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## Marking a milestone Christmas

This term has been filled with moments of joy and togetherness. Most recently, I've had the privilege of attending several wonderful school nativities and, earlier in October, I joined a very special service at Derby Cathedral. For the first time since the Trust was founded, pupils and staff from all 33 of our schools gathered in worship - a truly inspiring occasion.

These experiences have been a powerful reminder of what lies at the heart of our Trust: creating vibrant learning communities where children and adults flourish academically, emotionally and spiritually.

As we reach the end of this busy and joy-filled autumn term, it feels like the perfect time to reflect on the extraordinary efforts and achievements across all our schools. Looking ahead to a well-earned Christmas break, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to all our staff, families, governance and parents and carers for everything you do.

Wishing you a peaceful, hope-filled Christmas.



**by Dr Sarah Clark, CEO**



## DCS celebrates women in STEM



A group of Year 9 girls from **Derby Cathedral School** took part in a powerful celebration of Ada Lovelace Day – a national event recognising the achievements of women in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM).

Throughout the day, students took part in a range of hands-on experiments and workshops, including cancer testing, 4D medicine, computer science and 3D printing.

They met inspiring female scientists from diverse backgrounds and learned more about the many ways women are shaping the future of STEM.

The girls described the experience as “memorable,” “inspiring,” and “exciting,” and they represented Derby Cathedral School – and DDAT – with maturity, curiosity and pride.

Events like this play an important role in broadening horizons, challenging stereotypes and encouraging more young women to see themselves as the scientists, engineers and innovators of tomorrow.

## Showing racism the red card

This term, many of our schools proudly wore red in support of ‘Show Racism the Red Card’.

Across the Trust, children took part in thoughtful classroom activities exploring respect, inclusion and the importance of standing up against discrimination.

Here's children at **Newbold CofE Primary School** showing their efforts!



# Dad shows his sweet side by stepping out for school



A Derbyshire dad who spends his days keeping people safe on the railways is now helping protect children on the roads too – after becoming his village's new lollipop man.

Pete Kelly already works in a safety-critical role on the railways but has now taken on a second job ensuring pupils can cross the road safely outside **Turnditch CE Primary School**.

The caring dad, whose five-year-old son Finley attends the school, stepped forward to help when the village had been without a school crossing patrol for three years following the retirement of its long-serving lollipop lady who was also a dinner lady and governor.

Hard-working Pete, 46, who lives locally, confessed he would have happily taken on the job as a volunteer but there is a necessity for the role to be paid as it involves children and road safety.

“My wife couldn’t believe I’d gone for it!” he said. “I thought it would be a cool thing to do. I think the job speaks for itself – it’s important and everyone just feels a little bit safer.”

Head of School Roxanne Bunn said she was delighted that Pete had taken on the role. She said: “We’re really pleased. We have had a lollipop lady in situ for 33 years. It is a busy road. Pete had seen us there in the morning and really wanted to help. We are over the moon!”





# Christian vision and inclusive support praised by SIAMS inspectors

**Long Lane Church of England Primary School** has been praised for creating a caring and inclusive environment where every child feels safe, supported and encouraged to thrive.

The school has been recognised for its strong Christian vision, which underpins daily school life and inspires pupils and staff alike.

SIAMS inspectors described the school as “deeply welcoming and nurturing, where pupils feel safe, valued and loved.” Leaders were commended for embedding Christian teachings into all areas of school life, with governors ensuring that the school’s vision remains at the heart of decision-making.

Headteacher Teresa Boley said: “We are proud to be a school where every child is known and cared for.

“Our Christian vision shapes everything we do – from our curriculum to the way we support each other as a school community.

“This recognition reflects the dedication of our staff and the way our values guide everything we do. We are delighted it has been acknowledged and will continue to build on these strong foundations.”

The report highlighted the school’s ‘values hero’ initiative, where pupils nominate each other for acts of kindness, compassion and courage, showing how Christian values are lived out in daily school life. Pupils were also praised for their respectful relationships with one another, with older children showing care and responsibility towards younger peers at break and lunchtime.



Collective worship was described as “joyful and reflective”, with pupils playing an active role in planning and leading services. Strong links with the local church were also celebrated, enriching the spiritual life of the school and giving pupils opportunities to experience different worship traditions.

