

Oak Trees MAT: the first year

Oak Trees Multi Academy Trust is one year old. In this newsletter you can read about how far we have come...and how far we still have to go



This summer marks one year since four Wirral primaries came together to prove there's strength in numbers.

And it's been a year of getting to know each other, sharing fun times and learning and for one school, raising the roof.

Children and teachers became acquainted through a variety of cross-school events in sports, music, science and more. Vital buildings improvements got underway - funded because Academy schools can access extra pots of central government money.

And teachers took part in innovative INSET days, made possible by our increased buying power.

Early next year, we hope to bring a fifth school into the fold. Church Drive is in Port Sunlight and is rated good by Ofsted.

This Academic year has been just the start for the Oak Trees MAT (Multi Academy Trust). Next academic year we look forward to building upon the opportunities we can offer our children, their families, our teachers and our communities.

We live in challenging times - changing times - and strongly believe we are better together.

Tell us a story

At the start of the new year, we ran a competition for Oak Trees MAT schools to write a story in 500 words.

The project uncovered a wealth of creative talent across the schools, with stand-out entries written by children from all year groups. The eventual winner was Eve Pugh from Great Meols. The Year 6 pupil penned a chilling tale about what might happen if you went away on holiday accidentally leaving the fridge open.



Year 2 teacher Mandy Parkinson said that the competition not only brought new excitement to the children's written work, but created an opportunity for the schools to learn from each other and share best practice.

"Oak Trees MAT 500 word story competition engaged children of all abilities." she said.

"Cross school moderation of Year 2 work has ensured consistency in standards between all of the schools in the MAT. Links between schools have enabled sharing of good practice and resources. Accuracy in assessment and ways to gather evidence have been shared."



Sports mad

As the world's football fanatics were packing their bags for Russia, we held the first Academy Sports Festival at Great Meols in June.

The children worked really hard, showed great talent and determination and were a credit to every school with their conduct. Eighty children took part across five schools and Poulton Lancelyn were the overall winners.

Year 5 teacher and sports lead Phil Smith said:

"It was great to work so closely with PE coordinators from the other MAT schools. I can't wait to grow and deepen our sports relationships next year and together develop further inter-school competitions in a wide range of sports.

"In this way we can really open our children's eyes to the whole range of sporting talent there is out there and provide the best opportunities possible."

We are scientists

Also in June, our Big Science Event saw children pull out their clipboards and don white coats and safety glasses to carry out their own scientific investigations. Teams from every year group presented their findings in poster form to our judging panel.

Topics under investigation included how to make invisible ink, why volcanoes erupt and the relationship between mass, force and velocity. Year 3 pupils from Egremont were the overall winners.





Year 6 teacher Frankie Farlam said: **“My Class really enjoyed taking part in the MAT science event. Every group came up with an investigation and even though they didn't make it through to the finals, they were still really interested to find out who had won overall .**

“I think events like this that are held across the MAT bring an extra level of excitement and increase pupil engagement as it is seen as more important to be competing with people from other schools. I am looking forward to more of these cross-school events next year.”

Music makes the world go around

Our music Festival, held at Great Meols in early July, invited Year 2 children from Stanton Road, Egremont and Church Drive to join their own Year 2s in a celebratory event.

The children enjoyed performing together a programme of animal-themed songs, arranged by Mrs Keiller, Great Meols' music lead and led by Mrs Hooper.

The school's deputy head, Ben Parker said: **“It was a fabulous opportunity for some of the children from our different MAT schools to come together and sing in unison.”**



Great Meols is one of only a handful of Wirral primaries to hold an Artsmark Gold award, which is a national standard given to schools with the very best arts provision. We can already see how their experience and knowledge is going to be of great benefit to all of the Trust schools.

Over the next academic year, prospective partnerships with prestigious local arts organisations including Liverpool Philharmonic, will bring the kinds of experiences into our schools that children will remember for the rest of their lives.

Something to build on

In March this year, work was completed on a much needed new roof for Poulton Lancelyn. This was the first in a major programme of building improvements that we can now carry out due to additional funding streams open to Academies.

Headteacher Mrs Arnold, who oversaw the £800,000 project said: **“We worked collaboratively with the construction company to ensure the children’s learning remained undisturbed. The work was carried out during the school day but in order to minimise impact on teaching and learning many aspects were completed at weekends and school holidays.**



“The new roof and windows has had a very positive effect on the school community and we have been able to begin a programme of redecoration internally now that we are water-tight. The school building is also warmer during the colder spells due to vastly improved insulation layers in the roof”.

We have now secured a further £2.1m from central government for five further improvement projects across the schools in the Academy Group.

Next school year, Church Drive, who are hoping to soon join the MAT, will get a £1.2m buildings overhaul, to include a large scale roof and window replacement. Two further schools will benefit from long overdue new roofs and another will get a new fire alarm and fire doors.

Only Academies can access central government’s Condition Improvement Fund (CIF), which is one of the biggest sources of cash for school building improvements.

Special educational needs expert joins Trustees

Earlier this year we welcomed our newest Trustee, Dr Adam Boddison.

Adam is a highly respected educationalist and chief executive for NASEN (National Association for Special Educational Needs). It is a great privilege to have him on our team.



Adam will work alongside our SENDCos to lead on an inclusion policy for Oak Trees MAT schools. This will be a prototype in the area and will mark our schools out as centres of excellence for SEND inclusion and achievement for all.

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Summer 2018



Coming back with a splash

As the school year draws to a close, we want to thank children, teachers and parents for making the first year of the Academy Group such a positive one.

In just 12 months, we have already seen many of the benefits that working together can bring.



All that is left is to wish you a fantastic summer and we look forward to welcoming you back to school in September.

Tony Lacey
Chief Executive Officer