkers and vulnerable children, has been humbling; as has the way that schools have ensured that those eligible for free school meals have been fed, including carrying out home visits on occasions.

So, for me the word of the year will be the over- used term “Unprecedented”. Not for the unprecedented circumstances of the pandemic but for the unprecedented way in which LIFE Trust staff have responded.

**Ian Gurman,**  
Director of Education

## LIFE Ethos in Action

LIFE Ambassadors have been working hard on a project this year examining air quality and how humans impact the environment. Since lockdown there has been a dramatic improvement in air quality that evidenced changes in behaviour, written about in recent blogs by Eleanor and Maheen.

Despite being separated, the Ambassadors were united in the July meetings, reflecting the term that has just passed. We look forward to our launch meeting in September when we can gather together once more and share ideas for the forthcoming academic year.



Recent times have caused many families to struggle in our communities. In response to these difficult situations, The LIFE Education Trust is supporting the crucial work of the Trussell Trust and local Foodbanks. Caring for our community’s, we are passionate about supporting our families as they move forward in life.

**Rachel Grimwood,**  
Culture and Ethos Manager

# LIFE Education International with EAL

Within our LIFE schools we celebrate the diversity and internationalism that is an integral part of who we are as a community. Across our Trust schools we speak at least 54 first languages aside from English – and that's before we even count our staff. As I took some time to map the internationalism happening across our schools it was exciting to see how much internationalism is already happening across our schools, and in the coming year we look forward to building even more on that foundation.

In May Benhurst gained the International School award with the comment "strong human values and ethos across the school with the emphasis on diversity and inclusion to reflect the wider community. The 'Language of the Month' is a great example of an ongoing and curriculum-related activity that involves all pupils. The two activities featured in the application demonstrate the school's vibrant atmosphere with an eye on both the local community as well as international space." In the meantime Roxwell are waiting to hear back on their International School Award application, and we are hard at work on finishing the applications for both Margaretting and Dame Tipping.

Covid-19 has interrupted so much of life as we know it including much of our work with our partner schools. But this is only a pause in the exciting adventures our pupils have already embarked on with other schools around the world. At Roxwell a partnership has been established with a rural school in Kenya and they are all set to link up the classrooms come September. Margaretting continue 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 which began just as lockdown hit.

Unfortunately our Teacher Training conference to Tanzania had to be cancelled this year, but we look forward to planning a conference for next year. A great opportunity for any teacher from any of our LIFE schools.

Around 12% of all pupils across our 6 schools are EAL learners. Therefore we've also been looking at EAL provision across our schools and looking at creating a best practice for all schools to follow so that our EAL learners receive the best support possible.

**FaithSpinks**  
Programme Manager

## The Bridge

In March we said a fond farewell to our Year 11 students. It was a sad day for us all knowing our much needed transition support to help our Year 11's successfully integrate into their Post 16, placements had come to an abrupt end.

We hope they will hold onto all of the positive achievements and resilience we have embedded, so they are able to reach their full potential in the years to come.

During lockdown the school building felt like a vacuum, there was a sense of loss as suddenly our school had lost its soul and was without purpose. We were all deflated.

Fifteen weeks on, I am delighted to report we have some of our students back with us and despite feelings of fear anxiety and loss I am pleased to say we are also experiencing laughter and a sense of ease and calm. Staff and students have shared the benefits of being back together again and their return has been a positive experience.

At The Bridge we recognise our students will face many new challenges in the coming year, but we believe our commitment, adaptable and personable approach to relationships and teaching will ensure their journey to recovery and prosperity is full of hope for their future.

**Toni Cox,**  
Head of School

## Dame Tipping

It hasn't been the end to the year that anyone was expecting but the Children and Staff at Dame Tipping Primary have shown resilience in abundance, and their determination to finish the year on a high has to be applauded. Never have the LIFE core values been so important. Courageous Optimism, Boundless Creativity and Heartfelt Compassion have helped to ground us all and navigate through the unknown. Opportunities have arisen for the children to learn in different ways, through gardening, baking and online lessons. The children have taken on every challenge that they have been set in school and at home, and they have continued to live out our school motto, 'The best that I can be'.

We cannot wait for the children to return in September and begin our 'new normal' journey.

**Amy Holmes,**  
Head of School



# Frances Bardsley

## 18+ week

One of the evidence of excellent practise during the lockdown seen at FBA was the 18+ week.

18+ week is designed for students to consider and explore different career opportunities, prospects and pathways. Although we were not able to run the week as usual, the sixth form team were determined to provide a virtual week for the students. A website was created and students were able to find information on Universities, Apprenticeships, Gap Years and also hear from guest speakers and former FBA students. We were very lucky to have several individuals contribute to recording videos for our students so that they were still able to experience the highlights of the week. Students were also able to join live sessions on Apprenticeships by the company Ask Apprenticeships and we also ran several sessions led by former students. Here is the website if you would like to take a look;

<https://sites.google.com/francesbardsley.co.uk/fba-sixthform-futureready/home>

## Celebrations evenings

We were delighted to welcome over 400 people via Zoom for the year group Celebration Evenings where students received awards for their achievements this year. We were delighted that the poet, Hussain Manawer wrote the following for Year 8.

