



Odyssey

Collaborative Trust



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HELPING PUPILS, COLLEAGUES AND THE COMMUNITY TO THRIVE

WHY MARA IS AN INSPIRATION TO EVERYONE

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Another school year has almost come to a close. So much has happened and it's great to share some of the highlights through this newsletter and reflect on all that has happened. Staff are looking forward to a well-earned rest and I would like to thank them for all of their hard work.

As is always the case at the end of the school year, we are saying farewells to some colleagues, including Borrow Wood's headteacher Zoe Fletcher who is retiring, Karen Williams, who has taught at Asterdale for 27 years, and Emily Hatton, who has worked at Beaufort for 19 years.

I wish them and all staff who are leaving this Summer all best for the future and thank them for their hard work and dedication to the children in our schools.

Tragically, we have also lost a close colleague, Jo Bunting, who died earlier this term. Jo was Beaufort's School Business Manager before becoming the Trust's Chief Finance Officer and playing a crucial role in the formation of Odyssey.

Jo is much missed by all and everyone's thoughts are with her family.

Wishing everyone an enjoyable Summer.

NEW ALTERNATIVE PROVISION IS A NUTURING SPACE

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COREY CLOCKS UP THE CASH FOR A GOOD CAUSE

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Ian Dewes
Odyssey Collaborative Trust CEO

Mara inspires community as she prepares for bone marrow transplant



OUR COMMUNITY THRIVES



“Mara really is an inspiration. She is an example to everyone. She always has a smile on her face and is always thinking of others, including her friends around her.”

Teacher Sheena Thiara

Although only weeks away from a life-changing bone marrow transplant, nine-year-old Mara has been busy raising funds for charity. Mara, a pupil at Oakwood Junior School in Alvaston, suffers from a rare bone marrow failure syndrome which affects her red blood cells. As a result, she is often fatigued and requires blood transfusions every three weeks to manage her condition – called Diamond Blackfan Anaemia Syndrome (DBAS).

Mara is now preparing for a bone marrow transplant at Birmingham Children's Hospital. The procedure, due to take place this month, will require Mara to undergo chemotherapy and she has been told she is likely to lose her hair during treatment. Yet, in the positive spirit her teachers say is typical of her, Mara has not stopped thinking of others. In preparation for chemotherapy, she has gradually been cutting off her long hair, donating it to the Little Princess Trust, and has even dyed it a bright pink ahead of her procedure.

She has also been busy raising funds for DBAS UK, a charity she says has supported her and her family.

“I organised a cake sale at school and it got lots of support,” said Mara. “We raised about £380 and the school is helping to arrange for that to be presented to the charity.”

So committed is Mara to helping others that she says she dreams of working for DBAS UK when she is older, visiting schools to raise awareness of the condition.

Mara has already begun educating her peers, giving a talk to her class about her diagnosis and allowing it to be mentioned in a school assembly to promote her cake sale.

And she has done all this while undergoing liver biopsies, blood transfusions and other tests in preparation for her transplant.

Sheena Thiara, Mara's class teacher at Oakwood Junior School, has been supporting her throughout.

“Mara really is an inspiration,” said Mrs Thiara. “She is an example to everyone – not just pupils but staff too – of tremendous resilience and positivity. She always has a smile on her face and is always thinking of others, including her friends around her.”



Pitch perfect performance

The boys football team at Borrow Wood Primary School have had a really successful year. They reached the regional finals of the EFL Kid's Cup at Derby County's training ground, won the 9-a-side league and also the 7-a-side cup. They all received individual trophies along with two school trophies at a presentation evening at Pride Park Stadium.

Portway Junior School launches on-site Alternative Provision to create a new nurturing space

»»» OUR CHILDREN THRIVE

Portway Junior School in Allestree has teamed up with national creative CIC Freedom Foundation to establish its own on-site Alternative Provision (AP) – a nurturing space designed to support children who struggle with aspects of mainstream education.

The innovative provision, affectionately named Dreams Come True Here (DCTH) by the children who attend, offers a creative and therapeutic environment for pupils both from Portway and other schools across Derby, including those within the Odyssey Collaborative Trust to which Portway Junior School belongs.

The 12-week mentor-led programme, which currently runs two days a week (soon to be more) from the Portway site, combines emotional support, creative arts and tailored personal development.

It is designed to build pupils' resilience, improve attendance and behaviour, and equip them with strategies for emotional regulation.

The aim is to support reintegration back into the classroom — not only with renewed confidence, but ongoing mentorship.



