

LOWER HEATH CE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY
part of the Marches Academy Trust

LGB ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024



Trust vision and values

Our vision:

Achievement through caring

Mission statement:

As a Trust, it's our mission to empower everyone in our Trust and our communities to live and breathe our values and Achievement Through Caring, to reach their full potential.

Our values:



SCHOOL PRIORITIES



**School
Priorities
(School
Development
Plan)
2023 - 2024**

Strand	Priorities	Outcomes
Quality of Education	Reading: to implement a fully inclusive approach to reading following the termination of Accelerated Reader	Highly structured approach to reading embedded in school culture. Children accessing age-appropriate texts throughout the school. Reading for pleasure developing.
	Writing: to develop the composition of writing	Whole school training on developing composition. Writing principles approach agreed for role out 2024 2025.
	Maths: to develop children's arithmetic proficiency and automaticity of recall of number facts	Number Sense and TTRS embedded in school teaching and learning. Tracking of fluency established and reward systems in place.
	Foundation Subjects: Establish a monitoring schedule for the development of all foundation subjects	Whole curriculum has been reviewed and action plans created to be reviewed annually.
Behaviour and Attitudes	Attendance: to reduce persistent absence from 13% and improve attendance from 94.5%	PA = 8.8% and overall, 96%. All staff aware of responsibility to improve attendance. Systems in place and effective
	Develop strategies to support wellbeing throughout the school	Children's Health Project established to highlight the importance of four pillars of health (Healthy Nutrition, Movement, Thoughts, Habits). One Voice project focused on Wellbeing.
	Behaviour for Learning demonstrates an impact in the classroom	Teach Like a Champion Strategies implemented throughout the school to establish a whole school approach for attention and focus.
Personal Development	Embed enrichment opportunities (e.g. cultural diversity day) into wider curriculum plans with a focus on EDIB	Two year rolling programme to celebrate significant dates and events. Pupils actively engaged in developing these events.
	SIAMS: to understand the SIAMS framework and implement changes within the school to ensure Lower Heath is effective as a church school	Whole School Christian Values form school culture. Children able to articulate these and demonstrate them in everyday life.
	Revisit and plan for Courageous Advocacy to link with curriculum intent	Termly Courageous Advocacy projects delivered by each class to enable children to speak out and make change.
Leadership and Management	PPR systems ensure that targets further develop the SDP foci: they are effectively implemented and reviewed	All staff engage in termly PPR meetings to discuss progress towards annual targets, developed in line with school development plan.
	Ensure that there is a system of assessment in place for all foundation subjects	All subjects have either formative or summative assessment systems in place with tracking systems also established.
Early Years	To ensure that phonics is fully embedded and taught consistently across EYFS to support reading fluency	Little Wandle teaching and reading processes fully embedded. Building on parental engagement for home learning following informative workshops.
	To ensure that children with additional needs are identified as soon as possible and interventions put in place	Early identification of Speech and Language concerns through screener. Talkboost intervention in place to develop communication and language difficulties. Termly pupil progress meetings enable effective interventions to be put in place speedily.

1. Reflections – a summary of the year

It is with great pride that I reflect on the achievements and developments at Lower Heath. We began the year with an inspection visit from OFSTED and were delighted to maintain the grading of 'good' in all areas. This positive result is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our staff, children and families. This recognition has further invigorated our commitment to excellence in education.

We have been fortunate to expand our talented team with two new teachers, whose fresh ideas and enthusiasm have enriched our Lower Heath offer. Our annual staff 'We Thrive' survey showed a remarkable level of satisfaction, demonstrating our team are not only happy to work at Lower Heath but are also deeply invested in going above and beyond for the benefit of our children. Our community spirit has notably strengthened through various fundraising and school improvement events and the introduction of 'Little Wrens Stay and Play' has enabled us to welcome new families to Lower Heath.

This year's addition of two new classrooms has been a transformative development for Lower Heath, providing a modern and spacious learning environment for our Key Stage 2 children and the capacity for growth. This year, we have worked hard to secure our robustly taught and wider curriculum that successfully ignites a passion for learning. Coupled with our focus on 'Behaviour for Learning, Teach Like a Champion' strategies, exemplary conduct and an eagerness to learn go hand in hand in our classrooms.

The Lower Heath team are filled with anticipation for the opportunities that await us in the coming year. We are eager to build upon our successes and continue to foster an environment where every member of our school family can flourish and excel.



