

updATe



Gill Weston, Chair of Learn-AT's Board Trustees

At the beginning of this academic year we held a conference for all staff and governors, held at Meadowdale. It was a great opportunity to come together, get to know each other and share learning across the trust. It showed how we are harnessing the talents of professionals to achieve the best possible outcomes for children. I would like to thank, once again, all those who planned and led workshops on the day.

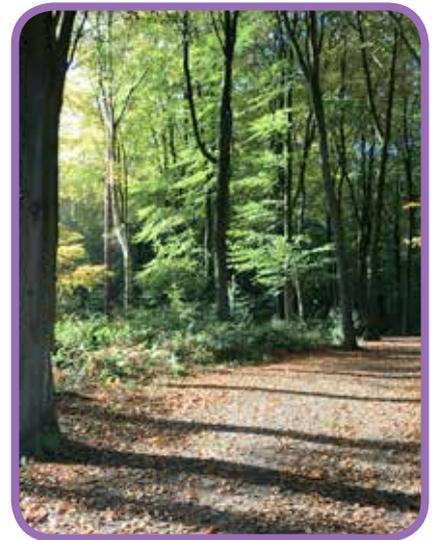
Our second year is now well underway. We welcome Angela Dewes to the leadership team, as executive headteacher at Ridgeway and Great Bowden. We also welcome staff, pupils and governors from Church Langton CofE primary school who joined us at the beginning of November. We are really looking forward to working with them as we move forward together.

A priority for the Board of Trustees is to make sure that governance is working effectively for all schools and

that resources are deployed as efficiently and effectively as possible. The Board will be working with local governors and headteachers to look at how we can develop effective structures, including channels of communication, so that there is clarity and efficiency about the way in which we carry out our roles.

I am delighted to have the opportunity to work with a group of enthusiastic middle leaders within the trust. This collaboration is being led by Kerry Rodger who does a great deal of leadership development work within and beyond the trust. Sir John Dunford and I will be offering some insight into the challenges and opportunities that leading with integrity brings. I look forward to meeting the group in the spring term.

We talk a lot about remaining focused on the main thing – learning, and doing things in the right way – in fellowship. It is helpful to return to this when we are faced with the ongoing 'to do' list that never seems to reduce. As the trust begins



to grow, we will keep this at the core of what we do. Amanda Spielman, HMCI has made clear, through her renewed focus a rich curriculum that, at the very heart of education sits the vast accumulated wealth of human knowledge and what, of this, we choose to impart to the next generation. We must seize this opportunity to consider what is it that we want children to learn and what it is that we need to learn in order to deliver that for children.



Stef Edwards, Learn-AT CEO

Here we are almost at the end of the first term of Learn-AT Year 2. There is so much to celebrate and be proud of already. If we think about our Trust's vision to be a research-engaged, school-led learning community, in which adults thrive and children flourish, we are making good progress. We spent last year developing our Assessment Framework, delving into the research to find out as much as we can about how we can make sure that assessment makes a difference to children's learning. This is now being implemented in our classrooms. Leaders and teachers are discussing teaching and learning and planning next steps, together. An article about this work has been published in *Impact* – the new journal of the Chartered College of Teaching. I was invited to talk about it at a Chartered College 'Third Space' event at the University of Bristol, because other assessment and education professionals are really interested in how we developed the framework and in how it's working in practice. This is great encouragement for all of us to persevere and build on the progress we've made so far.

This year, the 'Big Conversation' is about the curriculum. The Curriculum and Pedagogy Group is led

by Dave Turner at Ridgeway and meets monthly to consider research from experts across the world about the primary curriculum. We read a lot and debate (sometimes quite loudly) the principles we think are important for our children's learning and achievement. As a trust we have joined Whole Education – a network that supports schools to develop the curriculum. Through this network we have made connections with other schools doing exciting work in this area. On 16th November members of the group are going to Fulbridge Academy in Peterborough to spend the day investigating their curriculum design and in particular the work the school has done on developing oracy. You can find out more about Fulbridge Academy here: <http://www.fulbridgeacademy.co.uk/>

The Trust central team has finally found a home to work in, which has made life much easier this term. Extensive renovation and alteration works at Lubenham All Saints Primary School provided an opportunity finally to move the school's administration offices downstairs, leaving space upstairs. Along with changes to the school entrance, this is a significant improvement for the school, for safeguarding, pupil learning and staff working

conditions. The Trust team has moved into the vacant offices upstairs – furnished with many thanks for cast-offs from Birkett House, Gum Tree and E-bay and for the manual labour and transport provided by staff and their relatives. Definitely substance over style – but functional and efficient!

