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Marking the spirit of our schools

As we come to the end of another busy and rewarding term, I want to take a moment to reflect on all that has been achieved across Derby Diocesan Academy Trust and to thank our staff, pupils and families for their continued commitment and support.

This term has been filled with moments that truly capture the spirit of our schools. From the fantastic new swimming pool at Arboretum, which is already making a real difference to pupils' confidence and life skills, to the vibrant Chinese

New Year celebrations that brought culture, creativity and community together—there has been so much to celebrate.

What stands out most is the sense of community and shared purpose that runs through everything we do. Whether it's enriching experiences, cultural celebrations or everyday learning in the classroom, our schools continue to provide opportunities that support both academic success and personal development.

As we look ahead to the summer term, we do so with confidence and optimism. I wish you all a restful and enjoyable Easter break.



by Dr Sarah Clark, CEO

Celebrated author visits Griffie Field



Griffe Field Primary School had a fantastic time celebrating National Book Week, kicking things off with a special visit from author Catherine Barr.

Catherine, who has written more than 35 non-fiction picture books, is an award-nominated author whose work has captured the imagination of young readers across the country.

Her book *Fourteen Wolves: a rewilding story* was shortlisted for the Royal Society Young People's Book Prize, while *The Tigers Tale*, from the same series, was shortlisted for the ASE Book of the Year.

During her visit, Catherine shared her books with the children, as well as her journey to becoming an author and the inspirations behind her work, sparking curiosity and enthusiasm for reading and writing.

Each year group also took part in an engaging workshop led by Catherine, focusing on non-fiction and encouraging pupils to explore and learn more about the world around them.

Throughout the week, children and parents had the opportunity to visit the school book fair, helping to further inspire a love of reading. There was also a creative spoon decorating competition, where pupils were invited to transform a wooden spoon into their favourite book character, resulting in a fantastic display of imaginative designs.

The week proved to be a memorable celebration of books, creativity and storytelling for the whole school community.



Abundant opportunities for all at William Gilbert



William Gilbert Endowed Church of England Primary and Nursery School has been praised for giving pupils 'abundant opportunities to live life to the full' following a glowing inspection.

The school has been visited by an inspector as part of the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) report, which examines the effectiveness of a school's Christian vision, values, and leadership.

The report highlighted the exemplary behaviour of pupils, the warmth of their welcome and the confidence and depth of knowledge they demonstrated throughout the day.

In addition, it was noted 'the school is marked by a profound sense of care and compassion for others', while praising pupils' strong understanding of social justice, tolerance and moral responsibility, highlighting the positive difference they are making in the communities of Duffield and Belper.

Pupils are encouraged to translate their faith into action, with the inspection recognising their involvement in local charities, hospices and community initiatives, alongside projects promoting environmental responsibility.

Headteacher, Helen Britten, said: "Our school vision, 'Through faith, hope and love, we learn together,' continues to guide everything we do.

"To have such affirming feedback is testament to the commitment, compassion and dedication shown every day by our staff and to the invaluable support of our parents and wider community. It is heart-warming to see that the inspector recognised the positive impact of all this on our pupils and school life."

The inspector also noted that the school provides pupils with 'opportunities to "be more, not have more"', encouraging them to develop their talents, grow in character, and take responsibility for themselves and their communities.



Aboretum Primary pupils are in the swim with pop-up pool

Arboretum Primary School children had a taste of fame this term when the TV cameras visited to film its fantastic pop-up swimming pool. For four weeks the school has been home to a fully heated, ten metre swimming pool.

Around 100 children a week have been enjoying learning to swim in the pool which is housed in a marquee and provided by Next Level Sports and run through Elite Swimming UK as part of the Pools to Schools initiative.

The school has invested in the temporary pool instead of paying for children to travel to swimming lessons externally.

Head teacher Helen Phillips said she wanted to bring the swimming pool to Arboretum having arranged one at a previous school and seen the huge impact on children's confidence in the water.

She said: "I want to ensure that the children get quality swimming lessons. Because the pool is on the school grounds, it's a much more efficient use of time,

maximising their time spent in the water. Some children who are nervous about swimming have been more accepting and they can see their friends having a go. A lot of children have gone from being very unsure to overcoming their initial fears and being able to get on and swim."

