



# LIFE Matters



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## Summer 2021

### From the CEO

#### Thank you

It is hard to put into words what we have been through in the last twelve months or to adequately express the incredible admiration that I have for the school leaders, teachers, support staff, parents and pupils in our schools who have triumphed through adversity.

So many of the things that we have taken for granted have been taken away. Many of our daily activities have been stopped, restricted or altered.

But in everything we have some amazing examples of why a recent Ofsted study highlighted the significant benefits of schools being in multi academy trusts. We have been able to share resources, ideas, disappointments and successes. School leaders have met weekly to discuss and debate the latest government and local authority guidance and to ensure that we are acting legally and safely, whilst trying always to focus on the best interests of our children. At times safety and legality has meant that we have had to take action which has been disappointing and upsetting for children and parents. We have always done this with a heavy heart and as a last resort.

So much of our communication has been virtual with governors and leaders meetings online as well as the LIFE Awards Evening this term for pupils and the LIFE Ambassadors final event.

We know that life will not return to what we used to call normal from 19th July but we do expect there to be a relaxing of restrictions and we hope that you and your family and friends are able to have some great times together.

#### Hello and Goodbye

In September we will return to a much more usual way of working. Our Rural Primary Schools will be led by Mrs O Regan who has worked wonders at Margaretting and Roxwell over the past few years. Mr Ley will become Head of School at Dame Tipping and Miss Larkman will become Headteacher at Benhurst. Miss Darabasz and Mr Turrell will become permanent Joint Headteachers at FBA. Mr Adams will join us as Head of Estates and support Mrs Broom and all our site teams.

We are really grateful to Miss Holmes at Dame Tipping and Mrs Grimwood, our Culture and Community Manager, who both leave us this summer, and to Mrs Hart and Mrs Rumsey who step down from their roles as acting headteachers at Benhurst and Ford End respectively.

We have also created two hubs to support the schools even more effectively. These are the "Romford" hub and the "Rural Primary" hub. Our administrative staff and leaders will be linked to one of these for even clearer working practices.

#### Communication

Mrs Brickell and Mr Gareth have done a great job updating our website with areas for governors, staff and pupils. We will be sharing more information about this in the autumn term. We will also begin by having a Parent Forum in each school in the Autumn so that we can hear directly from parents how they feel about their child's school and the Trust. Thank you to those parents who completed our recent surveys. The results were extremely positive.

We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter. It will give you a flavour of what we have been getting up to in our schools and as a Trust this year and our plans for the future. With very best wishes for the summer.

**Julian Dutnall**  
CEO, LIFE Education Trust

# From the Chair

I am writing at the end of a most unusual academic year, one that has tested us all in different ways.

My message for this edition is short: it is a huge thank you to everyone involved in LIFE Education Trust. Whether you are a parent or carer, a pupil or student, a member of staff or a volunteer, thank you for your commitment and hard work. Between us, we have dealt with a wide range of issues including remote learning, changes to exams, constantly evolving guidance from government, alongside illness, mental well-being concerns, and for some, the death of a loved one.

I have witnessed heartfelt compassion time and again across our schools, demonstrated in so many ways. I have also seen boundless creativity, most recently through the performances produced for our prize-giving celebrations. I have observed courageous optimism over and over again throughout the pandemic in our staff, pupils and students, volunteers and families.

We are living up to our mission and are building great learning communities: this isn't something that is done by one or two, but by us all, playing our part. I am so proud to serve your amazing communities and look forward to continuing the journey with you in the next academic year.

**Louise Douglas**  
Chair



LIFE in flowers at Roxwell Cof E Primary School

## Director of Operations

This term we have continued on our journey to build a great central operational team. The increase in contribution agreed by all our schools has enabled the Trust to have operational teams in Finance, HR, IT and Premises. Aligned to the structure of a Romford hub and the Rural Primary hub, these teams will be able to provide an excellent bespoke service to these schools. We are ready for September!

We welcomed Thomas Mercer as Head of Finance in March and Steve Adams will join us in September as Head of Estates. Brian Bowling takes up the role of Rural Primary Site Assistant, a role that was not available to these schools as part of the LA.

