



South York
MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST

Autumn Term Newsletter 2024

In busy times it is often challenging to find the opportunity to reflect on the choices and decisions we have made over time.

The process around the possible merger with STAR MAT has very much focused me and the team on the why we do what we do. Education above all offers hope. It is involved in the business of change. Our hope for each child is that they are happy, feel loved and are given every opportunity to be the best versions of themselves. We look to not only remove barriers but to develop the resilience in our children and young people to overcome them. We want them to be the change they want to see in the world.

At South York MAT our schools stand shoulder to shoulder, underpinned by shared core values. This doesn't make us immune to the challenges faced by all local schools around funding, falling numbers at primary level and increased need. Sometimes times are hard, and the support we give to one another is invaluable. We also share in each other's success, as in the naming of Fulford School as the Sunday Times Comprehensive of the Year 2025.

This is why shared fundamental values was so important in identifying a possible merger partner. Growth will allow us to have a greater impact on the experience of all our children and young people. Our schools will maintain their individuality whilst being members of a larger family with the opportunities this gives us of further developing the high-quality experiences our children and young people experience at school.

We will keep you fully informed of the merger process. Letters, slides and a feedback questionnaire are available on the SYMAT website.

Thank you for your support you have given to your school this year. I hope you and your family enjoy the Christmas celebrations and that you have a happy and health New Year.

May your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears – Nelson Mandela

Steve Lewis
CEO

Primary School Improvement

The autumn term has provided further opportunities for staff, from both primary and secondary phases, to work collaboratively on our trust improvement priorities. These are based around supporting pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs (SEMH) and improving standards in writing and mathematics.

Our writing improvement journey in primary schools continues. We now have consistent writing expectations across the range of year groups and taught genres in our schools and these are being used to inform each schools' unique curriculum plans.

Maths leaders are also working together to consider how the primary maths curriculum aligns with key stage three, and beyond, and where tweaks or emphases can be made to better support transition.

Year 6 assessment practices have been arranged to allow for moderation of standards and comparative data across the trust. Y6 practitioners meet regularly to discuss experiences and share effective curriculum ideas, demonstrating support for each other and a collective responsibility to meet aspirational curricular targets for all pupils in their final primary year.

Plans are also underway for our first SYMAT training day in February when we hope to bring together all staff from our primaries to further enhance classroom practices in each of our priority areas.

As always, it is an absolute privilege to work amongst such dedicated, committed and supportive colleagues. I look forward to further exciting developments in the New Year but, until then, I wish everyone an enjoyable and relaxing festive season with family and friends.

Caroline Hancy
Primary School Improvement Lead



Bishopthorpe Infants and Archbishop of York Church of England Junior School News



The autumn term at the Infants and Juniors has been both fun and busy, filled with exciting sports events, inspiring charity initiatives, and enriching opportunities that have brought the curriculum to life. Pupils have embraced every activity with enthusiasm, making this term a memorable one full of learning, teamwork and creativity. Here are just a few examples:

Children in Distress Christmas Shoebox appeal

In October both schools supported the Shoebox Appeal for the Children in Distress Charity. Simon Errington, CEO of the charity and son of the founder of Children in Distress, came to collect the boxes on Saturday October 19th. He was extremely grateful for the 224 boxes he took away with him. It was a wonderful Bishopthorpe community effort and amazing to see the quality of the beautifully wrapped boxes, each one packed full of special items that will be loved and cherished by the vulnerable children and elderly in Romania.



Harvest Festival



The Infants and Juniors enjoyed visiting St. Andrew's Church during October for their Harvest Festivals. They were fantastic events with lovely atmosphere. It was wonderful to see such a full church with so many parents and grandparents on both occasions. Many generous donations of food items for the York Food Bank and Carecent York were gratefully received. We are looking forward to our Christmas services which will be taking place in the last week of the autumn term.

EYFS Library visits

During November, both Reception classes had the opportunity to visit Bishopthorpe library. They had a lovely time walking to the library, listening to stories and exploring the books. They also brought some books back to read in their classrooms. We are very grateful to the library staff for facilitating these visits which the children thoroughly enjoyed. We are very proud of our new Reception children. They have settled so well at being in school.

