

Our Community Matters

February 2024
Issue Eighteen



The latest news, views, and announcements for the
Community Academies Trust



#catschools/#schoolscat

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Do you feel like half-term flew by in the blink of an eye? January and February can be particularly gloomy months, but don't let that bring you down! Remember that our Trust is here to assist you through its Health Assured subscription. Download the app (details in this issue of OCM) for instant help and support right at your fingertips.

Additionally, we often forget to care for ourselves while looking out for the young people in our schools. To promote mindfulness, we have curated a list of websites and organizations that offer support should you need them.

In other news, meet Lois, one of the newest additions to our team, responsible for managing our Trust funds. Although she may be new to some, to others, she is already a familiar figure.

Despite the short half-term, there has still been plenty happening in our schools. We're excited to showcase the artwork from Chadsmead Primary Academy's Early Years class. The pieces created by the youngest members of our trust are truly mini masterpieces.

We hope you enjoy this issue! Don't forget to join in the cross-trust competitions being launched in the next couple of weeks, and I look forward to catching up with you after Easter.

Michelle, Editor
Our Community Matters





Message from Philip Hamilton OBE, CEO



This edition of OCM and the others that have preceded showcase the numerous achievements across our trust in the classrooms and in our communities. Those achievements are of course only made possible by your inclination to go that extra mile and to constantly strive for excellence. The levels of professional diligence in our schools and in our support teams really does leave me in awe.

This half term I also want to pay tribute to the 100s of volunteers who work with us across the trust. There are volunteers who work directly with children often supporting extracurricular study. There are volunteers who support our administrative work and there are 100s of volunteers who govern our schools.

The role of governor is a significant, important and highly valued role in our trust. Our fundamental belief in community education is at the heart of our choice to involve local people in the leadership of our schools. Governors bring a wealth of knowledge and experiences from different education environments but also crucially the world outside education. They include parents of children in our schools and members of our staff.

This voluntary role has significant responsibility delegated to it by the trustees. The role is best summed up as "guardian of standards". Our local governing teams in each school are known as School Standards Committees (SSCs) and they focus on challenging and supporting our headteachers around current standards and plans for the future. This is demanding enough, however many governors also go that extra mile, serving on ad hoc committees (pupil disciplinary, complaints and staff related hearings), making school visits and immersing themselves in the life of the school - often alongside demanding day jobs. This is truly awe inspiring and all our governors can say with pride that they make a real difference and change the lives of children for the better.

My thanks to the governors and to all those who give up their time for free in the interests of the young people in our care.

Best wishes for the term ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Philip". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Philip Hamilton OBE, CEO

Ensuring Excellence

Snapshots of what our schools have been up to this half term.

Stoneydelph Primary School, campaign trail feature

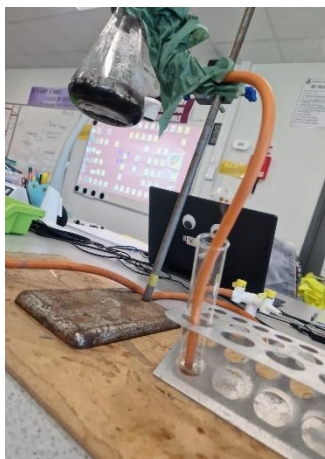


As election fever starts to build around the country, politicians are hitting the campaign trail. Anywhere there is a hand to shake, a picture to take, there you will find an eager politician, extending his hand of friendship to anyone, anywhere there's a photo opportunity.

Eddie Hughes, looking to stand as candidate for Tamworth and surrounding villages, spent the day at Stoneydelph Primary School to meet Headteacher Esther Parsons. Whilst he was there, following on from their great OFSTED outcome, he commented on the wide range of sports and enrichment activities the school provides for its pupils, from archery to athletics, and forest school to football. But sports

notwithstanding, he was also impressed with the school's focus on improving their results and noted how standards had risen across all subjects.

Having spent an enjoyable day at the school, Mr Hughes commented on how fantastic the staff at Stoneydelph Primary School were, and how it was a real asset to the area. He said he looked forward to visiting the school again soon.



Polesworth Y7 become alchemists.

Whilst Y7 Pupils from The Polesworth School have not quite yet learned the art of turning lead into gold, they have started small with turning ink into water!