The school's year four classes have benefited from daily sessions in the pool while Year Six children have been able to enjoy additional catch-up sessions too.

Mrs Phillips said: "It's been great for Year Four children to build on their previous day's learning, seeing the same coach. It's had a very positive impact on the children.

"The joy on their faces has been wonderful to see. For many, this will be their first time in a pool. Their sense of achievement and the huge smiles on their faces have been fabulous and have made it all worthwhile."

As well as organising swimming for Year Fours and Sixes, Arboretum has also put on an after-school club for year ones and twos.



School council hosts local MP

Bolsover Church of England Junior School Council recently welcomed local MP Natalie Fleet for a special visit, giving her the opportunity to meet pupils and experience life at the school firsthand. During her time there, the council proudly showcased the school and shared its core ethos of "Faith, Love and Hope", which underpins all aspects of school life.

Pupils spoke confidently about their roles within the school council, the initiatives they are involved in, and how they help to make a positive difference across the school community. The visit provided a valuable opportunity for children to engage with their local MP, ask questions and learn more about her role. The school council are also delighted to share that they have been invited to visit Parliament in the summer term.

Questions spark curiosity



Griffe Field Primary School held its second Science Share, with each class working hard to carry out experiments and prepare to present their findings.

In line with this year's theme, 'Curiosity: What is your question?', pupils focused on a key question to guide their learning, while also generating their own questions based on what they discovered.

Throughout the day, children demonstrated excellent enthusiasm and strong oracy skills as they confidently talked through their investigations and explained their learning. They also had the opportunity to pose further questions inspired by their findings, showing a real sense of curiosity and engagement in their scientific exploration.

Trip brings faith learning to life



The Juniors of Bishop Purglove Primary enjoyed a fascinating and enriching trip to the Derby Open Centre this term. During the visit, they had the opportunity to explore a Sikh Gurdwara, a Hindu temple and a mosque, learning about the beliefs, traditions and practices of each faith.

Throughout the day, pupils were able to observe important features of each place of worship, ask thoughtful questions and take part in discussions that deepened their understanding. The experience brought their classroom learning to life and encouraged them to reflect on similarities and differences between faiths.

It was an enjoyable and memorable day that supported their learning in a meaningful and engaging way.

Sale and Davys pupils find their inner dragons



Children at Sale & Davys CE Primary School in Barrow-upon-Trent were given an authentic taste of Chinese New Year with the help of local parents and a dancing dragon.

Joshua and Jane Tse, who have come to this country from Hong Kong and whose daughters Sofie and Alyssum attend the school, were on hand for the day to tell children about how the Chinese celebrate the lunar new year. The couple helped pupils make traditional "laughing" biscuits, a popular New Year treat in South China, while teachers and children got stuck into crafting delicious spring rolls stuffed with vegetables and noodles.

Primary Workshops came along to the school to teach children all about Chinese dancing with fans, parasols and a traditional dragon too. Pupils swapped classrooms for the day and enjoyed a wide range of activities including crafts such as lantern making. With the help of Jane and her daughters they even learned to sing Twinkle Twinkle Little Star in Cantonese!

Head teacher Sarah Briggs said: "At Sale & Davys we like to teach children about Chinese New Year. We think it is very important to celebrate different traditions and create a really inclusive environment in which we recognise ceremonies from all faiths and countries of the world.

"Children really enjoyed learning all about Chinese New Year at Sale & Davys this year. We encouraged all the teachers to wear red and it's been brilliant to see everyone enjoying the dancing, the food and the brilliant crafts we've had on offer."





Budding musicians take part in brass taster session

Year 2 pupils at **All Saints CE Federation**, Matlock, enjoyed an exciting introduction to brass instruments last week during a special lesson with Mrs Fellows.

The session gave children the opportunity to learn about different brass instruments, how they produce sound and what it takes to play them.

Pupils were thrilled to try the instruments for themselves, showing great enthusiasm as they explored something new and developed their musical skills.

The lesson was a fantastic experience for everyone involved, sparking interest in music and giving children a valuable hands-on introduction to the world of brass.