I am delighted to welcome Church Langton CE Primary School - who joined Learn-AT formally on 1st November. We are all very much looking forward to working in fellowship with the whole school community.

The first round of Learn-AT Subject Leader Network meetings took place at the end of the first half of this term. Subject Leaders for SEND, EYFS, Maths, English, Humanities, RE, Science and the Arts met in schools across the Trust to share key messages, discuss priorities for their subjects and plan together. We are very grateful to Natalie Packer, national SEND specialist and Learn-AT trustee who was able to attend the SEND meeting to lend her support. Sam Whelan, of Platform Thirty, attended the Learn@rts Network to launch an exciting Mighty Creatives Arts project to support our schools to achieve Artsmark. Marianne Quinsee, representing The Ogden Trust, supported the

Science meeting. All in all, it was a really great start for this aspect of the Trust's determination to develop innovative and collaborative curriculum leadership.

Nineteen of our middle and senior leaders have started a programme of leadership development meetings led by Kerry Rodger at Meadowdale Primary School. This group will be meeting every half term and a series of visiting specialist speakers will provide support.

It is sometimes difficult, in the often intense busyness of the work we all do, to take time to stop and stare; to reflect on the progress we are making, on the achievements clocked up so far and on the challenges we encounter. In the course of my work, I am often in and out of Learn-AT schools. I see how hard everyone is working, how committed and dedicated people are to children and to the main thing: learning. At the Chartered College of Teaching 'Third Space' assessment event in Bristol on 4th November, Dame Alison Peacock said in her closing address, "*Learning is exciting*". We are engaged in a continuous process of learning more about learning, in fellowship, together. That is exciting. Thank you for the contribution you all make.

Retrieval Practice

Matt Hough, Assistant Headteacher at Meadowdale Primary School

For a while now Stef Edwards and I have shared an interest in the benefits of low stakes testing. Stef was wholly convinced that the regular, short and wide-ranging tests used at Great Bowden Academy had played a large part in the success of the school. The teachers liked them, the pupils liked them and they seemed to encourage an analytical and responsive approach to the needs of the pupils. However, neither of us could quite get to the bottom of why they worked and whether we needed the whole package or just elements of it. And then we both read Daisy Christodoulou's wonderful book, *Making Good Progress*, and we were even more confused.

Christodoulou's book highlighted that the reliability of the tests was a problem; teachers were making summative judgements about the achievement of pupils in whole subjects based on very short tests. Whilst it could be argued that the weekly scores combined termly to inform one overall summative judgement, this, again, was an issue. All that work just to make one summative assessment?

(The obvious parallel was the horror that manifested itself as APP grids).

A fan of the tests might argue that the information from each test was used formatively to point teachers to where pupils needed further instruction. But as each test only contained one or two questions on a particular topic, the validity of the inferences being made must be called into question. If a pupil gets a single problem on adding fractions wrong, it is clearly risky to assume that it's because their conceptual understanding of adding fractions is weak.

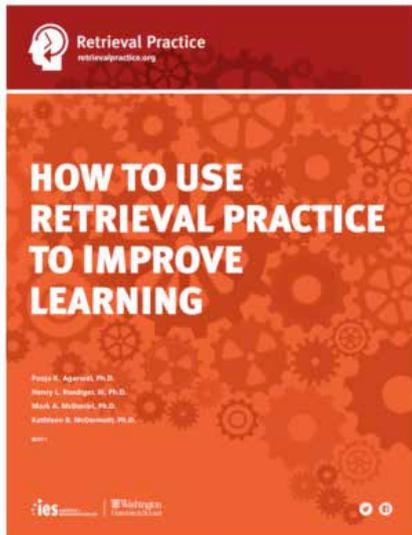
We now had even more questions than answers, until Stef found an article (Agarwai et al, 2013) on Retrieval Practice, something I'd never heard of.