Staff were recognised for knowing each child as an individual and providing bespoke programmes that help them overcome barriers to learning.

## Griffe Field pupils spread Christmas kindness



Pupils at **Griffe Field Primary School** have been busy putting their values into action this term through a thoughtful act of kindness led by the School Council.

Keen to support children beyond their own community, pupils organised a shoebox appeal for children in Eastern Europe. With the generous support of families and staff, they were able to put together 22 shoeboxes, each filled with small toys, toiletries, stationery and treats for children to enjoy.

The boxes will be transported by the charity T4U and delivered to different countries in time for Christmas, helping to bring a little joy and remind children that they are cared for.

This initiative is a wonderful example of Griffe Field’s compassionate ethos and the way DDAT pupils live out their values in practical, meaningful ways.

Well done and thank you to the Griffe Field School Council, pupils, families and staff for their generosity and kindness.



## Inspiring visit to Kedleston Hall



Pupils from **Hardwick Primary School** were recently given the opportunity to step back in time during an educational visit to Kedleston Hall.

A particular highlight was the search for secret doors and hidden passageways, which sparked plenty of excitement and curiosity. Throughout the visit, pupils also made thoughtful links to their learning in science and geography, identifying different types of stone – including limestone and marble – used in the building's construction.

The visit provided a rich, hands-on learning experience.

## Pupils engage with local MP



Children at **St Laurence Primary School** recently welcomed local MP Adam Thompson into school as part of their work around UK Parliament Week.

Mr Thompson visited classes across the school to hear about the pupils' learning on democracy, Parliament and how laws are made.

He then met with the School Council to discuss the projects they are currently working on and to listen to the issues that matter most to them.

The children found the visit both useful and inspiring, and it proved to be a great way to engage with politics in a real and meaningful way.

This is the second time Mr Thompson has visited St Laurence and the school hopes to arrange further visits in future to stay closely connected to local issues.

## William Gilbert goes green with community support



Pupils, parents and staff at **William Gilbert School** have joined forces to transform their school grounds into greener, more vibrant spaces for everyone to enjoy.

Pupils at the school were each challenged to raise £20.25 for the year 2025, with all proceeds going towards outdoor improvements and green projects across the site.

Local landscaping group Down to Earth helped bring the vision to life by transforming the playground. New planters, benches and raised structures were installed, creating calm and colourful spaces where children can relax, read and spend time outdoors.

Each class has been tasked with tending to two planters, choosing seasonal flowers and vegetables to grow, learning valuable lessons about nature, sustainability and responsibility along the way.

The £20.25 for 2025 campaign proved a huge success, raising almost £5,000 and bringing the whole school community together. Replacing the traditional summer fayre, pupils used their “happy hour” – an hour at the end of the school day on a Friday – to sell baked cakes, organise sponsored events and run their own stalls featuring obstacle courses, penalty shoot-outs and arts and crafts.

## St Giles' pupils spread Christmas cheer



Pupils from **St Giles' Church of England School**, in Matlock, took part in a very special act of kindness, delivering “cheer packs” to homes across the community.

Accompanied by staff, the children walked around the neighbourhood singing Christmas songs and posting the cheer packs through residents' doors, bringing festive cheer to everyone they visited.

Many residents waved from their windows and thanked the children for their thoughtfulness, and one neighbour even rang the school to say, “This has really made me feel so warm and fuzzy inside.”



Well done all!





## Little reindeers dash about in memory of Mrs Unsworth

Pupils at **St Laurence Primary School** took part in a festive Reindeer Dash, completing laps of the playground in their Christmas headwear to raise money for Treetops Hospice.

Treetops recently supported a much-loved former teaching assistant, Sue Unsworth, when she was diagnosed with cancer. Sadly, Mrs Unsworth passed away last month. Although she left

the school five years ago, she is fondly remembered by many staff and families, having worked at the school for 20 years, particularly supporting children with SEND.

The Reindeer Dash was a joyful and active way for the school community to come together, honour Mrs Unsworth's memory and give something back to the hospice that cared for her.

## School councillors spread joy by posting handcrafted cards

School councillors at **St Chad's CofE Nursery and Infant School** thoroughly enjoyed attending the DDAT 10th anniversary service at Derby Cathedral and were keen to show their appreciation to everyone involved.