Christmas Nativities

The children have loved learning about the Christmas story and performing their nativities for their parents and friends. Our reception classes performed 'Bundle of Joy' and Year 1 and 2 performed 'Simply the Nativity'. At the Juniors, the Y6 drama group children performed 'Straw and Order' with the whole school becoming the choir on the matinee performances. They were all fabulous!



From all the staff and children at Bishopthorpe Infants and Archbishop of York's C.E Junior School we wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. See you all in 2025!



Dunnington Church of England Primary School News

What a fun-filled and jam-packed term we have had here at Dunnington Church of England Primary School filled with lots of fantastic learning, school trips, author visits, pantomimes, sporting success and rounded off with a wonderfully festive Nativity this week. It has been wonderful to see the children in reception settle in so fantastically and to welcome their families into the Dunnington school community.

We have been working hard to achieve our ADHD Friendly School Accreditation over the last two terms. As part of the work for this award we have made 6 pledges:

1. We pledge to work with the ADHD Foundation to provide a training session for our staff team.
2. We pledge to provide regular opportunities for all learners with ADHD to have access to physical activity and exercise during the school day.
3. We pledge to provide opportunities for all learners with ADHD to learn self-calming strategies such as breathing, progressive muscle relaxation or mindfulness.
4. We pledge to provide tactile resources in every classroom.
5. We pledge to produce a display for the whole school and hold one assembly to celebrate the achievements of people living with ADHD.
6. We pledge to provide information and support for parents and carers of children and young people with ADHD.



We are really proud of the work we have done towards this award and we will continue to strive to consistently put the best possible provision in place for all of our children, including those with special educational needs and disabilities – something we are all incredibly passionate about.

Five of our classes have been lucky enough to go on some amazing educational visits during the term. In September, Year 5 had a wonderful trip to Murton Park to learn all about the Anglo-Saxons. They had a brilliant day - chasing Vikings, making bees-wax candles and writing their name in Anglo-Saxon! In the same week, years one and two went on a wonderful adventure to RHS Harlow Carr. They explored the kitchen gardens, learnt how different vegetables and fruit grow, had stories in the woods and explored the play areas. In November, Year 6 went on a trip to the Merchant Adventurers' Hall and York Castle Museum. They learned about the history of the hall, were excited to see portraits of the famous York chocolatiers that their school houses are named after and came up with different business ideas for the Victorian Times. They then walked to York Castle Museum, where they had a tour, played in the Victorian Street and went to the fashion gallery where they got to design new labels. Last, but not least, our reception class went on their first ever trip to Dunnington Library, where they got to listen to stories and choose class books.



As you would expect, every class did us proud on all the trips, epitomising our school values – thank you to all of the staff for arranging these wonderful enrichment opportunities.

We have also enjoyed an author visit from Toby Glover, where he led workshops in every class, a performance of the Enormous Christmas Pudding by Story Craft Theatre, completely free of charge, and we have been completely blown away by the children's amazing confidence and enthusiasm in this week's Nativity Performances.

What a wonderful term it has been! We look forward to all the exciting opportunities the New Year will bring.





Escrick Church of England Primary School News

Our pupils have been embracing a vibrant term of learning filled with exciting enrichment opportunities. From hands-on practical activities to creative workshops, our curriculum has been brimming with activities designed to spark curiosity, encourage exploration and inspire a love of learning!

EYFS: Reception have had a fantastic first term in school, the children quickly developed friendships and an understanding of our school rules and values. We have enjoyed many activities including creating transient art faces, learning about Diwali and making clay diva lamps and helping stickman to escape from the ice. However, the children have particularly enjoyed our fortnightly forest school lessons and recently experienced their first forest school campfire where they sang songs and toasted marshmallows!



Year 1: Year 1 have been thoroughly enjoying their active and engaging curriculum. We have been working hard with our sentence writing and sentence checklist and have been putting this into practice whilst learning about the Naughty Bus. Children worked creatively to plan and design their own Naughty Bus scene, similar to that of the author. We then created our scenes using various equipment around the classroom as a stimulus for our writing. Linking closely with our Castle Topic this term and learning all about our local history of Clifford's Tower; Year 1 were thrilled to take part in our Fencing Day. All children thoroughly enjoyed learning the fundamentals such as 'Lunge', 'On Guard', 'Retreat' and 'Advance'.