Mrs Broome's Year 7 Chemistry class (7N) have been learning all about separating different mixtures and one of the techniques which includes this is distillation. **On Thursday 18th January** 7N successfully completed the distillation of ink by obtaining pure water from inky water.

Budbrooke Primary's Chestnut Class have had a busy week...

You don't have to wait to have important visitors, achieve great feats of sportsmanship on the field of dreams, nor do you have to have won national competitions to share what's going on in your school. Sometimes, just getting on with learning brings great stories too. If you have any updates on what your classes are up to, it's great to read them. Send them to communications@catschools.uk.

Budbrooke Primary School featured in its facebook pages the learning week for Chestnut Class who started off their new and exciting Misty Mountain Winding River Topic. In Geography they learned about the different features of a river, such as deltas, floodplains, meanders, oxbow lake and waterfalls and how they were created. They also made 3D models to show the features occurring in the upper, middle and lower course of the rivers. Researching major rivers around the world, Chestnut class also created information posters to showcase their knowledge of erosion, transportation, and deposition.



In English, Chestnut have been writing a story from a familiar setting linked to The Iron Man by Ted Hughes, looking at a variety of settings and using expanded noun phrases, similes and metaphors to write a creative description to hook the reader.

Another new topic was explored in science, where States of Matter will be investigated, looking at solids, liquids and gases. The class have learned about particle theory and what happens to particles when they are in these various states. As an experiment, the class melted chocolate to show how heating and cooling changes state. *(Personally, my favourite experiment with chocolate is seeing how long it takes to melt in my mouth....)*

Chadsmead Primary Academy's Early Years reach for the stars!

The children from Chadsmead's Early Years have been looking at "Starry Night" as their focus of the week. They've looked at routines around night time, but what has really captured their imaginations are the planets and the solar system, so, using balloons, they printed pictures of each planet to create their own pictures of the solar system and labelled them afterwards, recalling facts that they had learned about each planet.

Also, linked to the topic, the children enjoyed talking about Vincent Van Gogh's famous "Starry Night" picture. The children discussed the different painting techniques, and then had a go at painting for themselves. I think you'll agree the results were amazing! You can see how the children really took on board the techniques and were able to try them out for themselves.



The Polesworth School Snippets



Year 10 Fine Art students at The Polesworth School had their first exhibition on Friday 22nd December 2023 which displayed their work from their Noughts and Crosses project. Our Headteacher, Mrs Favell came to open the exhibition for the second year running and she was struck by the quality and diverse outcomes of the abstract art on display. The work was the culmination of months of preparatory work by our students focusing on being inquisitive, imaginative, collaborative, persistent and disciplined young artists.

Well done to the Year 9 Girls 'Fits a Knockout Team'

who competed at the County Finals on Wednesday 31st January which took place at the Combat Sports Centre in Solihull. They competed in a number of different fitness challenges and put up a fantastic fight to finish 4th place overall. Well done girls!



Mrs Asbury, School Counsellor and Well-being Coordinator at The Polesworth School held two bereavement groups in December at break and tutor times for any students that wished to attend. Many of the students decorated Christmas tree baubles and wooden shaped decorations in memory of someone they had lost. There were some truly wonderful decorations created at this group which students were able to keep and

take home.

If you do feel that you are struggling, please do not suffer alone. There are various charities that are on hand to help you:

MIND

offers information and advice to people with mental health problems and lobbies government and local authorities on their behalf.

NHS

Information about health problems and treatments, including details of local NHS services in England.

National Suicide Prevention Helpline

UK

a compassionate and understanding lifeline for those grappling with their mental well-being or thoughts of suicide.

Shout

If you would prefer not to talk but want some mental health support, you could text **SHOUT** to **85258**. Shout offers a confidential 24/7 text service providing support if you are in crisis and need immediate help.

Introducing....

Lois Gordon, Executive Director (Finance and Operations) joined our trust at the end of the summer term. and brings with her experience and plenty of fresh ideas.

I've just completed my first 6 months with the Trust as Executive Director of Finance & Operations, and I can honestly say it has been a wonderful experience and full on! I

have had the privilege of meeting our Headteachers and visited most schools to see the pride in the staff and pupils for their many achievements. Thank you to everyone for your welcome.

I am a Chartered Certified Accountant, Member of the Association of Project Management and have delivered Major Programme, procurement, and contract management consultancy to the Cabinet Office. I have spent all of my career in public service and latterly in corporate services for the education sector.

