



### Message from the CEO

**Happy New Year!** As we begin 2026, I am hoping this year will be a productive and positive one. The year begins with us welcoming Mrs Lorraine Ratcliffe to the Trust as the new Headteacher of Sexton's Manor Primary. We are looking forward to working with her. Honington Primary became the 16<sup>th</sup> school to join the Trust in November when it officially converted, and we are enjoying working with their staff and families. I have the good fortune to visit all of the schools in the Trust in a monitoring and school improvement capacity. I am always so proud and impressed with our pupils and I look forward to continuing these visits this term. **Melanie Barrow- CEO**



### All Saints, Laxfield Primary

Wren Class topic has been 'People who help us.' A variety of visitors have come into school including a Police Visit, Tractor and calf Visit, Mini First Aid whole school workshops and KS2 assembly and a Fire Engine visit! The whole school have also taken part in seeing all of these visitors on the playground.

### Benhall St Mary Primary

December was an incredibly busy month at Benhall. This Christmas, we were delighted to gift every child in the school their very own book! Each book was carefully chosen by their class teacher, ensuring it was something they would truly enjoy and cherish. We hope these books inspire a love of reading and bring hours of joy. We were thrilled to have four pupils compete in the cross-country finals at Hartismere, with two finishing in the top five. An amazing effort from every one of them. Our Christingle service was absolutely beautiful. Such a special moment to come together and it was wonderful to be joined by so many of our families.



### Charsfield Primary

Just before Christmas Charsfield Primary School held our annual Reverse Advent collection. Pupils and parents generously donated items for the Lighthouse Women's Aid charity to help those in need at Christmas. We invited Jo from the charity to our

Collective Worship where we presented her with the donations and she explained that these items would be so useful to the families who come to them for support. This act of generosity reflects our Christian Values of friendship, responsibility and compassion.

### Cockfield Primary

At Cockfield Primary School we always try to make learning enjoyable, and getting outdoors whenever we can is a big part of that. Birch Class have absolutely loved their Forest School sessions. The children have embraced the chance to take safe risks, explore creatively, and let their imaginations run free. They've built dens, lit fires, and enjoyed plenty of s'mores along the way. There's been excitement indoors too. With the fantastic cooking equipment generously donated by our brilliant FOCSA team, food technology has never been more enjoyable. Oak Class also had a wonderful time on their recent trip to the Escalator Skills Day in Bury St Edmunds, where they explored a wide range of careers and even tried out some hands-on activities.





### Dennington Primary

Children from Wren Class enjoyed a fantastic Romans trip to Hands On Heritage at Tunstall Forest. On arrival, they were treated to home-cooked pancakes with honey and apple juice served in Roman numeral cups. The children then stepped into the role of archaeologists, excavating a Roman villa and uncovering artefacts such as broken pots, coins, bones and tesserae (mosaic tiles). These discoveries helped them work out how the different rooms of the villa were used. They also tried hands-on activities from Roman Britain, including whittling wood to make a butter knife, creating pewter jewellery

and weaving wool into cloth. Everyone agreed it was a brilliant and memorable trip. Hands on Heritage said that they had never had "a more interested, curious, knowledgeable and well-mannered group" than the children from Dennington school, which we were very pleased to hear!

### Fressingfield Primary

#### **Pupils celebrate regional win at national Fonetti Summer Read-Aloud Challenge awards.**

Two pupils travelled to London to collect the East of England Regional Winners trophy at the national Fonetti Summer Read-Aloud Challenge awards ceremony, hosted at Amazon's UK headquarters. Finley and Oliver, were selected to represent their school after Fressingfield Primary was named regional winner for the East of England. They received the trophy on behalf of the school presented by Clare Balding, broadcaster, journalist and ambassador for the summer reading challenge. The achievement follows an outstanding summer of reading for pupils at the school. Eleven children from Fressingfield Primary finished in the top 100 readers across East Anglia, with many children reading more than 50 books and the winner – Finley – reading 114 books in total! The summer reading challenge encourages children to continue reading for pleasure during the school holidays, helping to support literacy, confidence and a lifelong love of books. The challenge takes place using the Fonetti Read-Aloud App, which listens as the children read, supporting with words as necessary. This year's results place Fressingfield Primary among the most engaged schools in the country.



### Great Whelnetham Primary

At Great Whelnetham, we are proud to have opened our new 'Zen Den' wellbeing room for both our school and the wider community. This calm and welcoming space offers children the opportunity to spend time individually, in pairs or small groups, providing vital support for pupils experiencing anxiety, emotional or mental health needs, or simply those who need a quiet moment away from the busy school day. The Zen Den has been made possible thanks to the generous support of our local community, including our PTFA and the Tesco

Sure Start scheme. This term, the space will also be used by the local community to host the *Hamish and Milo* Families Together programme, bringing families together each week to share experiences, support one another and strengthen wellbeing across our community.

### Hardwick Primary

A group of Year 5 girls from Hardwick Primary School recently enjoyed an inspiring visit to a local secondary school, where they took part in a STEM event designed to encourage girls to explore science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Throughout the day, the pupils worked collaboratively to tackle a range of practical challenges, drawing on their scientific thinking, technological skills and mathematical knowledge. The girls had a fantastic experience, building confidence, teamwork and enthusiasm for STEM subjects.