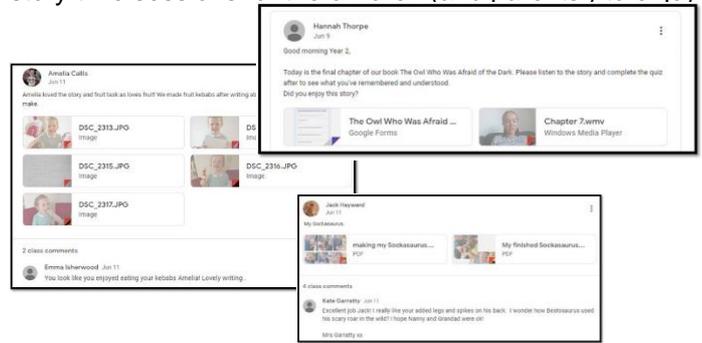
*Another school year gone by,  
Outside the classroom, we learnt a lot,  
How to cope with Lockdown?  
Why, it's important to hold on to who you got.  
Another school year gone by,  
This time, we worked online,  
We learnt to be resilient,  
Even through the toughest time,  
Another school year gone by,  
This year, with a new Head of Year,  
Let's focus on the future ahead, And together, we will get there.*

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

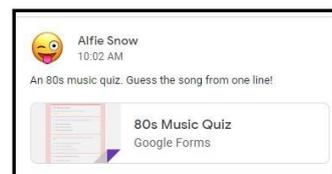
# Benhurst

Following our school closure in March, we quickly realised that the most effective and efficient way to support our children at home was through Google Classroom. Many children in KS2 had used this learning platform at school but our enforced closure presented us with the opportunity to develop this across the school. At the start of our closure, it was important we found a way to raise the profile of online learning with our children. Just before the Easter holidays, Mrs McCarthy organised a whole school SMART Monster Quiz which over 250 children joined in with. By mid-April, over 97% of our children were actively engaging in Google Classroom. For children who did not have easy access to a computer at home, we set up a mini laptop loan scheme for over 25 of our families.

Our teachers and support staff have been very active and set Maths, English, Reading, Science and Topic work for the children. They have also included weekly challenges and story time sessions for the children (and parents!) to enjoy.



Staff have really enjoyed receiving questions from children about their learning and challenges. We have also received some work of our own – Alfie in Year 6 set staff an 80s music quiz. Mr Light and Mrs Haskew were born a little too late to know many of the answers but Mr Denchfield, Mrs Hillyer, Mrs Sheehan and Miss Snow very much enjoyed the challenge and the chance to reminisce!



It has been fantastic to see our children engaging with their learning and also to see them sharing messages with the staff and each other. Google Classroom can never replace being at school or with each other but it has helped our children stay in contact with the school and continue with their learning. Thank you to the staff for their dedication to our online learning, congratulations to our children for their fantastic work and a huge well done to our parents for the outstanding support they have showed during this difficult time.

**David Denchfield  
Headteacher**



# Margaretting

The Summer term at Margaretting C of E Primary School 2020, presented many challenges. Margaretting Primary School closed for 10 weeks during lockdown because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Very few parents wanted to use the Key Worker lessons provided by the school, so it was more economical to close the building. Margaretting Primary received a deep clean and we closed the doors. It felt strange closing the school as it has been opened for 155 years. Two Key Worker children from Margaretting joined Roxwell Primary while their parents returned to work for the NHS and in no time they settled in very well.

The staff from Margaretting School joined the Roxwell Primary School staff and together we used this unusual time to look at our curriculum provision and see if we could improve it even better. After discussions about how we could include our values and new vision into the curriculum intent, the staff agreed on a template and all the teachers worked tirelessly to produce a new detailed curriculum. This exciting curriculum includes the skills progression in every subject area from EYFS to Year 6, with a great emphasis on Cultural Capital. The staff worked really well together and soon settled in Roxwell School.

Margaretting School staff started to enjoy the beautiful view, the horses in the fields nearby, the lovely new staff room and the extra learning areas around Roxwell School. I then had the challenge to coax all the staff back to Margaretting School! The staff from our school and Roxwell School made great friends, got to know each other better and shared their professional knowledge. From a worldwide crisis, came an opportunity to be together. We had time to assess what we are providing as a small church school and make that offer even better.

Margaretting School opened its doors to the children on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020 and even though the uptake for places has been low, it has been great to have children back to school. The detailed Risk Assessment and all the new Government legislation has been a challenge, but the support from The LIFE Educational Trust has been extraordinary. In a time of isolation and social distancing, we at Margaretting School have never been alone.

**Maire O'Regan,  
Headteacher**



# Roxwell

The summer term at Roxwell C of E Primary looked different to all the summer terms in its history. As we learnt about the Covid-19 pandemic taking over the world, the school closed down for all the children except Key Worker children. It was very sad to say goodbye to everyone on 20<sup>th</sup> March and I don't think many of the children had a full understanding of what was happening in their school or the wider community. We then reopened the school to support key workers and NHS staff, after a deep clean had been undertaken.

Ten children returned to school and we were very pleased to support their parents to complete the important work of caring for people who were ill with Covid-19.

The children had a good understanding of the idea of the virus and we made it our goal to support the people of Roxwell. We made rainbows and hung them around the village, to show our support for the NHS. We wrote letters to older members of the community and offered to do their shopping. We left gifts of chocolate and flowers at people's doorsteps. The village really liked these gifts and were very grateful.

We took this opportunity to get to know a horse that we would like to adopt in September 2020, who is called Paddy. He is an adopted horse and lives in the field next to our school. He is very well trained and loves children. We got the opportunity to have him in the school playground and groom him and he loved the attention from the children. We even plaited his hair with blue ribbon to match our uniform. Paddy was a very welcome guest, who distracted us from the worry of the virus spreading across the world.

As from 1<sup>st</sup> June, more children returned to school and we are feeling a sense of normality. The social distancing and constant sanitizing of surfaces feels strange, but the children see it as their new normal. They are coping very well. Mr Dutnall visits us at a 2m distance every Tuesday to check that we are well and his support and the support of the whole LIFE Education Trust team has been invaluable. There have been many lessons learnt during this term however the children and staff are more resilient as a result. We are now ready for the summer holidays to recuperate!

**Maire O'Regan,  
Executive Headteacher**