Pupils bring reading to life for World Book Day



It's always inspiring to see our schools bringing learning to life and **Long Lane Church of England Primary School** did exactly that to celebrate World Book Day. Children arrived dressed as their favourite characters and spent time sharing stories, exploring new books and celebrating the joy of reading together. From brave adventurers to curious explorers, the classroom was full of imagination and creativity.

St George's C of E Primary School encouraged children to

“Go All In” on something they would love to read more about, and the results were wonderfully creative. Pupils came to school dressed as their interests, from aspiring chefs and budding scientists to dinosaur enthusiasts, showcasing their curiosity and enthusiasm for learning.

Each class also visited the local library, where they had the opportunity to explore a wide range of books and enjoy shared reading sessions together, further encouraging a lifelong love of reading.

St Peter's pupils learn BSL from former classmate

Pupils at **St Peter's CofE School** in Littleover welcomed a special visit as part of Sign Language Week, themed "United in Sign".

Students from the Royal School for the Deaf Derby (RSDD) visited the school as part of a wider tour across the city, introducing communities to British Sign Language (BSL) and encouraging more people to get involved.

The visit was particularly meaningful for Year Six pupil Nanette, who returned to her former school to reconnect with classmates and staff.

Alongside her peers from RSDD, Nanette led an engaging BSL session for St Peter's pupils, teaching finger spelling as well as signs for foods and emotions.

she said: "I was really nervous to come back to the school and have a lot of attention on me, but I felt great



as soon as I came in. It was so good to see everybody.

"It was so great to see that some of my old friends have been learning BSL since I left, and it was lovely being able to teach them some more signs.

"That was really nice and meant a lot to see that they were doing that because of me."



St Chad's strengthens early literacy through REAL programme

St. Chad's CofE Nursery and Infant School has been delighted to work in partnership with Derby City Family Hubs to deliver the REAL (Raising Early Achievement in Literacy) programme in its Nursery.

This four-week programme supports the school's youngest children, aged two and three, along with their parents, to explore early reading, writing and language through practical and engaging activities.

Each week, families attended sessions in school where they shared stories, conversations and play-based learning. Using the ORIM framework – Opportunities, Recognition, Interaction and Modelling – parents were supported to develop simple but effective ways to build language and early literacy into everyday life at home.

The programme has further strengthened the partnership between home and school. Parent feedback has been extremely positive, with some families even asking if younger siblings can attend future sessions. It has been wonderful to see parents and children learning together, sharing books, discussing ideas and building confidence in early communication.



A love of reading takes centre stage at Hardwick Primary

Pupils at **Hardwick Primary School** enjoyed a fun-filled day celebrating World Book Day on Thursday 5th March. Children took part in a live online lesson hosted by the BBC and got creative by decorating wooden spoons inspired by their favourite book characters.

Throughout the day, pupils also spent time discussing their love of reading, sharing what it means to them and why it is so important. Each class also learnt a poem, which they proudly performed during a special assembly.

It was a fantastic day, with everyone thoroughly enjoying the celebrations and their shared love of books.



Infants get hands-on with experiments

Children in the infants at **All Saints CE Federation** enjoyed Science Week carrying out lots of awe-inspiring experiments. They asked lots of questions and made predictions about what they thought might happen. Pupils are also having a potato growing competition between the classes to see which class can grow the most potatoes between now and June.



Derby Cathedral School debaters shine in tough competition

Derby Cathedral School's Debating Society delivered an outstanding performance in the Derby School Debate Competition held at the University of Derby.

The group progressed to the semi-finals after an impressive victory over Allestree Woodlands, the unbeaten reigning champions.

In one of the highest-scoring debates in the competition's history, pupils demonstrated exceptional clarity, confidence and precision in their arguments, rising to the challenge against formidable opposition.

The team went on to face Littleover School in the semi-final, competing with determination and skill in another highly competitive round. While they narrowly missed out on a place in the final, Littleover School went on to be crowned overall winners, highlighting the strength of the competition.

Throughout the event, Derby Cathedral School pupils showed remarkable teamwork, preparation and intellectual courage. Their ability to engage with complex topics and present thoughtful, persuasive arguments was truly commendable.

