

Article for Whiddon Parishes Magazine

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“Community, Challenge, Care” Following consultation with parents, staff and (most importantly) our pupils, **Community Challenge Care** is our new school vision, replacing “Love Life, Love Learning” which felt had perhaps lost meaning and focus through over-familiarity, especially when we reflected on all the changes that the school has seen over the last few years. These three words accurately represent the current culture of the school and its desire to:

- reconnect with the community;
- actively welcome challenge; and
- demonstrate genuine care.

Community

We are nothing without our communities - our children and families have roots and backgrounds that make them unique, and collectively we are of this place - we draw from it and we give back to it. The lockdowns and regulations of the pandemic made it hard for us to demonstrate and nurture our connections to the community context of our school and it's time to purposefully put that right. By the time this is published, we hope to have held a successful Autumn Festival in the school grounds welcoming, not only parents and children, but all community groups, including those with no obvious or direct connection with the school. It is really important to us that the school plays a significant and obvious part in Chagford life.

We want to make our school not only a place that nourishes the pupils' sense of being part of a community but also a place that reaches out to create good in the community. If you are part of a community group that has an idea of something we can do to reach out to our communities, will you please get in touch and let us know?

Challenge

The school openly acknowledges that the last three years has been difficult, particularly in respect of stability and consistency. It listens to its parents and other voices, and is open to learning and being better, just as we expect to pass on to our children. When we speak about challenge, we mean not accepting second best, raising standards, setting out our aims in a clear and concise way, and responding to criticism with improved communication and new channels to allow feedback to be provided.

Care

This featured heavily in the children's “What does school mean for you” discussions. They are so very keen to show how much they care, but sometimes it is difficult to “make it happen”. We need your help to identify projects and other areas where our pupils could genuinely make a difference. For example, do you know of a local community group who might benefit from some youthful enthusiasm, or perhaps you'd like to teach them about something that is important to you?

It is important to add that this isn't just about the school caring for the community – it's also about the community caring for the school. Please do have a think about how we can build our relationships with you, and let us know!

The more we think about **Community, Challenge, Care** the more we see that they overlap and work together. We care for our community. We challenge ourselves to do better because we care. As a Church of England School we are asked to consider a scriptural basis for our vision. We found the Bible verse Hebrews 10:24 thought provoking and inspiring *'Let us think*

of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works'. Good work has lots of different meanings in a school from the good work that the children do in their books to the good work teachers are doing to facilitate learning; from the good work of the PTFA to the good work of Elaine in the office making sure the right information goes to the right place. Dancing together in the morning is good work and mopping the hall floor in the evening is good work too.

While we will leave all of that with you for now, we'd also love to share some of the stuff the school's been up to during the first few weeks of the Autumn Term!

Morning movement

Each week, the whole school learns a new dance to a different song, and each morning Mr Finch drags his recently-purchased mic & amp (thanks to the PTFA for this!) out to the playground and, once the bell is rung, the parents watch their children boogie away. We've had Waka Waka, The Electric Slide, Footloose and a cheesy disco routine. There are, admittedly, some more hesitant participants, but the general feedback has been really positive, and we can see that the majority of the children (and their parents!) enjoy the opportunity to relax and have a bit of fun before the school bell rings.

Concert at Church

We were able to welcome four young professional musicians into the school in September to work with the children to learn a song written especially for the occasion 'When we're a Team' which we are now practising with the whole school to become our new school song. In the evening some of those children came up to the church for a practice then performed as part of the concert alongside professional musicians and in front of an audience of family, friends and the whole community. After a long time where we couldn't do many of these things, it was just lovely to get back into doing the sorts of activities that connect us to our community. Thanks to Freddie Crowley, once a pupil of this school, for organising the event and making sure our children were involved. We hope that the Whiddon Autumn Festival becomes an annual event and that the school can maintain a place within it. A thousand thanks to Freddie for inviting us to take part.

Bell ringing – by Emily Leech (Year 6)

Year 6 have recently been to Chagford church towers to see the bells and learn about them! First we looked at the 'Ellacombe Chimes', we also had a go at them! Jon Bint (aka Tower Captain) told us that the church bells date back to the 1400s, so they are extremely old. Then, we went up to the place the bell ringers ring. We all had turns on the bells. He led us all up to the top of the tower too, and we all stood outside spotting our houses and the school! It was a really fun morning. We all had an amazing time!

Opportunities for our readers

Now that we can open up the school, albeit somewhat cautiously, we would love to meet more of our local communities. We are looking for adults who may have some regular spare time to help us with a number of activities, such as:

- reading catch up;
- running a weekly club either before or after school (for half a term or a full term, depending on the club and your preference!);
- a lollipop person (or team of lollipop people), to help our pupils cross the road safely before and after school.
- People to join our periodic work parties to improve our grounds for the children.

Please contact Ed Finch, Principal by email: efinch@dmatschools.org.uk or Elaine Lawson, Administrator: admin@chagford-primary.devon.sch.uk if you have any comments or suggestions. You can also find us on Facebook – Chagford C of E Primary School.