Year 2: Year 2 kicked off the year with learning inspired by the book 'Traction Man is Here'. After reading the book, we designed, made and performed puppet shows to retell the story from the book and even had a go at writing the hero's next adventure. In Science we have been learning all about materials. Children have investigated what materials have been used in our school and considered why that material might have been used for that purpose. The children were very passionate about the importance of reusing and recycling materials where possible and we had a go at making our own recycled paper!

Year 3: In Year 3, the children have been loving their history topic on Railways. On their exciting trip to the National Railway Museum, the class spent the morning in the Wonderlab space, where they tested their engineering skills and built their understanding of forces by using the hands-on exhibits and watching a live demonstration. In the afternoon, they were excited to bring all of their learning to life when they visited the Great Hall to see so many of the locomotives they had been learning about in school, such as the Mallard, the Evening Star, and the Japanese Bullet Train!



Year 4: In Year 4, we have explored our creativity and carried out lots of hands-on learning in Science. In our sound topic, we made recycled wind, string and percussion instruments and played in a 'junk band' to learn about pitch and vibrations. We also used data loggers to measure how soundproof different materials were and designed our own ear defenders. In History, we borrowed a box of artefacts from The Dig in York - we were amazed to find that there were REAL Roman objects, mosaic tiles and a replica strigil that we had learnt about from the Roman Baths. All of this learning has culminated in the children presenting these objects, facts and activities for parents in our very own 'Roman Museum' experience!

Year 5: Year 5 have had an incredible term, packed with immersive and hands-on experiences that sparked both curiosity and excitement. Space Day was an unforgettable adventure, as VR headsets transported them across the cosmos for a breathtaking exploration of the universe, leaving everyone in awe of the wonders of space. The Spanish Restaurant brought language skills to life as pupils served one another, practiced ordering, and even paid for meals in Spanish, all while trying a range of delicious Spanish dishes.



Finally, during Victorian Day, children stepped into the past, following strict Victorian classroom rules, baking traditional recipes, and mastering the delicate art of cross-stitch, offering a true taste of life in another era.

Year 6: This term, Year Six has been diving into the fascinating world of ancient and modern China. Their learning journey began with an exploration of the Shang Dynasty, uncovering its rich history, and extended to studying the geography and trade of present-day China. A highlight was China Day, when visitors from the York Chinese Church brought the culture to life with lessons in Chinese language and numbers, calligraphy workshops, and fun chopstick challenges. The children also discovered the meaning behind Chinese zodiac symbols and sampled a variety of traditional Chinese snacks and foods. Children even transformed their classroom into a fully-fledged restaurant—China Diner! Parents were invited to enjoy a delicious three-course meal and green tea, entirely planned, cooked, and served by the children. Their hard work paid off, raising over £100 for charity!



Christmas Activities: Pupils have been actively involved in a wide range of festive activities this Christmas. A highlight was the formation of a Christmas Choir, with students from both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, who performed at the local tea rooms and during the Carols around the Tree event on the village green. A group of Year 4 and 5 children took their lovely Christmas crafts (from Christmas Craft Club) to decorate a tree at York Minster! They created a range of decorations that focused on our woodland theme and the tree looked beautiful! KS1 and KS2 children also entered a tree in the annual St Helen’s Church Christmas Tree Festival here in Escrick.





Fulford School News

We are delighted to announce that Fulford School has been named

The Sunday Times Comprehensive School of the Year North 2025

This prestigious award celebrates the outstanding achievements of our students and the excellence of our school community.



In October, the whole of Year 7 took part in the Restart a Heart event which takes place in schools across the country.

Yorkshire Ambulance Service came into school to deliver a fantastic session on what to do in an emergency and 300 Year 7 students learnt the CPR process.



Fulford School welcomed the BBC's Bitesize Careers Tour 2024 to deliver an exciting and engaging session to all students in Years 7, 8 and 9.