What is Retrieval Practice (RP)?

Pooja Agarwai, and her fellow authors, state in *How to use Retrieval Practice to Improve Learning*, that:

"Retrieval Practice is a learning strategy where we focus on getting information out [of pupils' heads]. Through the act of retrieval, or calling information to mind, our memory for that

information is strengthened and forgetting is less likely to occur. Retrieval practice is a powerful strategy for improving academic performance without technology, money or class time.'



In very simple terms, RP facilitates and aids a shift of information from the short-term memory into the long-term memory, thereby giving us genuine learning

and not just temporary and transient understanding. Not just a single exposure to RP, I hasten to add: 3 to 5 times for each piece of learning seems to be the accepted ideal, where the trade-off between the benefits of RP and the loss of time for delivering new content is best balanced.

Retrieval Practice at Meadowdale

After being introduced to it, I immediately began to use RP in the classroom at Meadowdale, with my main focus being the teaching of maths to our two Year 6 classes.

The pupils liked RP and were keen to both discuss and explore its many forms, but we found, after experimenting with what we called blank page

memory transcripts (writing down everything we could remember) that most of the children preferred a written quiz every few days. This developed into very short quizzes each lesson, focussing on the learning from the previous session. At the end of each week, a longer quiz made up of the same questions as the shorter quizzes would help us to revisit the learning of the whole week. We then added another element to enable everything to be revisited three times: half of the weekly quiz became questions we'd used one month before.

I was pretty happy with this approach. The pupils also liked it and the time spent revisiting learning wasn't unduly hindering our progress through the curriculum, especially as it

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF RETRIEVAL PRACTICE

- As RP is the act of attempting to remember previous learning, quizzes or low-stakes tests are ideal activities and should use a variety of strategies and question types – fact-based, conceptual, higher order/transfer.
- RP is learning, not assessment so no scores should be given.
- it is important that pupils know what RP is and why they are doing it, and they should be reassured that 'challenge is good'.
- It doesn't matter whether or not the attempt to remember is successful as long as accurate feedback is available.
- Instant feedback is essential as the pathways in the brain are ready to accept the previously learned material again.
- A medium to high retrieval success rate is necessary for pupils to maintain a positive impression of the process.

was becoming clear that there would be no need for the usual Year 6 revision period, for which I normally set aside four weeks.

RP also got the pupils talking (during the feedback time after the test) and it was easy to manage. It even encouraged me to use formative assessment, as I needed to know whether a concept had been understood at the first visit, before trying to employ RP.

There was no problem in Year 6. But what about the rest of the school - could we expect EYFS and KS1 teachers to implement RP into their daily timetables? Two of my colleagues (Abbie Brown and Jo Edwards) and I decided to try to find out. We embarked on a lesson study in the last half of the summer term with the aim of discovering whether we could administer an RP weekly quiz in Year 2 firstly, and then in FS.

Initially, we enlisted the help of the whole teaching staff, and used a staff meeting to pull the essential elements of RP out of the plethora of literature available (see box). We figured that as long as we kept these elements, it didn't really matter what the quizzes looked like or how they were delivered.

Year 2 was a breeze – the children liked the quiz and although they struggled with their first attempt to feedback the correct

answer and strategy to each other, this was soon sorted with a bit of teacher modelling from Jo.

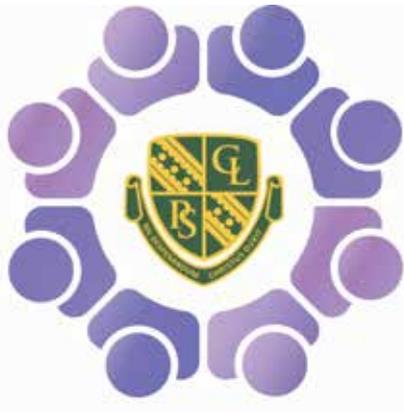
Abbie had a more turbulent time in FS, not helped, I'm sure, by Jo and I trying to construct impromptu barriers from whiteboards and cushions to stop the children attempting to help each other with the answers. After three lessons though, Abbie had the quiz sorted, using a system where children responded to multiple choice questions using a letter card, before recording the same answer on a written version of the sheet. This recording stage allowed the children to remember how they'd answered, thereby giving Abbie the information she needed to facilitate the feedback phase of the RP process.