Helen Reynolds
Headteacher

2. Safeguarding children and young people (CYP) including attendance of CYP and staff

Safeguarding children and young people is at the heart of our school ethos. We understand that the safety, well-being and attendance of our pupils and staff are paramount in creating a nurturing environment conducive to learning and growth.

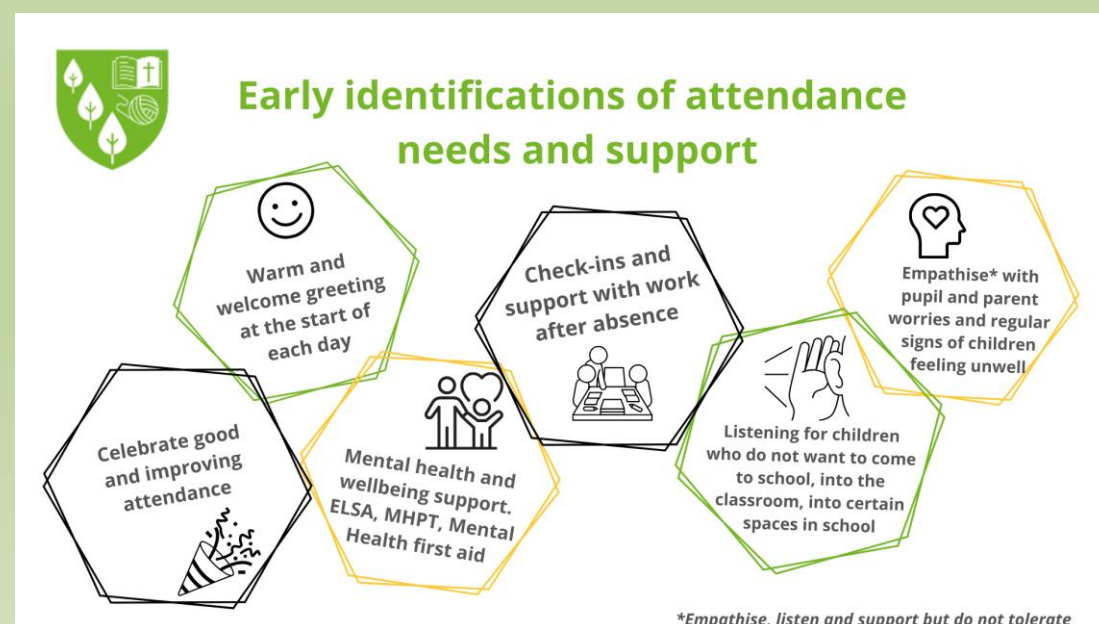
This year, our Marches Academy Trust's 'One Voice' project focused on Wellbeing in our school. Our Wellbeing Ambassadors have been the driving force behind three innovative projects: 'Marvellous Mondays' to kickstart the week with activities designed to boost morale and foster a positive mindset; the 'Super Fun Cross Country Colour Run' encouraged children to embrace physical activity; and the 'Healthy Bake Off' challenged pupils and staff to get creative in the kitchen, promoting nutritional awareness.

These initiatives linked beautifully with our 'Children's Health Project' which defines four pillars of health: nutrition, movement, thoughts and habits. These pillars empower children to make informed choices about their well-being.

Our ambassadors lead by example, showing that a balanced approach to health can be both enjoyable and rewarding.

Attendance plays a crucial role in our safeguarding efforts. Regular attendance not only fosters academic achievement but also allows for consistent monitoring of children's welfare by our vigilant and nurturing staff. This year's attendance figures have improved on last year due to sharing the importance of attendance with our families and providing support where it is needed. The consolidation of our attendance systems and having a 'whole team' approach have been instrumental in establishing these improvements. The support of our Educational Welfare Officer has also been invaluable.

As we move towards the next academic year, we plan to make do more work to encourage annual holidays to be taken outside of school time, as this continues to affect our overall attendance figures and children's learning.





2.1 Safeguarding – external and internal reviews

The Spring Trust Safeguarding review was a thorough investigation of our school systems, and this year also considered our attendance procedures. Staff voice was obtained along with talking to pupils and observing them both in lessons and at social times. Also, the ‘Our Voice’ Trust review shared positive opinions from children and staff alike.

Lower Heath continues to have robust systems ensuring our children’s safety is paramount. Pupils talked about Lower Heath being their family and that they feel safe. They were positive about their learning, their teachers and the enrichment activities that enhance our curriculum.

Our internal ‘Smile Survey’ was similarly positive. Children enjoy their lessons and demonstrate they know what to do if they have worries. They know about the importance of being in school and they know how to improve.