“I’ve seen first-hand the impact that Freedom Foundation’s work has had on our pupils in previous workshops. We wanted to take that to the next level by creating an on-site AP ”

Emma Wilkinson, headteacher of Portway Junior School

Emma Wilkinson, headteacher at Portway Junior School, said: “I’ve seen first-hand the impact that Freedom Foundation’s work has had on our pupils in previous workshops. We wanted to take that to the next level by creating an on-site AP that could serve both our children and others in the city. There’s a real lack of early intervention provision at Key Stages 1 and 2, and we knew we needed to act. If you can support children early enough, you can make a long-lasting difference.”

Freedom Foundation, whose facilitators come from backgrounds in musical theatre, performance and other creative industries, delivers projects that use music, rap, hip hop, dance and digital storytelling to help children understand and express their emotions.

Anna Malik, head of development at Freedom Foundation, said: “What makes this AP unique is the creative way we engage with the children, using the power of music to empower children to recognise their unique skills, reengage them in themselves whilst ensuring they have the tools to overcome challenges with resilience. In mainstream classes of 30+ students, working in such a targeted way simply isn’t possible. Our goal is to build their self-esteem and the belief that they can succeed, not just in school but in life.”

Having the Freedom Foundation Alternative Provision on site allows the school to make quick, early interventions to support children for whom other routes haven’t worked.

New leaders to strengthen community-focused education

>>> OUR COLLEAGUES THRIVE



Natalie



Aimee



Abbie

This term The Trust has welcomed three new leaders, strengthening its mission to deliver high-quality, community-driven education with a trio of key leadership appointments and further cementing its role as a driving force for positive change across its seven city schools.

A Director of Education and Director of SEND roles have been created and the Trust has also appointed a new Headteacher for [Borrow Wood Primary School](#), as current head Zoe Fletcher prepares to retire at the end of this academic year.

Aimee Tinkler joins Odyssey as Director of Education, bringing with her over two decades of experience in teaching, leadership and system-wide school improvement. Most recently working as Head of Education for a trust in Coventry, Aimee is returning to her roots in Derbyshire, where she previously spent eight years as a school leader.

"I'm really excited about taking on this role back in the community where I live and grew up," Aimee shared. "Education isn't just about children - it's about supporting families and communities and Odyssey's compact nature and close-knit schools make it possible to have meaningful, place-based impact."

Aimee will be joined on the executive team by Abbie Watts, who takes up the newly created role of Director of SEND.

She brings a wealth of experience from her current role as SENCO for the Village Federation in Derbyshire. She has worked in both mainstream and special schools and is deeply committed to collaboration and consistency in SEND provision.

"Being part of a Trust, whose schools are geographically close means we can genuinely work together. I want to help our SENCOs feel supported, connected and confident in sharing their expertise," said Abbie. "SEND can sometimes be isolating work - my goal is to create a network that builds resilience and wellbeing."

Natalie Bartlett joins Odyssey Collaborative Trust from Transform Trust, where she was Head of School at Pear Tree Primary. A proud Derby native, Natalie brings a deep understanding of the city and a passion for making a difference in the community she grew up in.

"I've always worked in Derby and have seen the challenges our children face," said Natalie. "I want to be part of making it better. There's a real opportunity here to shape positive moments in children's lives and, as a leader, I believe strongly in being able to influence those lightbulb moments - for both pupils and staff."

Welcome on board!

"Aimee, Abbie and Natalie's personal values and passion towards working with the wider school communities, supporting staff and ensuring the best outcomes for children mean they are a perfect fit for our Trust and helping us achieve our vision. We are already enjoying working with them as they transition into their new roles and are looking forward to welcoming them to the posts fully in September."

Ian Dewes - Odyssey Collaborative Trust

Logan's literary leap from Mars to Flash Fiction

»»» BEAUFORT PRIMARY

At just seven years old, Logan has become a short story competition winner and a published author.

The Beaufort Primary School pupil has been chosen as the winner of the Derby Book Festival's Flash Fiction competition, which invited entrants to write a 50-word story on the theme of 'voices'.

Being announced as the winner has given Logan a huge boost, but writing accomplishments are not new to the Minecraft-loving boy, who has already independently published his own book, which is available on Amazon. "I've always written stories but never published one, and I thought maybe I could try, so my mum helped and we published my first book," said Logan, who also enlisted the help of his dad to design the front cover.