We concluded that with training for the pupils and explicit explanation of why the quiz is being done, a weekly quiz is possible in any year group in the primary phase. As an added bonus, the pupils enjoyed the quizzes, with no child giving the task less than a 3 out of 5-star rating (the majority were 4 or 5). However, in FS, with our current approach, we found that the ideal group size is around 10 to 12 so further work is needed to determine whether the extra time it takes to administer the quiz to all the pupils is the most effective use of the

teacher's time.

We are continuing our lesson study this year, focussing on Year 2 and then Year 6, following a line of thought that Jo had. She wondered whether we could use the same question for formative assessment in the lesson when pupils are first introduced to new learning and then again for RP, both next day and in the end of the week quiz. If it works, it could provide us with a basis for a very neat rolling programme of questions, finely honed both to deliver accurate assessment and to enable the pupils to get the RP they need to cement their learning. All being well, we plan to roll this out across Year 2 and Year 6, hopefully before Christmas, and maybe throughout the whole school after Easter.

If your interest is piqued, Clare Sealy's blog, <https://primarytimery.com/>, is a good place to start if you want an accessible but more thorough explanation of what's happening in the memory when we employ RP. It's also worth following these people / organisations on Twitter: Learning Scientist (@AceThatTest), @ClareSealy, @joe_kirby, Effortful Educator (@effortfuleduktr), @olivercaviglioli, @Kris_Boulton, @deansforimpact



Church Langton CofE Primary School

A big thank you to Neil O'Brien MP for visiting our school. He took part in a tour of the school and then joined the school for our collective worship. The children really enjoyed hearing about his work at the Houses of Parliament and they had some excellent questions for him. To complete his visit to the school he met the school council who welcomed him to open their first meeting of the year. The newly elected council discussed the parts of the school of which they are most proud and share their aims for the year ahead.

It has been a busy start to the sporting fixture list with pupils from year's two

to six representing the school. The involvement of the Leicester Tigers and Football Association coaches working with teachers and pupils have been super preparation for the tournaments and matches. The boys' and girls' football teams have had a series of matches while teams have taken part in three different tag rugby tournaments. The highlight of this term has been the Hanbury Festival which we hosted on our field. We were also very proud to enter our largest ever squad in the Market Harborough Cross Country run. The months ahead promise many more activities and matches for the pupils to look forward to.

The pupils across the school have enjoyed making the most of the school grounds this term. The outdoor learning sessions for year one have provided great opportunities for the children to explore our learning environment. This has included mini-beast hunts and discovering dinosaur eggs! Year four have been lucky to work with the Royal Horticultural Society as part of their project in the school garden. They have planned their work for the term ahead and are excited to consider how the area can be developed further.



Year 5 & 6 have recently returned from a fantastic week at PGL in Shropshire. Whilst team building and getting to know each other in their new classes, the children (and teachers) took part in a range of activities including high ropes, the giant swing, abseiling and raft building. The trip was a huge success and thoroughly enjoyed by everyone involved. Since returning to school, the children have been writing exciting recounts of their adventures.



Great Bowden Academy



Anderson Shelter

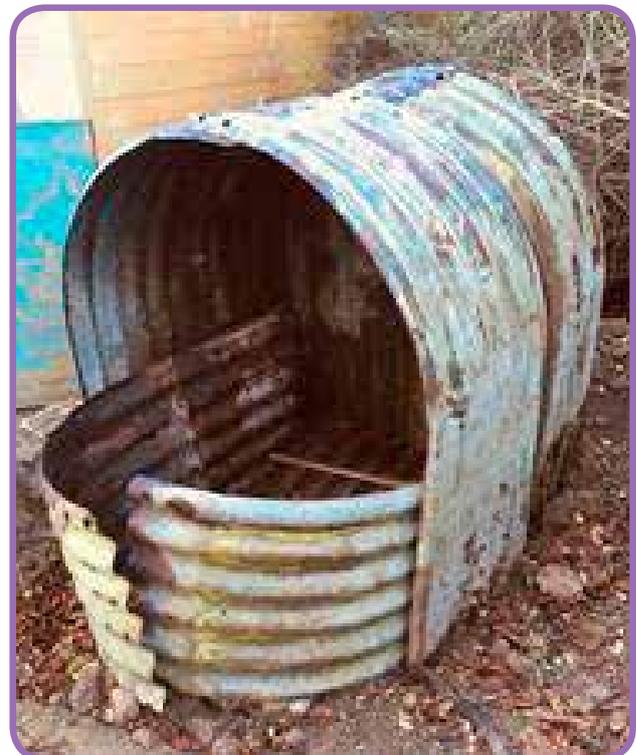
As part of their topic on WW2, Year 6 have started constructing an original Anderson Shelter in the school grounds. On 'Dig Day' the children donned wellies, brought in spades and dug two feet down in order to