Each councillor selected a person they wished to thank, then carefully designed and created a special thank-you card just for them.

With the support of a parent helper, the councillors visited the post office to post their cards, hoping to spread a little kindness and brighten someone's day.

The school wanted to say a special thank you to Paula Martin for sending a lovely photo of her holding her card – the sender was thrilled to know they had made her smile!



## Pupils celebrate healthy living with Rammie



There were cheers all round at **William Gilbert School** when pupils got the chance to meet a footballing icon after completing a six-week programme exploring the joy of movement and healthy choices.

Year five pupils took part in the Joy of Moving programme, run by Derby County Community Trust, which concluded with a special visit from Derby County's mascot, Rammie.



## Arboretum pupils show East Midlands Mayor around the area

This term, pupils from **Arboretum Primary School** were proud to host a community event on behalf of Clare Ward, Mayor of the East Midlands.

The Mayor visited the local area to engage with residents and students from the Arboretum and Normanton wards. Together, they discussed the forthcoming development grant and shared ideas on how it could be used to improve facilities and create new opportunities within the community.

Our school councillors welcomed Mayor Ward at Arboretum Park and escorted her to Arboretum Primary School, where the community conversation session was held. The Mayor praised our children for their excellent manners, thoughtful reflections on the area and insightful suggestions for future improvements.



# Sweet treat for pupils thanks to new head

Children at **Derby Cathedral School**, which has been named one of the top schools nationally for attendance, were treated to free ice creams at the end of half term.

New head teacher Andrew Brown, introduced the reward to recognise students who “do the right thing every day” and consistently meet the school’s high expectations.

The school has been recognised by the Fischer Family Trust (FFT) as being in the top 10 per cent for attendance among similar schools nationally, taking into account factors such as catchment area and context.

Overall, Derby Cathedral School sits within the top quarter of all UK schools for attendance, based on FFT’s analysis of thousands of schools.

To celebrate this achievement and encourage continued excellence, the school has so far welcomed two ice cream vans onto site.

More than 500 Mr Whippys



were enjoyed by students who, over the course of a month, achieved:

- 95%+ attendance and
- an exemplary behaviour record, with no negative points.

Mr Brown, said: “Sometimes in schools the focus is on pupils who aren’t doing the right thing. Students who are doing the right thing every day can get forgotten.

“Some children need more support and that’s fine, but we

also want to recognise those who meet our expectations day in, day out.

“We want to drive up standards and expectations in our school, instilling our values of rigour and joy so that everyone can flourish.

“There’s a joyful element to having an ice cream. The atmosphere while we were handing them out was buzzing – it was a simple thing to do, but we hope it sends a really

positive message.”

Looking ahead to the end of this term, Mr Brown promised a new treat: pupils who again demonstrate excellent attendance and behaviour over a month will be rewarded with a pre-Christmas hot chocolate, complete with whipped cream and marshmallows – another small but meaningful way of celebrating commitment, character and community at Derby Cathedral School.

## Young writers shine at Trust-wide showcase

Derby Cathedral School hosted “It’s a Celebration!” – a Trust-wide writing competition and showcase bringing together winners from across DDAT’s schools, representing more than 7,500 pupils.

We were especially delighted to be joined by author Kat Quarmby – not only a celebrated writer, but also a teacher at Bishop Lonsdale Church of England Primary School, the very first school to join DDAT 11 years ago.

Kat’s presence brought both inspiration and authenticity to the event, and we were thrilled to share the day with her.

Looking ahead, we hope the competition will become an annual fixture – a celebration of creativity and the remarkable achievements of our young people.



## Students sparkle in Christmas Celebration



The **Derby Cathedral School** Christmas Festive-al was absolutely bursting with talent, teamwork and seasonal cheer!

Students across the year groups came together to produce an effortless performance, after weeks of rehearsals, crafting and finessing their musical talents.

The end result was a room full of pride, joy and the kind of energy that makes this time of year so special. We are incredibly proud of everyone involved – what a wonderful way to begin the festive season at DCS!