All CIF projects for last year have been completed and have made a huge difference to our schools: no leaking roofs; great windows and heating systems. This year the Trust has been successful in securing CIF bids to the value of £700,000 for replacement windows at FBA and £128,000 for a new heating system at Margaretting. Preparation is underway to start these projects in the near future.

The pandemic continued to bring a number of challenges and the Trust HR team has supported staff in a number of ways to manage the situation and their wellbeing which has been well received.

**Denise Broom**  
Director of Operations

# LIFE Ethos in Action

Recognition that life has been more than an adventure in recent times has caused us to adapt and adopt some new ways of working. We have seen teaching through new lenses and have created innovative ways of working.

The LIFE Passport has been promoted during the Summer term with students finding new ways to complete the challenges such as visiting a museum or attending a theatre production virtually. The Passport continues to provide a tool for experiencing the world and embracing new experiences. This benefits all the children in our rural primaries and years 7 and 8 at FBA. The passport fosters the idea "I can do that" and has given students the sense of achievement. This year we have had a great number of students participating in the scheme which is fantastic to see.

## Director of Education

As we come to the end of another very challenging year, the Government has just announced that schools will no longer have to partition their buildings, teachers and pupils into "bubbles" when we return in September, and that requirements for staff and pupils to self-isolate will be reduced.

We hope, therefore, that we can return to something resembling a pre-COVID "normality" next year, with a full curriculum being taught (in person, not remotely) and the re-introduction of a full range of shared social spaces, assemblies, clubs and other extra-curricular activities.

Another feature of school life that is expected to resume in the summer of 2022 is the return of A Levels, GCSEs and SATs, which may perhaps be less welcomed by pupils. In the meanwhile, teachers at FBA and The Bridge have rigorously completed the process for submitting Teacher Assessed Grades and they and their students will await the publication of results in August.

Teachers in our primary schools have also completed end-of-year assessments for all pupils. In some cases standards are not as high as we would normally expect at the end of the year, because all pupils' learning has been significantly impacted by the pandemic over the past two academic years; but we are confident that achievement remains high by national standards.

At Trust level, next year we also plan to push ahead with our mission to "Build Great Learning Communities". The four rural primary schools will be collaborating more closely than ever, as a single learning community, and we have plans to develop learning across all our schools.

Finally, on a personal note, I would like to thank all LIFE staff and the pupils and staff in every LIFE school for their exceptional courage and resilience in the most difficult of circumstances over the past year; and I wish them, and you, a happy summer holiday.

**Ian Gurman**  
Director of Education



The farm has flourished despite having to operate in bubbles. Students from FBA's ASDAN course have enjoyed regular sessions using their skills in updating old garden furniture and organising farm equipment. All the animals will be accommodated at Lambourne Centre during the Summer holidays allowing the farm site to be prepared for the start of the Autumn term.

LIFE Ambassadors held their final zoom meeting of the year on the 8th July, reflecting on this year's project and sharing how they have supported the Trussell Trust. As a result of the previous year's project on Air Quality, we supported a bid with local business to have a living wall installed at Romford Station. The bid was successful and the wall was installed in May to improve air for the local community around the entrance to the station. LIFE Ambassadors make a difference within school and the wider community.



**Rachel Grimwood**  
Culture & Community Manager



# LIFE Enrichment, Internationalism and EAL

This term has been another term of restrictions and bubbles, but we haven't let that stop us. In January we started with another lockdown but while learning at home (or in school) our pupils enjoyed getting involved with weekly competitions to write book reviews about what they were reading, and a photography competition themed "this week I noticed..." We have some amazingly talented pupils across our schools – but then we knew that already!