situate the shelter. Once the corrugated tin has been bolted into place, the children hope to grow carrots up the side of the shelter using the leftover earth.

The Anderson Shelter was kindly donated by Mr Measures, a farmer from Lutterworth, who had the shelter in one of his fields since the early 1940s.

Royal Shakespeare Company

We are very proud to announce that Great Bowden Academy has been accepted as an associate school for the Royal Shakespeare Company. We are now part of a regional and national network of schools and theatres, committed to transforming experiences of Shakespeare and live theatre for young people. We will be part of a community of schools sharing practice, pedagogy and performance. The project is spread over two years and will involve incredible opportunities for the children and teachers, including workshops and performances. Even though the project is mainly focused on Shakespeare and drama, it is also a way of giving children confidence and self belief.





Husbands Bosworth CofE Primary School

Class 1 and 2 spent an amazing day taking part in activities linked to their learning about Diwali. The classes enjoyed; designing rangoli patterns with lentils, mehndi hand designs, rangoli patterns sun catchers and making Diva lamps using CDs and candles. The children also learnt about Bollywood dancing. All the children enjoyed learning and exploring this important celebration for people who follow the Hindu faith.



Here is a selection of some writing produced by the year 5 and 6 children in the school linked to their topic about the Victorian period. They really enjoy seeing their writing published and I hope you enjoy reading it.



There were dark clouds covering the sky. A cluster of stars glimmered in the eerie night. When I look at the sky I feel I can let out all my secrets. Sophia

*No escape
Boring days
Lost parents
Cold yard
WE HATE THE WORKHOUSE.* Toby

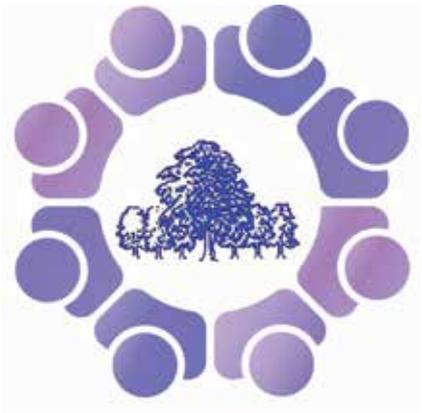
The great Charles Dickens, a Victorian author, wrote fifteen gripping novels and twenty five short stories; he wrote some of the most famous novels in the world. Many of these have been turned into films, plays and musicals. He is considered one of the most distinguished authors of all time. Connie



We have also been thinking about creation and the children invited their parents to come into school to help them design paint cans that will be used to create a whole school art installation. The art work will be used to help us all consider all the wonderful things in the world that have been created. We have had visits from people with other faiths and the children have had discussions about the views of people who have other beliefs.

Swallows & Swifts have very quickly settled into work and have thoroughly enjoyed learning all about our digestive system through our Cornerstones topic *Burps, Bottoms and Bile!!* Having done lots of research into how our digestive system works and finding out the functions of the various different parts, our first task was to draw our digestive system onto individual t-shirts. We had great fun and don't they look great? We have carried out lots of different science investigations including finding out if baked beans really do make you windy!! We are sure that your child will be able to tell you about that one! We did another experiment to see the effect of different liquids on our teeth by placing an egg into coffee, diet coke, milk and orange juice and leaving them there for

a week with some interesting results!