The book, *Apollo's Adventures – The Scarlet Stone*, is set on Mars and features a robot, Rob Nine. Logan, who has always enjoyed learning about space, is already writing a sequel based around the main character's adventures. Through creative writing, Logan says he has increased his vocabulary and improved his spelling.

"I type the books, but if I can't think of a good word that I need, I ask my mum for help, or if I need help spelling something," he said.

For the flash fiction competition, Logan wrote a story inspired by his cousin, with whom he has enjoyed holidays to the beaches of Cornwall.

"My cousin likes collecting things on holiday when we go to the beach in Cornwall, and it was about collecting seashells and the voices you hear when you hold a shell to your ear," explained Logan.

As a result of the win, Logan received a £50 voucher to spend at Waterstones – and he has already spent it on a



haul of books – including *Charlotte's Web*, which is a book he had wanted and has been studying at school. Unsurprisingly, Logan loves to read about space and science. Other authors who have inspired him include Dav Pilkey, author of the *Dog Man* books and *Captain Underpants*, as well as David Walliams, particularly his *Spaceboy* book.

Trust wide initiative helps children thrive

»»» CHERRY TREE HILL PRIMARY

Cherry Tree Hill Primary School hosted a brilliant Trust-wide Athletics Day this term.

Year 6 pupils from across all seven schools came together to enjoy a fantastic mix of running, javelin and shot put events and to build friendships ahead of their journey to secondary school this September.

It was a perfect example of Our Children Thrive — one of our core Trust values. Through collaboration, shared experiences and opportunities beyond the classroom, we're helping every child grow in confidence, connection and character.



Specialist education centre opens its doors

➤➤➤ **BORROW WOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Borrow Wood Primary School in Spondon is celebrating the opening of its new Enhanced Resource Facility (ERF) to provide specialist education for children with communication and interaction needs, such as autism.

The centre opened following the Easter break at the school in Arundel Drive and will cater for up to 20 children.

Zoe Fletcher, Head Teacher at Borrow Wood said: "The new provision at Borrow Wood is for children with complex communication and interaction needs, who will come to us from across the city." Trust.



Books worms

➤➤➤ **BEAUFORT PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Young bookworms at Beaufort Primary School have been rewarded with iconic Blue Peter badges for showcasing their passion for reading. Year 1 pupils were invited to write about their favourite books and explain why they loved them. From magical adventures and talking animals to laugh-out-loud characters and thrilling plot twists, each child selected a story that had captured their imagination. The entries were submitted to Blue Peter by class teacher Mr Scaife, who praised the children's enthusiasm and creativity.



Corey steps out for holiday centre

➤➤➤ SPRINGFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Nine-year-old Corey Dobson, who attends Springfield Primary School, has been making headlines this term by putting his best foot forward for a long-running children's charity that has previously helped him.

Corey, of Spondon, has walked 191 miles over four weeks in aid of The Derbyshire Children's Holiday Centre. Corey has enjoyed three free holidays with the charity, which provides stays at its specialist centre in Skegness for children who might not otherwise get a break.

He set out to clock up 100 miles but Corey, who has high functioning autism, walked almost double the amount. He raised almost £2,000 through his efforts.

Mum Angie said his holidays with the centre had done them both the world of good.

She said: "It's just the two of us at home: myself and Corey, and we'd never had a break from each other before. I haven't got anyone in my life who can look after him for any time – it's literally just us.

"Sometimes it's a struggle for both of us. I struggle to manage his autism sometimes.

"Corey has stayed three times with the centre now and the break did both of us a lot of good. For me, it was just so nice to be able to sit down and read a book, for example."

After hearing the centre would not be opening for holidays this year, while it works to fundraise and come back in 2026, Corey was keen to help support the charity himself and came up with the idea for the walking challenge. He smashed his 100-mile target by walking in his local park and round the field at lunch time, as well as undertaking additional fundraising by organising charitable bake sales at his school.



Janine Stillwell, chief executive officer of The Derbyshire Children's Holiday Centre, said: "It's brilliant that at such a young age Corey is stepping up to help us out like this.

Not everyone may realise that we help all sorts of children and their families through our charity and we often hear that parents benefit just as much as children do.

"We are really happy to hear how much Corey enjoyed his time and we're very grateful to him and his mum for supporting us."

Brilliant bake off

➤➤➤ ASTERDALE PRIMARY

The Trust-wide Bake Off was a delicious success. Trust Chief Executive Ian Dewes said:

"The standard this year was so high and we saw incredible creations which demonstrated school's individual values and our Trust's."

The winner was chosen, after many re-samplings, as Asterdale Primary School - well done!