Everyone involved should be incredibly proud of their achievements, and we look forward to seeing the team continue to grow and succeed in future competitions.



Church report sings praises of Derby Cathedral School



A key Church report has sung the praises of Derby Cathedral School, saying its students and staff “live life in all its fullness”.

The report from SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) has found that the secondary school and sixth form – part of Derby Diocesan Academy Trust – is an “aspirational community” which is “driven by its values”.

The report said: “Derby Cathedral School is driven by its values. It is an aspirational community where students and staff are enabled to flourish. Supported by the trust, leaders model integrity and care, enhancing outcomes.

“The Christian vision, aligned with that of the trust, is well understood and embedded in policy and practice. Through monitoring and evaluation, reflective leaders and governors ensure that the school’s Christian foundation compassionately and robustly serves the community.”

Particularly highlighted by the inspection was the inclusivity of Derby Cathedral School’s community, saying that pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) were being given “the bespoke support they need to thrive”, with “thoughtful adaptations” specific to their needs.

The school is offering “significant pastoral support and provision for emotional wellbeing” with one-to-one support, the inspector found.

Head teacher Andrew Brown said: “I could not be prouder of our recent SIAMS report which I feel has truly captured the spirit of rigour and joy that we try to permeate into every aspect of our everyday life here.

“Our students and staff form a great community, striving hard every day and looking out for more vulnerable members of society in a wide range of projects that we do here.

“We are a church school and everyone is welcome here – of all faiths and none. The inspector quoted one of our students who commented how every student here is equally valued and cared for, and that’s an ethos we believe in. I hope every member of our school family is as proud of this report as I am.”



Rock legend inspires pupils

Pupils at Newbold Church of England Primary School and Nursery were treated to an unforgettable musical experience when renowned drummer Jeff Rich, best known for his work with Status Quo, visited the school to deliver an inspiring drumming masterclass.

Jeff led an energetic and engaging session for all pupils, showcasing his incredible talent and passion for music. Children and staff alike were captivated by the performance, with many left feeling inspired and eager to try drumming for themselves.

The masterclass provided a fantastic opportunity for pupils to experience live music up close, sparking enthusiasm and creativity across the school. It has already inspired talk of budding musicians, with plans in place to share more information soon about potential drum and guitar lessons.

As a special memento of the visit, Jeff kindly gifted the school a pair of signed drumsticks. These will be raffled off to raise money for the school.





Local school goes the distance to Paris and wins national award

A Duffield primary school which launched the county's first car-free School Street has won a national award for its work encouraging pupils to walk, scoot and cycle to school.

William Gilbert Endowed C of E Primary School and Nursery received a Mode Shift Month award after every pupil and their family took part in a campaign promoting greener, healthier travel.

The 240-pupil school was recognised at a ceremony at The Royal Society in London, alongside organisations including Luton Airport, Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Derbyshire County Council.

Judges described the school's entry as "standout", praising its creativity, long-term commitment and strong community engagement.

A month-long cycling challenge saw families collectively cycle 435 miles—the distance from Duffield to Paris—celebrated with an Active Travel Breakfast for all pupils. Other initiatives included scooter workshops, an active travel art project, a walking trail and a 'parking pledge' encouraging families to reduce car use.

Pupils also took on leadership roles as Junior Travel Ambassadors. The award follows the school achieving 'Outstanding' status in the national Modeshift Stars scheme. Over four years, the percentage of pupils driven to school has fallen from 37% to just 3%, while around one in five now cycle or scoot—up from none in 2022.

Headteacher Helen Britten said the whole school community had worked hard to create lasting change, highlighting the benefits for both wellbeing and the environment.



Sixth former wins advisory role

A Derby Cathedral School sixth former is helping shape the future of A-levels after winning a coveted student advisory role for the country's largest exam board.

Nadia Brodowska, 16, a Year 12 student at the Derby Diocesan Academy Trust secondary on Great Northern Road, is one of only around 20 young people in the country to be selected to sit on the Student Advisory panel for the AQA (Assessment and Qualifications Alliance) exam board. Well done Nadia!