After 30 years in central government departments, HMRC and DEFRA back-office functions, I am used to big budgets and teams where the public customers are remote, and resources are available. But for me there is a greater personal reward in seeing the direct impact of service to children and communities from overseeing budgets that deliver best value for money to investing in staff and safe working environments.

I have had the pleasure of getting to know my Central Services Team, Executives, Trustees and Governors. There is a real sense of family and a great culture as many of our staff and their own family members have invested a significant part of their working lives to the Trust. I feel working relationships are very friendly, full of humour and supportive.

I am grateful to our Finance and Schools Business Support Teams for all their hard work in delivering a very solid financial outcome last year that provides a healthy reserves position. They have embraced necessary changes to our financial management systems and are keen to work with partners in schools to optimise those changes.

As always, funding is tight in the current and forecast years, and I would congratulate schools for their careful management to date in the current UK economic climate. I am truly impressed by Headteachers and their Office staff engagement with the early planning stages of this year's 3-year capital investment planning and budgeting cycle. Our Estates and HR Teams are working hard to support schools with investment and resource plans aligned to our ambitions for educational excellence.

My husband and I celebrated our 30th wedding anniversary last year and our twin girls are 22 years old (where does the time go?), they recently graduated and have made a great start in their chosen careers which is a big relief although the empty nest syndrome is sometimes difficult. When I feel the pride in my daughters' achievements, I am conscious of the privileges they have had with pushy middle-aged parents (husband not me!) who were able to secure private SEN support and manage a taxi service to events. I recognise this is not an option for many of our families and feel my duty is to help our schools level the playing field for our under privileged children.

On a few occasions colleagues I have met in schools tell me they took part in my interview process online and I always thank them, and I am now minded revisiting what I said I would do just in case anyone was taking notes! I mentioned collaboration a lot and I am truly passionate that this can bring good things if only a problem shared. I also talked about investing in staff training and development so with both of those in mind I am looking forward to working with the IoE and non-teaching staff Networks to design a conference that delivers both to all our support staff soon.

Take care and best wishes,
Lois!



Education Matters



If you haven't downloaded our App onto your phone yet, you can do so directly by accessing the OCMJ on the web here: <https://www.theocmjjournal.com/> As usual control and click on the pictures below to access the full story. If you would like to submit an article, we would love to hear from you. Email: communications@catschools.uk

Health Assured - My Healthy Advantage App

Health Assured can offer support via their app 'My Healthy Advantage' which is available via apple store and google play. **The organisation code required to register with the app is MHA095437.**

You can personalise the daily article feed, track mental and physical health, create 4-week plans, access to health podcasts, financial wellbeing, alcohol and support guidance, marriage, civil partnership and divorce, grief and bereavement, legal information, and housing concerns - you can access this as podcasts, videos, articles etc.

The 4 week plans available via the app are themed to support with:

- Better sleep
- Healthy eating
- Quit Smoking
- Cope with change better
- Cope with pressure
- Pacing life
- Reducing caffeine
- Hydration
- Improving energy

There are many more resources available via the app so please have a look.

If you need to speak or chat to a trained counsellor, you can access this directly through the app too.

CAT Institute of Education Matters



A spotlight on the trust's Centre for Teacher Training, Professional Development and school improvement by Alexis Rickus, Director of Institute of Education

As the new year progresses, now is a great time to consider undertaking professional development. The IoE offers a range of courses, from Apprenticeships to NPQs. If you receive our Trust's Technical Update, you may have read about an upcoming series of free webinars presented by Capita ENTRUST on behalf of the DfE. These webinars, designed for school leaders and business professionals, cover topics such as curriculum planning, financial management, workforce development, procurement, digital integration, estate management, and more. They are available only to those connected to school resource management, and the free offer ends in March. To register, please click on the following [Link](#).

We would like to thank those who participated in Mike Glazebrook's Team Teach session at Heathcote last term. TeamTeach 2 is scheduled for this term at Budbrooke; please note that you must have completed TeamTeach 1 to attend this nationally recognized, certificated program. The flyer contains information about the course, and bookings can be made through ioe@catschools.uk.