Even though travel has not been possible, it hasn't stopped us from moving ahead in exploring internationalism – we've just had to find other ways of doing it. Across our schools we have a number of international partnership projects ongoing. Although Brexit means the end of school Erasmus + partnerships, we are lucky to already be in the middle of two great partnerships. At Frances Bardsley, the group of Year 9 girls involved in our Let's Science the Environment Erasmus project spent a day with students from the other participating schools in Germany, Spain, Portugal, and Denmark – with virtual meetings and break out rooms, we got stuck into making the project still happen. At Margaretting, with their On the Wings of Legends Erasmus project they travelled to Spain this term for their latest mobility – well, virtually anyway. The Spanish school hosted a week of fun activities online and the pupils enjoyed learning more from each other. Now that our Roxwell partner school in Namunja, Kenya, are back in school we enjoyed a virtual class link up with them. We learned so much about the reality of their school life and enjoyed being taught some words in Masai and Swahili. The school in Pakistan that FBA has been linked to for a British Council Connecting Classrooms project sadly hasn't been able to partner as fully because of the pandemic. Instead we've focused on working with the other schools in our Havering hub and still exploring the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This term, Year 8 students created and taught lessons on the Great Pacific Garbage Patch for the 3 other primary schools and delivered them virtually. All involved loved learning from each other. Amal, the giant puppet, is walking from Syria to UK, across Turkey, Greece, Italy, France, Switzerland, Germany, and Belgium. We are following her journey and learning more about what it means to be a refugee. Pandemic travel restrictions may apply, but we've still travelled the world!

We've had fun this term celebrating a number of International Celebration days including Earth Day, Women's Day, Mental Health Awareness, World Book Day, Mardi Gras, St. Patrick's Day, Easter, Ramadan and Eid Mubarrak amongst others. At Dame Tipping, we spent a whole week celebrating World Oceans Day and learning about the various oceans as well as the danger and impact of pollution in our oceans. Having travelled the oceans of the world we are looking forward to submitting our application for International School Award.

A number of our EAL students created art work and wrote pieces for a competition Me and My Languages held by Anglia Ruskin University. Although none of them were awarded a prize, the judges were impressed with their entries and they enjoyed exploring more of what it means to be bilingual.

## Faith Spinks

Internationalism and EAL Manager

## Benhurst

Since all pupils returned to school in March, following another period of remote learning, school life has felt as close to 'normal' as it could be this academic year. We have seen the return of extra – curricular sporting clubs, wide – ranging curriculum opportunities and even school educational visits, both day trips and our Year 6 residential! We are really proud of the opportunities we have been able to safely provide for our children despite ongoing restrictions.

We have made good use of our Catch – up funding allocation this term with many children benefitting from small group tuition. We have also been able to provide whole

– school gaps analysis diagnostics for Maths which will support with ongoing tailored interventions. The children have loved our new subscription to Junior Librarian Cloud which enables them to access books online from home and in school!

The children have enjoyed taking part in 2 fundraising events this term. In March, the children raised over £400 for Comic Relief. The theme for the event was 'The Power of Humour' and our children had a blast entering their best jokes into a class competition. The winning entries received a giant bar of chocolate! The children also participated in our annual Spellathon which raised over £2400. This money will be going towards an outside reading area for all children to enjoy.

As we approach the end of the school year, we also embark on a period of transition for Benhurst as I end my year as Acting Headteacher and we welcome our new Headteacher in September. I have very much enjoyed leading the school during the last academic year and look forward to working closely with Miss Larkman in the future.

## Katherine Hart

Headteacher, Benhurst



# Dame Tipping

The start of the Spring term saw many of our pupils welcoming teachers into their homes via their computer screens as they embarked on their remote learning journey. The pupils engaged well and submitted a huge amount of work of a very high standard showing Courageous Optimism in excess!

Collective Worship and Achievement Assemblies have been celebrated via zoom to ensure a sense of collective spirit as a school community. We are thankful to Revd. David who has continued to support Collective worship throughout the Spring and Summer term.

## The Bridge

We are all aware taking time to reflect on the past can be very comforting, it is said self-reflection is the key to self-awareness: it allows us to look neutrally at our thoughts, feelings, emotions and actions. Looking back at this extraordinary year, I feel I have gained a stronger sense of belonging towards my staff, students and LIFE Education Trust, which has helped me to navigate my way through daily life. One of our school principles is Connecting to Others, and given the sense of isolation which many of us have recently experienced, staff and students felt strongly that this school principle needed to be the key focus throughout the school year. During lockdown, staff came to school every day along with over 50% of our school cohort for face to face teaching, and for those who were unable to attend school, we connected virtually. Everyone worked tirelessly to ensure there was minimal disruption to our students' learning, but most of all that we stayed connected.