# St Laurence pupils stand in reflection on Remembrance Day

Pupils from Key Stage 2 at **St Laurence Church of England Primary School** joined the community at the town centre memorial to mark Remembrance Day.

The service was led by Father Max Marsh in partnership with the Royal British Legion, bringing together pupils, staff and local residents in an act of reflection and respect for all those who have served and sacrificed in conflicts past and present.

The children listened quietly, took part with great maturity and showed real understanding of the importance of remembering others. We are incredibly proud of the way they represented their school and DDAT at this special community event.



## Stanley Common's transformation makes the news

We are incredibly proud to see **Stanley Common C of E Primary School** featured in the Derbyshire Times for its inspiring journey of transformation.

Just two years ago, Stanley Common faced significant challenges. Today, the school is thriving — with a renewed culture, vibrant learning environment and a strong sense of belonging.

It demonstrates the power of collaboration across our Trust — with expertise, resources and shared purpose driving improvement.

Stanley Common's journey is a shining example of what can happen when trust, hope and teamwork come together.

## School radio stars are walking on airwaves

Budding radio stars from **Sale & Davys CE Primary School** in Barrow-upon-Trent have won a top £1,000 prize by tuning into their broadcasting skills.

Pupils at the school were crowned winners of the Millitec Media Starz competition run in conjunction with Erewash Sound.

Year five pupils from the school won the top £1,000 prize after entering the competition which called on key stage two pupils in Erewash and surrounding areas to produce a 10-minute radio show.

They were pronounced winners live on air after impressing judges with their funny show talking about their favourite sandwiches!

Richard Ledger, managing director of Draycott-based food technology company Millitec Food Systems — which founded and sponsored the competition — joined Erewash Sound co-founder Jeff Martin in visiting the school to present the £1,000 prize.

Sale & Davys Primary School created their show in the classroom and also benefited from Erewash Sound's innovative 'Studio in a Box' outreach project.

Radio show representatives have been travelling round schools with a complete studio packed up in a box, allowing young people to experiment with the magic of radio broadcasting.

School head teacher Sarah Briggs said: "We were absolutely delighted to win this brilliant £1,000 prize.

"They had a brilliant time putting together the show, allowing them to explore different skills from those they perhaps otherwise would — including getting their timing right and speaking nice and clearly!"





# School steps back in time for 150<sup>th</sup> birthday party



**All Saints' CE Federation School** celebrated its 150th birthday with a special themed day for pupils, staff and the local community – complete with 19<sup>th</sup> Century lessons, traditional games and even a time capsule.

The children swapped modern whiteboards for chalkboards, while teachers wore Victorian-inspired outfits and pupils donned caps, waistcoats, pinafores and bonnets.

The day began with the ringing of the school bell and a special collective worship led by Reverend Delafield from All Saints' Church, followed by a performance from the school choir.

At lunchtime, families and pupils enjoyed a communal picnic in the school grounds while a live brass band played, adding to the tradition theme. In the afternoon, Mayor of Matlock Councillor Marilyn Franks helped children bury a time capsule – a lasting reminder of the school's 150th year for future generations.

To round off the festivities, children took part in Victorian-style sports activities outdoors – proof that some school traditions never go out of date.

Head of school Cath Lee said: "The event was a fitting tribute to 150 years of education, community and Christian ethos at our school – a day rich in tradition, community spirit and historical fun that pupils and staff will remember for years to come."



## Children go on a Viking Adventure

Children from **Turnditch CofE Primary School** enjoyed a fantastic enrichment trip to DIG and the Jorvik Viking Centre, bringing their classroom learning to life.

Pupils were fully immersed in Viking history as they travelled back in time on the Jorvik ride, exploring what everyday life would have been like during the Viking era.

They also took part in an engaging workshop on Anglo-Saxon medicine, listened to an insightful talk on coin crafting and completed their very own archaeological dig.

The visit continued with stops at Clifford's Tower and The Shambles, making it a long but rewarding day, packed with fun, curiosity and rich learning experiences. The children were able to consolidate their understanding of the Vikings and human history in a truly hands-on, memorable way.

Most importantly, they represented Turnditch CofE Primary School and Derby Diocesan Academy Trust (DDAT) brilliantly and were commended for their excellent behaviour throughout. We are incredibly proud of them.