Last month the IoE hosted "Supporting Struggling Readers at KS2/3". The day was spent at Dordon Primary School and was attended by a number of teaching assistants. Rhianna from Birchwood Primary commented **"... I was lucky enough to be released alongside six of our Teaching Assistants to attend Emma Spiers training course focusing on Struggling and Reluctant Readers in KS2 and KS3. It was a fabulous day providing a range of practical and fun ideas to further support our approach across school. Emma's wealth of knowledge and her obvious passion made the day thoroughly enjoyable while developing our own CPD around an area that can be quite challenging as well as networking with other schools and colleagues. We very much look forward to rolling out the new strategies within our KS2 classrooms and seeing the benefits they bring to our young children and their enthusiasm for reading"**.

It's great to hear such positive feedback about the CPD opportunities we offer, and we look forward to providing more in due course.

Alexis Rickus
Director, CAT Institute of Education

TEAM TEACH BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT TRAINING LEVEL 2

Level 2 is a two day event and builds on the skills in level 1 and provides an understanding of the causes of challenging behaviour along with respectful, supportive and practical strategies for de-escalation and crisis intervention. You need to have completed Level 1 to be eligible for Level 2

- Learn how to understand the drivers and motivations displayed by individuals who are distressed and may become aggressive and disruptive.
- Execute simple and safe positive handling and personal safety techniques, including escorting, guiding and holding in standing, sitting and kneeling positions safely, which focus on maximum care-minimum force.
- Understand and know relevant legal standards and expectations related to the use of force, and of the reporting, recording, monitoring and evaluating requirements of incidents involving physical control and reasonable force.

Who should attend

- A teacher or TA in a challenging setting where children's behaviour might foreseeably challenge or pose a risk to themselves or to others
- A colleague who would benefit from learning de-escalation techniques
- An ECT who would benefit from additional positive behaviour management techniques

Delivered by Behaviour Consultant, Mike Glazebrook
Monday and Tuesday
11 and 12 March 2024
9.00-3.00pm
Budbrooke Primary School

Register Now!
ioe@catschools.uk

Certification for this course, upon successful completion, lasts for 24 months and will be sent to you by Team Teach once you have completed and returned your evaluation

www.thecat institute.org



Network and Expert Group News

Joining Link for the next Expert Groups Meeting on Wednesday 6 March 2024 at 3.40pm is [here](#). Please register, then join your session.

Network Groups Update by Neil Coleman

Our third meeting of this academic year saw 113 colleagues join one of 14 Network Meetings that took place on 17th January. It is really positive to see that the number of attendees for each network is stable and that staff are valuing the opportunity to network and share good practice. This consistency is really helpful to the Network Chairs, and they have asked me to pass on their thanks for the continued contributions and support and to Heads for prioritising these meetings and facilitating staff to be able to attend regularly.

The majority of discussions in the meetings were around contributions towards the IoE playbook in support of the Teaching and Learning Toolkit. This will continue to be a focus of the Spring 2 meetings and the IoE are hoping to be able to launch the first version of the playbook after Easter. This will remain a working playbook and will be constantly updated and amended with new resources and up to date policy and procedures.

The Network groups are supporting the development of 4 key areas listed below. If any colleagues who have not been able to attend recent meetings have any contributions that they would like to share in subject specific areas, please email these to Michelle Borders mborders@catschools.uk for consideration.

1a vi Have knowledge of resources.

1a vi Plan to use retrieval practice to link and embed prior learning into long-term memory.

1a i Have secure subject knowledge.

1a iv Have knowledge of misconceptions.