Lubenham All Saints CofE Primary School



Blackbirds Class topic this half term has been called Beachcombers.

We have had great fun finding out about things that live on and around the seashore. We started our topic with the lovely story of *The Mousehole Cat* by Antonia Barber. The children explored the characters and setting of the story before writing their own versions. We also produced some fabulous watercolour paintings of the characters.



The reception children in our newly named Robins class have settled in beautifully and the Year 1s have risen to all of their new challenges. Our topic "*Will you read me a story?*" began by visiting Market Harborough Library. The children were a real asset to the school and enjoyed exploring the library and listening to some new stories.

The last two weeks in school have been particularly exciting. After coming back into the classroom after morning break time the children discovered a cordoned-off crime scene. After intensive detective work and reviewing of the evidence they

discovered it was none other than Goldilocks! After creating 'Wanted!' posters which were displayed around the school, the children received a letter from Market Harborough Police Station telling them that Goldilocks had been found. This week we had a visit from a very apologetic Goldilocks. Having asked her lots of questions about what she did the children decided they would forgive her! We have finished off our week and half term by making and tasting porridge along with some healthy toppings.



Market Harborough CofE Academy

There have been lots of changes and improvements happening in Foundation Stage over the summer term and this half of the Autumn term. The Foundation teachers have been busy sorting, tidying and clearing out the clutter. We even got a skip! The main area in Foundation has now been newly painted and our new furniture has all been assembled and arranged. What a big job but, doesn't it look so much better.



KS1 have begun rehearsals for our Winter production of the Nutcracker. They have been learning new dances using music from the ballet. It is something completely different to the Nativity which has been done for many years and looks to be a really professional show.

Year 3 we have been studying the Ancient Egyptians. We were fascinated by the Ancient Egyptian embalmers and wanted to try it ourselves! We used tomatoes to mimic bodies, first scooping out the insides. They were then packed with Natron and enclosed in a Mummy Chamber. In Ancient Egypt, embalmers would wait for seventy days but we left our tomatoes for only two weeks! When we investigated our results, we discovered the tomatoes were completely dried out and shrivelled just as a Mummy would be! Don't worry, we didn't eat them afterwards!



Year 4 have been writing a Market Harborough Town Guide over the last couple of weeks. Once complete and written up as a booklet we have been given a table to do a Saturday book signing at Waterstones which will hopefully be on the 11th November. The children will be on a rota system so year 4 will collectively be there all day. We will be 'selling' the books to the general public with proceeds going to Children in Need.

Our school was one of forty schools from across Leicestershire and Rutland taking part in a Triathlon at Charnwood College on Friday 29th September. Children from Years 4, 5 and 6 met Alistair and Jonny Brownlee and children had photos with them and got their autographs. The triathlon began with a swim, leaving trainers on the poolside. Without drying or changing, the children were straight out of the water to complete a bike ride and a running course.



The first half of the Autumn term has been a busy one here at Meadowdale!

We have had visitors into school, children off on trips- including our Year 6 residential at Boreattan Park back in September - and the children have been really busy and working hard.

We are delighted that our school kitchen has recently been inspected and again has been given a 5-star rating by an Environmental Health inspector. Many thanks and congratulations to all the kitchen staff on their achievement - our school meals are all prepared in school and we have a minimum of 250 lunches served by the team daily! Some days, we have in excess of 350 meals served within an hour, so to have the hard work of the team recognised by environmental health is just fantastic!

When we had our big move around in the summer we took the opportunity to sort through our books and realised that we had maths and English textbooks which were no longer used as well as some early reading books that didn't fit the phonics-first approach to teaching reading. Not wanting to just throw them in the skip, we looked around for a good home and have been fortunate to forge a link with Pankh Creative School in Rishikesh, a small town in the northern state of Uttarakhand in India.