One of the highlights of the year was the move into our fabulous new school building, and although our plans to celebrate this long awaited move were cancelled due to lockdown, it did not deter the staff and students from coming together to celebrate our wonderful new surroundings. We were also very fortunate to be able to organise a number of school trips and visits, which took team building to a completely new level, but most of all we witnessed our students overcome many of their fears and anxieties whilst having fun together.

We also took the time to discuss our thoughts, fears and the school year, and although we all agreed life was difficult and at times incredibly worrisome, we all felt we could look back with a positive mindset and an appreciation that we all have much to be grateful for and to look forward to next year. I hope that next year we will not only build upon our achievements but also enjoy the rewards of our hard work and the strong connections we made this year.

**Toni Cox**  
Head of School, The Bridge



As a school we saw Boundless creativity in action as we danced our way through lockdown between January- March with our Weekly Dance Challenge. Many of the children joined in from home and the teachers danced in the corridors and classrooms. We were supported by Nicola's School of Dance who held a zoom Dance session each Wednesday to keep pupils active at home. The weekly dance challenge certainly helped to keep morale high amongst the pupils and staff and provided lots of laughs and entertainment.

Once the pupils returned to school on March 8th, there were endless opportunities and memorable learning experiences to be had. Year 5 and 6 experienced a Victorian Day, complete with costumes, slop and a dunce hat! Reception welcomed chicks and watched their transformation from eggs to chicks. The whole school has participated in an internationalism project which recognised and promoted the importance of World Ocean Day. The pupils spent time over the week to explore issues surrounding plastic pollution and gathered more information on the World's oceans before coming back together to celebrate their learning and understanding of Heartfelt Compassion with one another.



We made sure that we had the opportunity to say good luck and farewell to our Year 6 leavers with an adventure filled day at Lambourne End, where memories were made, challenges accepted and fears conquered. It has been another jam packed and memorable term at Dame Tipping and not even a Global Pandemic has stopped us!

**Amy Holmes**  
Headteacher, Dame Tipping



# Frances Bardsley

## Be Her Lead at FBA

As part of the school's mission to empower young women with the knowledge and personal characteristics needed to live successful and fulfilling lives, Miss Carr (Girls Empowerment Leader), Miss Thurston (Head of Sociology) and Miss Agbodan (Head of Psychology) led the first group of Year 9 girls through the Be Her Lead programme.

The Be Her Lead programme trains teachers to lead transformative workshops for teenage girls with the aim to empower students, enabling them to build their confidence, resilience and self-esteem. (<https://www.beherlead.com/>)

In the final session, students were asked to finish the statement 'Be Her Lead has made me...' Here are a few of the responses from the students:

**Be Her Lead** has made me... 'More inspired to challenge social stereotypes, more confident in myself. It has made me realise that, as a woman, I have the right to speak; I have a voice! And I am going to use it.'

**Be Her Lead** has made me... 'Speak out. Stronger. Confident. Become a leader, despite the odds. Feel empowered. Challenge society's views. Question; always .Make new friends. See different views. Plan my future. See what beauty is. Claim what a feminist is. Be mindful.'

**Be Her Lead** has made me... 'Feel more empowered in myself. Learn about the world and stereotypical views. Make me understanding what I can help change about the world. Has made me question my own mind-set and how sometimes I am stereotyping. It has taught me to speak up about something I don't feel is right instead of brushing it off. I now think more deeply about how people act and how other people feel.'

**Be Her Lead** has made me... 'Have a more developed mind-set. I feel happy to come once a week and grow in knowledge, and being able to speak freely. I love the female empowerment and the whole vibe of the place I am in. I have become more open minded in many situations. My final opinion, if this programme carried on, the new generation will grow in many ways.'

**Be Her Lead** has made me... 'Feel more confident in myself and has made me look at everything in a different way. I also have been the injustice that we have in the world and how stereotypes have made our lives a certain way.'

**Be Her Lead** has made me... 'A more open minded person and allowed me to express myself without feeling judged. This programme has made me see a different point of view of the world, such as through gender equality and feminism' Be Her Lead has made me... 'More confident. Powerful. Stronger. Resilient. Smarter. Self-loving. Less stereotypical.'

We would like to say thankyou to the staff and students for making this a real success and we look forward to continuing with this programme, and reporting about the amazing work that Miss Carr is leading across the school.