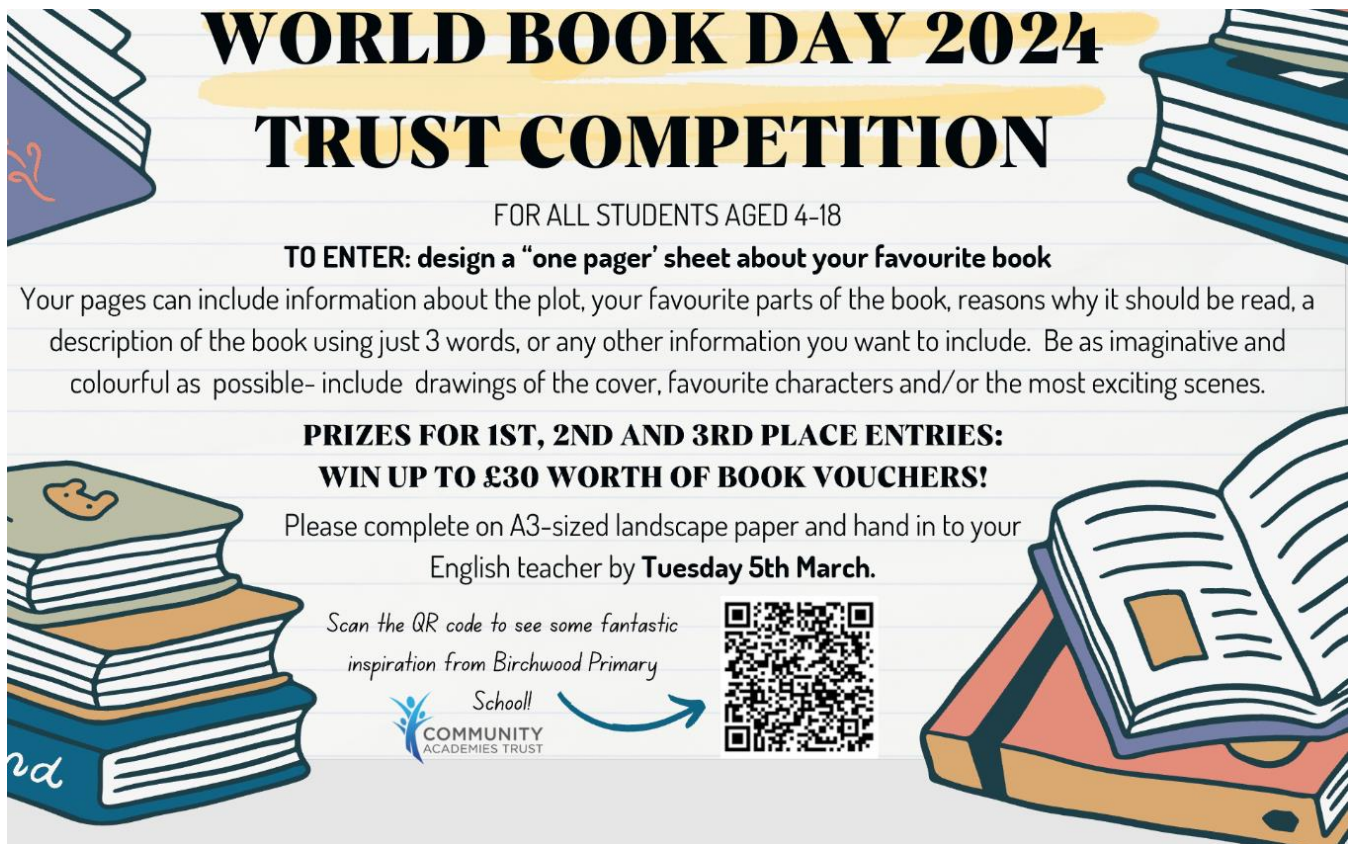
Guest speaker Craig Barton joined the first joint Maths group meeting. Craig delivered a really useful session on supporting memory and retrieval practice in Maths. The feedback from the session was very positive and I am aware that lots of colleagues have planned to share key messages back in their own schools. Other guest speakers are already in the process of being booked into further network groups before the end of the academic year.

Plans are also being put in place to offer a range of workshops for colleagues to opt in to attend as part of our Trust Day on Friday 21st June. A few workshops have already been confirmed, but further information of the full offer will be available soon.

A new feature of the Network groups is pupil engagement and enrichment. Lots of useful discussions have already taken place across the networks and there are plans for opportunities for children to take part in subject specific activities. Details for Trust wide competitions to support 'World Book Day' are in this issue of the OCM as are details of The Science network's 'Big CAT Science Quiz'. Looking ahead, the D.T network are planning to hold a 'Student Bake Off' at The Polesworth School in June and the Music network are trying to arrange hub music events involving cluster schools for the summer term. Further information about these events will be shared as soon as it is available.

The next round of meetings are set to take place on Wednesday 6th March 2024. The link for the meetings is available in the link at the top of this page and on the IoE website. As this is a secure link, please make sure that you register before you try and join the sessions. We look forward to continuing to work together as a family of schools and professionals.

'Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success' - Henry Ford.



WORLD BOOK DAY 2024
TRUST COMPETITION

FOR ALL STUDENTS AGED 4-18



TO ENTER: design a "one pager" sheet about your favourite book

Your pages can include information about the plot, your favourite parts of the book, reasons why it should be read, a description of the book using just 3 words, or any other information you want to include. Be as imaginative and colourful as possible- include drawings of the cover, favourite characters and/or the most exciting scenes.

