



Chagford CE Primary School has been blessed by avoiding any serious ‘hit’ from Covid, which has meant that we have not needed to close any classes or return to bubbles. This has allowed the school to continue assessing the current knowledge of the pupils and provide one-to-one catch up sessions where required. This is an ongoing process, but we are confident that it is bringing all of the children up to the expected standards in all areas of the curriculum.

Avoiding Covid also meant that we needed to make some adjustments to our Christmas festivities. We would have loved to have had the school hall crammed with parents, carers and friends but, under the guidance of the Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust, we held our Christmas carol singing and poetry readings outdoors on the evening of Thursday 9th December – the rain *almost* held off, but we know the Chagford community is a hardy bunch, and the children were excited to perform to their parents and friends by candlelight (with the help of some mini floodlights!). A special thanks goes to Philippa O’Brien who organised the Santa’s Grotto in town for the children to enjoy after the event.



Speaking of **Community**, as detailed in the last issue of this magazine, we have been working hard to integrate the school back into the community, and the school has really cracked on with this. Please enjoy the pictures below, along with a brief summary of how the school was involved!

Autumn Festival The school held its inaugural Autumn Festival in November, opening itself up at last to the community - something the school has been unable to do since the pandemic began in early 2020. Our thanks to the PTFA for its exceptional organisation and management on the day!

We were able to take members of the community (as well as parents, relatives and carers) on tours of the school and its magnificent grounds, which were greatly appreciated. There were numerous stalls: tombola; welly-wanging; a DIY craft stall and face-painting, which were fully operational all day! Along with an apple press, there was a BBQ and a cake stand... no-one left the grounds hungry (or with any spare change!)

Huge thanks to those parents, grandparents and friends that helped on the day, Jill Millar and Ralph Mackridge for the loan of the Apple Press, A.L Martin and Sons for a great deal on their delicious Old English sausages, Thomas’ Bakery for a discount on rolls, Pam of The Fruit Loop for lovely English apples at cost, Julia of Beachwood Bakery who did her very best Prue Leith and judged our Cracking Chagford Cake Scoff and provided winners’ vouchers, Max H and Lucy for setting up their fabulous fruit kebab stand and a few very generous families who donated all the food, drink and prizes.

A self-confessed ‘pair of oldies’ took the trouble to write to the school and said:

“Congratulations to everyone who contributed in any way to its success. Excellent refreshment stalls, many activities for the children, background music, a glowing log fire, all set amongst mature



trees and a wonderful rural landscape. The Samba Band treated us to a rousing, enthusiastic and jolly session. We were privileged to enjoy the Headmaster's Grand Tour of the school. Impressive facilities indeed! Our special places were the Book Corner downstairs, the inspiring Library upstairs, and the tucked-away corner for piano tuition. Positive and encouraging vibes throughout. Such a happy and friendly atmosphere, resulting in a great community occasion, which hopefully raised a good amount of extra funding for the benefit of the school and pupils."

Thank you for taking the time to let us know.



Remembrance Service The school was represented at the church service by a group of Year 6 pupils who read "The Inquisitive Mind of a Child" and laid two wreaths at the memorial. It was, as expected, a moving service and we were blessed by perfect Autumn sunshine!



COP26 You will doubtless already be aware that the church hosted a COP26 Celebration of the Earth event. Our pupils were invited to bring in items of nature that were special to them, perhaps from Grannie's garden, or from their favourite place on Dartmoor. These items were collected and blessed by Reverend Paul at a special collective worship at school, before being taken up to the church and used as part of the magnificent nature mandala that was the centrepiece of the twelve-day event. Many of our school families visited the church during COP26, and Oak Class were treated to a trip up one afternoon to admire their handiwork, read Letters to the Earth on our school display board, and write a prayer to hang from the prayer tree.



Following on from COP26, there will be monthly Celebration of the Earth events, the first of which took place in early December, celebrating Winter Trees. One of our Year 3 pupils took centre-stage, processing up the aisle behind the Yule log, and presenting the yule to the audience. This took courage and confidence, and we are extremely proud of her for not faltering, even when her mischievous headdress decided to fall off mid-sentence!



Devon Wildlife Trust The school has been really lucky to have Paul Martin from Devon Wildlife Trust working with us, teaching the children about the rich natural life around and in our grounds. He will be returning to the school regularly culminating, we hope, in a grand tree-planting day, as we create a mixed native hedgerow along the fence protecting us from the drop into the amphitheatre. This should also entwine perfectly with our Celebration of the Earth events, as mentioned above.

Challenge As we mentioned in our last article, challenge doesn't only mean constructive criticism! In particular, we like to challenge ourselves, and our Year 6 pupils certainly rose to the challenge of taking Kit Wright's poem 'The Magic Box' as a model for their own poetry-writing. There were some stunning pieces and they were all beautifully presented too, as the photo below will show. We are very proud of the effort all the pupils have put into improving their handwriting this term, and in turn, they are taking noticeable pride in their work.

The school has opened its doors to challenge, and we have been working hard on improving in a couple of really important areas. In response to direct challenge, we have ensured that all children are regularly swapping their phonically-decodable reading books, which build their skills and confidence in reading, and supports their usual reading habits. We have also have firmed up our school drop-off process, ensuring that all children are met off the bus and make it on to the school grounds safely. We acknowledge that not everything works as it should, and now have robust back-up plans in place. As always, we are glad for development areas to be brought to our attention and welcome any ideas that will improve our school in any way.



Care

The school is extremely lucky to benefit from a dedicated group of people who **care** for our gardens. They turn up every Wednesday with spades, wheelbarrows, rakes and so on, and have transformed the front gardens of the school into a beautiful sanctuary, not only for the insects, but for the children who enjoy running along the carefully-laid pathway. The raised beds have been given new life in the form of layers of cardboard which is blocking light and helping the perennial weeds to die back. The cardboard will break down into the soil and in the spring, we will be able to plant the beds again, and every child can experience the joy of planting, nurturing, harvesting and eating the food they have grown. Our sincere thanks to the team that have made this possible.



Children in Need took place back in November and Oak Class raised £106 with their bake sale. Quite impressive for a small school! The children all wore clothes that made them happy, and we had a great assortment of outfits, demonstrating the individuality of each pupil – this is the sort of thing we really love to see.





We have thanked Elvie Baker previously for raising around £1,500 by walking 164 tors of Dartmoor to provide additional funds to our Special Educational Needs department at school. It is our great pleasure to confirm that this money has been spent on an enormous variety of items fitting out our sensory room: concave & convex mirrors; sensory shapes and bags; beanbags; a reading chair; a yoga carpet; and reading rulers and other tools specifically designed to aid those with dyslexia. This has turned a rather uninspired room into a place of calm and sensory delight and will, without doubt, help our children who need it. We are overwhelmed by the impact Elvie's fundraising will have on the school, now and in the future. A thousand thanks feels inadequate. *'Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works'*.



Opportunities for our readers In the hope that the Spring Term will allow us to open up fully again, albeit somewhat cautiously, we are still 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.

Finally, we shall be pressing ahead with a mammoth project early next year, transforming the outdoor area into incredible learning and play spaces. On our website, we have listed all the small physical items that we are hoping to obtain via donations, but we will also be recommending our fundraising efforts to enable the project. If you would like to contribute financially to the school, we would (of course!) love to hear from you, and you can do this by contacting Ed Finch in the first instance, whose details are below. The website will also give details of our vision for the grounds, if you'd like to see what we will be up to! Thank you, in anticipation of your support.

Contact Us

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.