**David Turrell & Emilie Darabasz**  
Joint Headteachers FBA

## Ford End

This year has been like embarking on an exciting journey upon the LIFE Train. Amongst the whirlwind that has been Covid and closures, we have managed to arrange some 'end of lockdown' stimulating activities for our pupils.

Just after the Easter Holidays in April, we had a whole school trip to Boydell's Farm, just outside Braintree. We were lucky enough to have the whole farm to ourselves. Farmers showed us around in our bubbles and we were fortunate to be able to experience holding the baby animals as well as learning so much about the farming process and the other animals. We enjoyed playing and eating our lunches by the stream and thoroughly soaked up the opportunities of just 'being' together as a school.

Year 5 and 6 went to Danbury for a two-night residential trip, where they enjoyed the challenges of outdoor activities as well as staying away from their families. For many of our children, this was the first time they had been without their carers and parents. Our pupils faced their fears and found out that they could participate in activities that they never thought they could do!!

Being able to attend church and being led in Collective Worship by incumbents within our bubbles has been a positive move forward in our worship as a Christian School. We can't wait to start having whole-school collective worship from September and we will relish in the opportunities we will get from mixing, worshipping, and further embedding LIFE's Beliefs together.

**Maria Rumsey**  
Headteacher, Ford End

**Sarah Cottee**  
Head of School, Ford End



# Roxwell

This term the children have worked very hard and have loved their topics. Year 5 and 6 have been learning all about WW2 and we have been very lucky to be able to see memorabilia and beautiful medals from grandparents and great grandparents which has made our learning come to life. Our younger children have been learning about animals and reading a series of animal books including the famous, 'Hungry Caterpillar.' Year 3 and 4 children have been studying the Ancient Romans and have held a battle in school.

## Margaretting

Margaretting Primary School was able to open its doors again to all pupils on 8th March and since then we have had a truly fantastic Spring and Summer Term. We provided the children with the best education possible as well as memorable experiences for them to cherish.

The EYFS and Year 1/2 classes learnt all about animals and we even adopted some chick eggs to nurture, which enabled the children to learn first-hand how to care for them. We were all so excited to see the eggs hatch, and for the children the best part was holding the baby chicks. The children also loved having a visit from a real working tractor and completed a mini beast hunt – they were all so brave!

In Key Stage 2, the Year 3/4 class learnt all about decimal sand money so the children embraced the challenge of setting up their own shops. They also made some beautiful mosaics as part of their work on Romans. It was also great for the Year 3/4 children to experience golf and archery and they participated in the school's first virtual Erasmus project. The Year 5/6 class had a special visit from Mike Mullen (6x BMX Half pipe Champion and Former World Master Halfpipe Champion) who taught the children how to BMX as well as how to 'flearn' (learn from failure). The Year 5/6 children also enjoyed an educational visit to Colchester Zoo and had a Superstar Sports Day, with a McDonalds lunch!



It has been a memorable few weeks and we look forward to creating many more amazing opportunities for the children in the lead up to the summer holidays.

**Melissa Bryan**  
Head of School, Margaretting

Our new roof is now complete. The glass roof in the inside of the school has now had a seal attached and that gives 100% UVA protection for the children and staff and also reduces the glare. It is so good to have the front of the school looking so bright and cheerful. The children helped to plant shrubs and flowers donated to the school by the community. Both the staff and children worked hard to improve the front of the school during Earth Day and it is looking great.

Paddy, our school horse, visits regularly and listens to children read. He is very calm and encouraging and even with his limited knowledge of phonics, has a great impact on children's fluency. The children love reading to him and he listens intently to every story. Of course he gets a treat after every reader, so that is an incentive. The children have completed questionnaires to show how much they love Paddy's visits and many children from school are having riding lessons. Paddy stops outside the school when he is riding through the village as he thinks he is going to get a treat! We have decided to carry out a 6-month research project on the impact Paddy has had on our well-being. He has definitely made the staff happy. I think the children have loved seeing him too.



As this term and year come to an end, we are grateful for all the fun activities we have managed to complete, even with restrictions. The children have been resilient, hardworking and coped extremely well with constant change. We are so proud of our Roxwell family.

**Maire O'Regan**  
Executive Headteacher, Roxwell

