



Article for North Dartmoor Parishes Magazine

Submission by 10th April 2022 for inclusion in April/May 2022 issue

No sooner had our last article been published in the Parishes magazine, describing our relief at having avoided a big hit from Covid, a wave spread through **Chagford CE Primary School**, and we are only just recovering from this – thankfully in time for the Easter holidays! Despite having numerous staff absent, along with a large percentage of pupils at any one time, we managed to hang on by the skin of our teeth and keep the school open. And our school was delighted to have finally become a fully single form entry school, meaning that each year group from Reception to Year 6 now have their own dedicated form teacher.

Whilst all three of our Values continue to be embedded in all that we do here in our school, our particular focus this term has been on the **Community** element. Please enjoy this update letting you know what we've been up to.

Sunflowers for Ukraine Many of our pupils asked if we could do something for the many tens of thousands of people who have fled the war in Ukraine. For children who may be anxious as a result of what they have seen on the news or heard grown-ups talking about, one of the kindest things we can do is give them a sense that they can actually do something, however small, to help with the worrying issue.



The most immediate way to help was to raise funds, so we held a bake sale at the beginning of March, which raised over £230 for the Disaster Emergency Committee. However, we wanted to create something longer-lasting at our school, so our next goal will be to raise money for Chagford Sanctuary – and this is our 'Sunflowers for Ukraine' project. Our dedicated gardening group have already started preparing a space for our sunflower field at the front of the school and, by summer, we hope it will be a glorious riot of yellow and gold with a band of blue provided by cornflowers. We will think a way of honouring this together as a community, but in the meantime, do please feel free to plant up as many sunflowers as you can, ready for planting out.

COP26 The school continues to work with the Celebration of the Earth events, held monthly at St Michael's, as part of the community's ongoing reflection on COP26. We are enormously grateful to the group for ensuring our children are able to participate at these events, and do encourage all families to attend. They usually last for half an hour and take place at 17:30, so are very family-friendly! We recently contributed St Brigid crosses (which kept the whole school busy for a while!) and at the April event (which will have passed by the time of this publication), we have a pupil performing another pupil's beautiful poem about The Woods around his home on Dartmoor. Keep an eye out on the usual Facebook pages for more information, and in the meantime, put Thursday 12th May in your diary. Everyone is welcome.

Conservation Many of our pupils participated in the recent Community Conversation about our relationship with our natural environment, which took place in Jubilee Hall. The resulting artwork and poetry is currently displayed at St Michael's – do take a moment to enjoy learning about their favourite places in our beautiful local area.

Butterfly Conservation Project At the beginning of term, our Year Three and Four pupils started their butterfly conservation project in partnership with Shallowford Farm over near Widecombe. The Marsh Fritillary Butterfly used to be common on the moor but is now increasingly endangered. However, isolated groups of them still live in the valley bottom at Shallowford Farm, and in the patches of habitat on neighbouring farms. The team at Shallowford want to plant lots of Devil's Bit Scabious - the butterfly's exclusive food plant - and join up the isolated patches of habitat and they invited us to help grow the





plants. Each of our children planted out seeds taken from last year's scabious plants, and to make sure that we are growing the exact same species and variety as the butterflies on the farm are used to, the seeds were taken from the exact places that we will be planting them later this year. We are hoping to take the children to visit Shallowford Farm to see if we can spot the butterfly in its breeding season and to survey the plants that grow in the valley bottom. Later in the year, when the plants we are caring for here at school are big and strong enough to be planted out, we will take them to Shallowford and plant them out, expanding the butterflies' range and connecting up patches of habitat. This will be a fascinating project to follow.

Patron of Reading We are looking forward enormously to the first visit from our new Patron of Reading, Sarah McIntyre, who starts in her role after the Easter break. Sarah is the author and illustrator of many great picture books such as Grumpycorn, The New Neighbours, Jampires, Dinosaur Firefighters, amongst others. She also works with author, Philip Reeve, to create books together - many of the children will know their 'Kevin the Fat Flying Pony' series which is set on Dartmoor. Sarah and Philip will be visiting our school and leading assemblies, working with the children, and increasing our children's awareness of what exactly it is that authors and illustrators do, whilst boosting the love of stories, books and reading in the school. Perhaps by the next issue, we will be able to publish something really special as a result!

Sporting News As if we didn't already know this, it turns out that Chagford seems to have an abundance of keen cross-country runners! The school was incredibly well represented at the three West Devon Primary School races arranged by OCRA, that took place at Simmond's Park, North Tawton Primary School and Sleek Farm, Sourton. Every child tried their very best, and we did extremely well overall, but the thing that impressed us the most was the endless support, cheering and **care** shown, especially to those who found it tougher than others. We are extremely proud of our pupils for this genuine love and empathy that they show to each other, alongside a reasonable and healthy amount of competition!

Important dates!

On Friday 24th June, Chagford CE Primary School will be putting on its own, unique production of Shakespeare's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. It is our hope that every single one of our pupils will be involved with the show which will take place outdoors in our amphitheatre. As well as pupils from the school, there will be a host of community members taking part to supply music, puppetry and other roles. Do look out for the posters that will be launched imminently.

And we are lucky enough that the very talented musicians - cellist, Amye Farrell, and pianist, Rupert Egerton-Smith - will be performing a concert at St Michael's, Chagford to raise funds to support the production costs. This concert will be at the church on 21st May, do please book the date in your diaries. Again, keep your eyes out for more information about this.

We are SO excited for this project - it will be the event of the season. We hope to absolutely pack the amphitheatre and to create an evening of such magic that none of us ever forgets it. After the pandemic years when projects like this were unable to happen, we want this to be a big, glorious, healing celebration of love, nature and our community. **EVERYONE IS WELCOME.**

Opportunities for our readers We are still keen to find adults who may have some regular spare time to help us with numerous 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.



And finally, it is a good habit for us to '*think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works*'. We would like to take this opportunity to thank every single individual for all the help, support, suggestions and input that they have taken the time to give to our school, and make this simple but important school motto a reality. We know we don't always get it right, but we continue to learn, and hopefully you will agree that our school is one of Happiness, Health and Hope.

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.