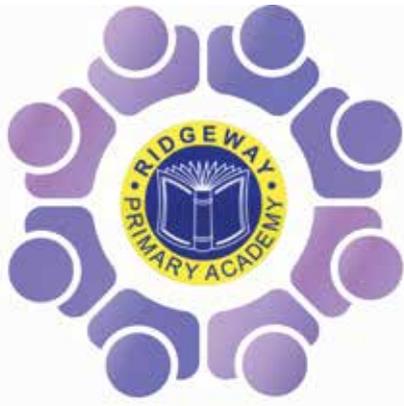
The school was founded by Alankrita Banerjee in 2012 and now has 170 underprivileged children attending. Meadowdale children were introduced to the school in a special assembly at the start of term and Year 3 children will be learning about the school in more detail and writing letters to the children there. We have decided to focus our school's international fund raising efforts this year into supporting the Pankh Creative School.

We are very proud of our Girls Football Team who won the Harborough Schools Tournament a couple of weeks ago and have now been invited to represent South Leicestershire at the County Finals on 16th November.



Meadowdale Primary School





Ridgeway Primary Academy

Reception were investigating a loud bang that was heard by the caretaker. When they took a walk onto the field they discovered lots of twisted and broken metal. Nobody knew where it had come from but the children thought it might have been a spaceship. Then Mr Moss took some photos of a creature that was hiding around school and the children were waiting to see if it

reappeared again and what it might be.

Ridgeway has had a fantastic library makeover. This has been funded by its parents group who have contributed £9,000 . The room has been redecorated, carpeted, new furniture has been purchased and a story den with fairy lights has been created. The books have all been audited by the school's library service and we are about to hold a sponsored read to revamp our fiction collection. What a transformation!

Children in Year 5 and 6 are trialing Read Theory. So far this has been a great success with children reading a variety of quality texts at home and school. Parents are also enjoying getting involved. We are now rolling it out to Years 3 and 4 who have been enthused by what they have seen. Find out more about Read Theory here: <https://readtheory.org/>.

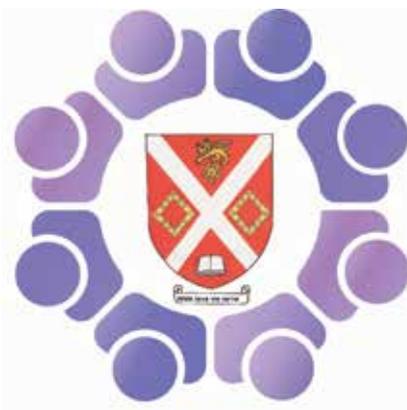


In Oak this term, our topic is 'Burps, Bottoms and Bile'; we have enjoyed exploring our bodies by focusing on the human digestive system and the circulatory system. The children particularly enjoyed re-enacting the stages of digestion and making their own breathing machine using old plastic bottles.

In addition, Year 5 & 6 had the amazing opportunity of experiencing a mini-triathlon at Charnwood College. This involved the children swimming 3 sides of a pool, cycling



200m and finally running 300m, they got the chance to experience first-hand, the struggles a triathlete experiences when transitioning between the different events. It is safe to say, the most memorable moment of the day was being able to meet both Johnny and Alastair Brownlee in person, the children were in awe of these inspirational sporting heroes.



St Andrew's Primary School

During Literacy the children in Willow have learnt the legend of Mousehole. Mousehole is a picturesque fishing village on the south coast of Cornwall between Penzance and Land's End. There is a legend told through the story of Mousehole cat, Mowzer and his pet, Tom. We have learnt the legend through story writing, a drama of the great storm and have created mini tourist leaflets to encourage people to visit this beautiful place. Especially the Christmas lights to celebrate the legend of Old Tom and Mowser, which happens every year.



In Science we have been learning about wonderful humans and amazing animals. Not only have we been stranded on a desert island, we have had to think about what we need to survive and what we would not be able to survive without whilst looking at food chains and habitats.

In Maple both Year 4 and 5 children enjoyed an afternoon outdoors, sampling Forest School and we hope to introduce more opportunities for outdoor learning during the next half-term. In addition to this, we have been improving our French by learning numbers, days of the week and classroom commands as well as looking healthy eating.



In Acorn this term we have been investigating different fairy tales. We have enjoyed learning 'Little Red Riding Hood' and changing it to make it our own. We have enjoyed acting out the story of the 'Three Billy Goats Gruff' and 'Goldilocks and the Three bears'. We also found Jack's magic beans and decided to see if they would grow. Just like Jack's beans ours grew well. We also decided to try and grow a bean with no soil! We were amazed to see the roots growing!