### Honington Primary

Year 5 have enthusiastically begun their Design Technology projects. They have enjoyed exploring a range of pillow designs, investigating different materials and aesthetic features. The children have been learning a variety of sewing techniques including running stitch, back stitch and blanket stitch, and have also had the opportunity to practise applique, attaching buttons and embroidery. The children are looking forward to designing and creating their own pillows.

### Ickworth Park Primary

The EYFS team have been pleased to invite parents and carers into school this term to share the fantastic progress Reception children are making in phonics. These sessions gave families the opportunity to see first-hand how phonics is taught and to celebrate the children's growing confidence in recognising sounds, blending and early reading skills. Alongside this, children in Reception have been very busy developing their writing skills. Through a wide range of engaging activities, children have been learning to form letters correctly, write simple words and sentences, and express their ideas with increasing confidence. This focus on early writing is helping the children to develop all the key skills they need to become confident, successful writers as they continue their learning journey.



### Occold Primary

Children at Occold Primary School have settled into the new term well. Fox Class have enjoyed reading Shackleton's Journey by William Grill in English. This book has inspired the children to create some wonderful books of their own to house their writing. The children have been writing in role as members of Shackleton's crew on his 1914 Endurance expedition. Their writing includes a job application, diary entry, poem, post card and short persuasive speech - each capturing important moments of the expedition brilliantly. Well done, Fox Class!



### Sextons Manor

Year 2 had a wonderful time visiting West Suffolk College for the skills escalator event. The children enjoyed 12 different sessions, learning all about different professions as well as healthy eating choices, emotional regulation and first aid. Year 3 are very much looking forward to their visit in January!



### St Peter and St Paul, Eye

Last week, our Year 5 class from St Peter and St Paul Primary School had the incredible opportunity to visit the UK Parliament. During their visit, they were privileged to sit in on a live debate in the House of Lords, gaining a first-hand insight into how decisions are made at the heart of our democracy. This memorable trip has truly inspired our young learners to develop their

debating skills and to champion causes that matter to them. We are proud of their curiosity, confidence, and commitment to making a difference.



### Stradbroke

Our primary school children got into the festive spirit by taking part in a wonderful Christmas Enterprise, where they designed and created their very own Christmas decorations to sell for charity. The event was brilliantly supported, with many parents attending and enjoying the creativity and enthusiasm on display. As a school, we are reflecting on the importance of compassion and solidarity with others as part of our Christian ethos, and this enterprise gave the children a

meaningful opportunity to put these values into action. Thanks to everyone's generosity and the children's hard work, we raised an impressive £204.65 for charity — a fantastic achievement and a lovely example of our school community coming together at Christmas. 🎄





### Thorndon

At Thorndon Primary each class has started their new topic. Holly Class are learning about the physical and human features of coastal regions across the United Kingdom. The topic for Oak class is Invasion. We are embarking on a thrilling journey back in time to explore the fascinating worlds of the Anglo Saxons and the Vikings. Willow class are learning about the characteristics and features of polar regions, including the North and South Poles. We also

held our second well-being session. This lovely session was run by our Mental Health Ambassadors and focused on the message that 'All feelings are normal and don't last forever'. We explored this theme by using paint to create abstract artwork that represented our emotions.

### Wortham

At Wortham, children marked World Religion Day by learning about the importance of understanding, respect, and acceptance of people from different faiths and beliefs. An assembly celebrated the diversity of religions across the world and emphasised the importance of compassion and mutual respect within our school community. Through a range of creative activities, pupils explored shared values such as peace, kindness, and harmony. Younger children created paper chains reflecting the school's values, while older pupils produced lotus flower origami to symbolise peace and unity. These activities encouraged thoughtful discussion and reflection, supporting our understanding of diversity and helping to foster a respectful and inclusive school environment.



### Trust News

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr Robert Rous, President of the Suffolk Agricultural Association this year for the 10<sup>th</sup> year of "Tractors into Schools". Many of our schools have really enjoyed these visits and the pupils enjoy hearing more about farming.



We are looking forward to welcoming Mrs Gemma Watts back from Maternity Leave before Easter and would like to thank Mr Bobby Varela for all his hard work as Acting Executive Headteacher at St Peter and St Paul, Eye Primary and Occold Primary. Mr Varela is not leaving the Trust as he will be taking up his new post as Head of School at Wortham Primary. We offer congratulations to Mrs Hayley Clarke, Headteacher of Hardwick Primary who is expecting a baby. Congratulations to Miss Nicky Tyler who will continue her role as Head of School at Great Whelnetham Primary after her successful application for the substantive position.

Well done to Mr Daniel Millican, the Head of School at Benhall Primary who has passed the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) and Mr Marc Gilbert, Executive Headteacher at Cockfield Primary and Great Whelnetham Primary who passed the National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership NPQEL. The Trust is very successful at growing leaders, and it is wonderful to retain our staff. As our teachers progress in their careers, we often see them gain leadership positions in other Trust schools. We are really proud to see so much professional development and our pupils benefit from this. Thanks, must also go to Dr Paul Parslow-Williams and Mrs Claire Flatman, our Trust's Directors of Education who have successfully run our Trust "Leadership Development" course this year.

We are very proud of staff, pupils, Governors and the whole school community at Thorndon who recently had an Ofsted inspection. We are looking forward to sharing the report with you. Well done Thorndon Primary!



# **Newsletter**

## **Spring Term 2026**