The tour aims to inspire 1000's of students nationwide by providing invaluable career insights and guidance from industry professionals to help students explore their future job prospects.



We are pleased to announce that this year's school production will be

Charlie and The Chocolate Factory

Rehearsals have begun and we are already filling the hall with sweetness on a Tuesday evening.

The show will be performed on the 12 - 14th February 2025 and tickets will be on sale in the new year.



Thank you to everyone who donated food for York Food Bank and cash for SASH, charity for the youth homeless, as part of our annual Christmas Jumper event.

We have been overwhelmed by everyone's generosity!



Wheldrake with Thorganby Church of England Primary School News

We have had an exciting and busy start to this academic year. After home visits from their class teacher, our new Reception pupils had a wonderful start to school. We invited parents and carers to a Welcome Evening to launch the start of the new school year. Our School Development Plan and aims for the year were shared and class teachers opened their classrooms. It was a valuable evening for everyone involved. Towards the end of September, our Key Stage 1 Team hosted a Phonics Evening for parents and carers. Two workshops ran for Reception/Year 1 and Year 2 phonics phases. It was a great opportunity for parents and carers to see phonics materials and learn more about our phonics programme.

Our governing body hosted a Welcome Disco at the end of October. It was a fantastic evening for the school community with fun stalls, food and drink. The DJ had everyone dancing and raising money for our governor funds.



Our Worship Group led a wonderful Harvest Festival Service in St Helen's Church in October. We were overwhelmed with the donations from our families which were gratefully received by the York Food Bank.

We had a range of clubs for the Autumn Term, including Dodge Ball Club, TT Rockstars times tables, tutor groups for Year 6 pupils and a Boxing Fitness Club led by Mr Thomas for pupils in Key Stage 2. Pupils from Years 1 to 6 took part in the Cross-Country event at Askham Bryan College and we have several pupils through to the finals!



Our Year 6 pupils had a three-day residential to Robinwood in Barhaugh Hall, Alston. It was a jam packed, adrenaline filled, confidence boosting experience for pupils (and staff!). Highlights for pupils were the trapeze jump, a piranha themed escape room and canoeing. We were incredibly proud of all our pupils and received amazing feedback on their resilience and behaviour.

After the October half term, we opened our EYFS classroom to prospective Reception children and their families for an Open Evening. We had school tours, activities, meet and greet with staff and some delicious desserts from our fabulous kitchen team. It was a busy evening and we enjoyed meeting lots of new families.

December has been fun packed! We had Christmas workshops for pupils in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 with YOYO, York Schools and York Trust. They also led a whole school assembly on the Christmas Story with a twist. The visitors to the stable had written Trip Advisor style reviews!

We were thrilled to continue our relationship with Sharing Life again this year, with a visit to their coffee morning with Hazel Class pupils to share life successes and tips. Pupils in Maple Class are singing at the Sharing Life Christmas Party in the last week of term. Maple Class are also making a stop at Somerset House Care Home to sing carols to the residents. A long standing and much looked forward to event on our Christmas calendar.

The Fireside Nativity was performed beautifully by our pupils in Birch and Holly Classes. The children amazed their audiences with excellent acting and performing of the songs. Well done to everyone involved in costumes, learning lines and rehearsing. The pupils in Oak and Hazel Class attended the pantomime Old Mother Goose at Joseph Rowntree Theatre, which was a very funny and exciting performance. We were so proud of our pupils, who were complimented on their manners and good behaviour by members of the public.



We are incredibly lucky to have an active PTA, not only for raising money for school but also for hosting events for our school community. This half term alone, we have had a Christmas Film Night, a visit from the Christmas Shop Elfridges, a late-night shopping event with local crafts and produce, a children's Christmas Fair with fun games and activities and in the last week of term, the PTA have paid for Riding Lights to perform a pantomime to the whole school. Thank you to all the volunteers and families for supporting and attending our events.

We are looking forward to starting 2025 and exploring the exciting adventures and opportunities the Spring Term will bring.

Be Aspirational ~ Be Collaborative ~ Be Inclusive ~ Be Responsible