## Pupils lighting up Bolsover



Pupils from **Bolsover Church of England Junior School** lit up the community as they proudly took part in this year's local lantern parade.

The event, a much-loved tradition in the town, brought families, schools and community groups together for an evening of light, creativity and celebration.

Taking part in the lantern parade allowed pupils to feel part of something bigger—celebrating community, creativity and togetherness.



## Donations to food bank

The Harvest Festival at **Christ Church C of E Primary School** brought the whole community together in a celebration of generosity and gratitude. Families, pupils and staff contributed an impressive collection of donations, resulting in 25 bulging carrier bags filled with essential food items.

These much-needed supplies were delivered to the Foodbank at Loundsley Green, where they will make a meaningful difference.



## Firs Primary School strikes Gold for inspiring Future Careers

**Firs Primary School** is celebrating after picking up a Gold Award in the Primary Futures Recognition Scheme, part of the Inspiring the Future programme.

The scheme celebrates schools that connect pupils with real role models from a wide range of jobs and backgrounds – helping them see how what they learn in the classroom links to exciting futures beyond school.

Achieving Gold is the highest level, showing that career-related learning is embedded throughout the curriculum and celebrated across the whole school community.

This achievement is a proud moment not just for the school, but for the families and local community around Raven Street who support Firs pupils every day. The school is known for its inclusive ethos and diverse community with children speaking 49 different languages and born in 46 countries.

## Little Stars Shine in Griffie Field's Wiggly Nativity

Children at Griffie Field Primary School well and truly put everyone in the Christmas spirit with their wonderful performance of A Wiggly Nativity.

The 60 four and five-year-olds took to the stage with such confidence and enthusiasm – especially considering they have only been in school for a few months.

Huge congratulations to all the staff for their hard work and dedication in bringing the production to life.





## Griffe Field retains its place among the East Midlands' best



We are delighted to share the news that **Griffe Field Primary School** has once again been named among the top 10 schools in the East Midlands.

The school has been ranked seventh in the Sunday Times Parent Power Guide 2026 – a prestigious publication widely regarded as the definitive guide to the UK's best primary, secondary and independent schools.

Griffe Field continues to set the benchmark for excellence and inclusion, and we look forward to seeing many more successes in the years ahead.

## Newbold pupils plant for the future in local neighbourhood



As part of National Tree Week, **Newbold Church of England Primary School and Nursery** pupils worked with the Friends of Stand Road Park to plant trees in the local area.

Children in Year 4 and Year 6 planted a variety of fruit trees and specimen trees to help boost biodiversity and create new habitats for wildlife.

Congratulations for helping make your neighbourhood greener and healthier places to live.

# Historic moment as DDAT schools unite at Derby Cathedral



Representatives from all 33 schools belonging to the Derby Diocesan Academy Trust (DDAT) gathered for the special service at Derby Cathedral, marking 11 years of growth, collaboration and shared successes.

The historic occasion saw the Cathedral filled with music as pupils from the Trust's Music in Schools programme performed a series of moving pieces, showcasing the confidence and talent nurtured in DDAT's schools.

One of the most poignant moments came when the Bishop of Repton, the Rt Revd Malcolm Macnaughton, blessed a handmade quilt created from fabric squares designed by each of the 33 schools.

The colourful patchwork, symbolising the unity and diversity of the DDAT family, will now embark on a special pilgrimage around all the Trust's schools.

DDAT Chief Executive Officer Sarah Clark said it was an unforgettable day for everyone involved.

She said: "To see representatives of all 33 of our schools gathered together in one place was truly inspiring. This service was about more than marking 11 years – it was about celebrating our shared purpose and the strength of our community across Derbyshire. Every school, from the High Peak to Derby City, plays a vital role in the DDAT community and it was wonderful to see that spirit come to life inside the Cathedral.

"The quilt is a beautiful reminder of what we can achieve when we come together. Each piece represents the heart of a school community and stitched together it tells the story of our Trust – one built on faith, hope and collaboration."

The service was led by The Dean of Derby Peter Robinson alongside The Bishop of Repton, with support from trustees Susan Whyld and Robert Atkins.

Mrs Clark added: "I want to thank every staff member, parent and governor who helped make this celebration such a success. This was a day none of us will forget."