**PRIZES FOR 1ST, 2ND AND 3RD PLACE ENTRIES:
 WIN UP TO £30 WORTH OF BOOK VOUCHERS!**

Please complete on A3-sized landscape paper and hand in to your English teacher by **Tuesday 5th March**.

Scan the QR code to see some fantastic inspiration from Birchwood Primary School

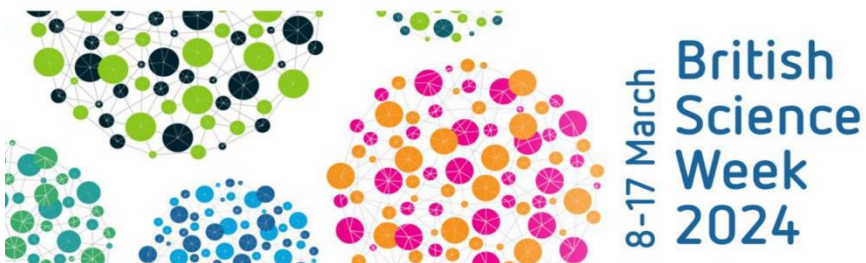
The English Network Group invites each school to take part in this cross-trust competition to celebrate World Book Day 2024. Opportunities for all year groups from 4 to 18!. Can each school who takes part scan and email to Beth their top ten entries on Tuesday 5th March. Beth and her English Network will judge a Primary and Secondary 1st, 2nd and 3rd place in their meeting and will announce these to schools on Thursday 7th March. Photos of winning 'one pagers' will also be shared in the next OCM. Beth's contact details are: b.currall@thepolesworthschool.com

The Big CAT Science Quiz



When: Tuesday 12th March 2024 - 1.30-2.30pm
Where: The Polesworth School Science Department or online via Microsoft Teams
Who: All primary schools across the CAT are invited to bring a team of four Y4-6 pupils/attend virtually
Please contact Becks Wilkinson if you are interested in taking part r.wilkinson@thepolesworthschool.com

The Science Network Group invites all primary schools across the trust to make up a team and join in the first Big CAT Science Quiz. Test your knowledge and pit your wits on all things science and see which school is the boffinist of the boffins! To enter contact Becks Wilkinson:
r.wilkinson@thepolesworthschool.com.
 Can't wait to see what happens...



Our Half Term in Pictures



And finally.....

Hopefully you found us on Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/schoolscat/> (#schoolscat) as well as on Twitter @SchoolsCat (#catschools). Follow us and we'll follow you back. You can also find us on our App via the Wix Spaces, Our Community Matters.

Stoneydelph Primary School @StoneydelphPS · 12h
Bumblebees class invited grandparents and special people into school to ask questions about their life in the past. The children asked the visitors thoughtful questions and a lovely time was had by all. We hope our special people can visit us again soon. ❤️🐝❤️
@SchoolsCat



Grange Park PE @Grange_Park_PE · Feb 12, 2019
We are delighted to announce that Grange Park Primary School has been selected by the Executive Committee of the Shropshire Schools' Sports & Athletics Association to receive the Derek Hayward Award as the most successful Shropshire Primary School Sports Team. #TeamGP #Proud



Polesworth School @PolesworthSchl · Feb 6
Photos from this year's Year 11 Mock Results Day on Wednesday 24th January! 📷📧👍
#thepolesworthschool #polesworth #year11mocks



CAT Institute of Education @CATTSAlliance · 7 Feb
Ready for university of Birmingham careers Fair - if you want to #traintoteach with @catschools - drop by and see us @UoD_SecPGCE



Dordon Primary @DordonPrimary · Jan 30
Brilliant explaining in maths from one of our Peacocks. She arranged the fish into pairs, counted them all and knew the number was even because every fish had a partner! Wow!



Birchwood Primary @BirchwoodPrim · Feb 4
This week, as part of our Fishkeeper Fry project, we were excited to welcome our new arrivals - 5 cherry shrimp. Well done to Harry for being our 'Fishkeeper of the Week' for showing lots of interest and concern that our shrimp should be safe in their new home. @the_fishkeeper



Stratford-Upon-Avon Primary School @StratfordPrim · 26 Jan
After a delicious breakfast, we've packed up and walked to the Jorvik centre. It's a cold and sunny morning. Time to look at all things Viking...



Our Community Matters