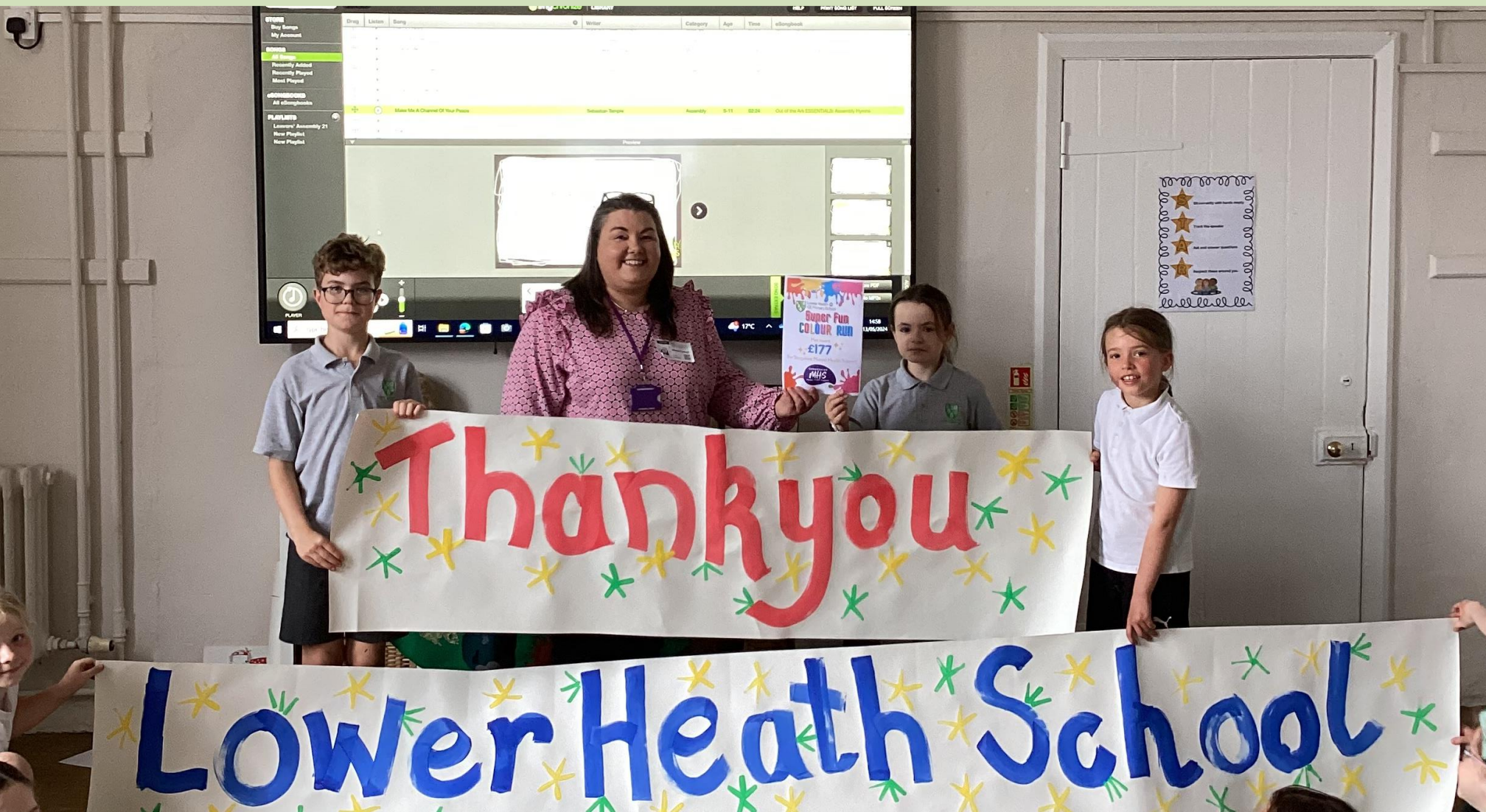
Further work is to be done to develop our school council, building this into our ‘Safety Squad’ to empower children to take the lead in school improvement. The children who will be part of the Safety Squad will be encouraged to be proactive in highlighting safety concerns, generating solutions and being involved with raising awareness with their peers.





2.2 Attendance report - staff

Attendance of staff has been excellent this year. Our strong team recognise the impact their absence has on the children and their colleagues so do their utmost to be in school wherever possible. When absence is unavoidable, staff work together to cover each other's roles; internal staff are often more effective than bringing in external supply teachers. Our highly skilled Higher Level Teaching Assistant, who is a qualified teacher, has been a key component in this strategy.

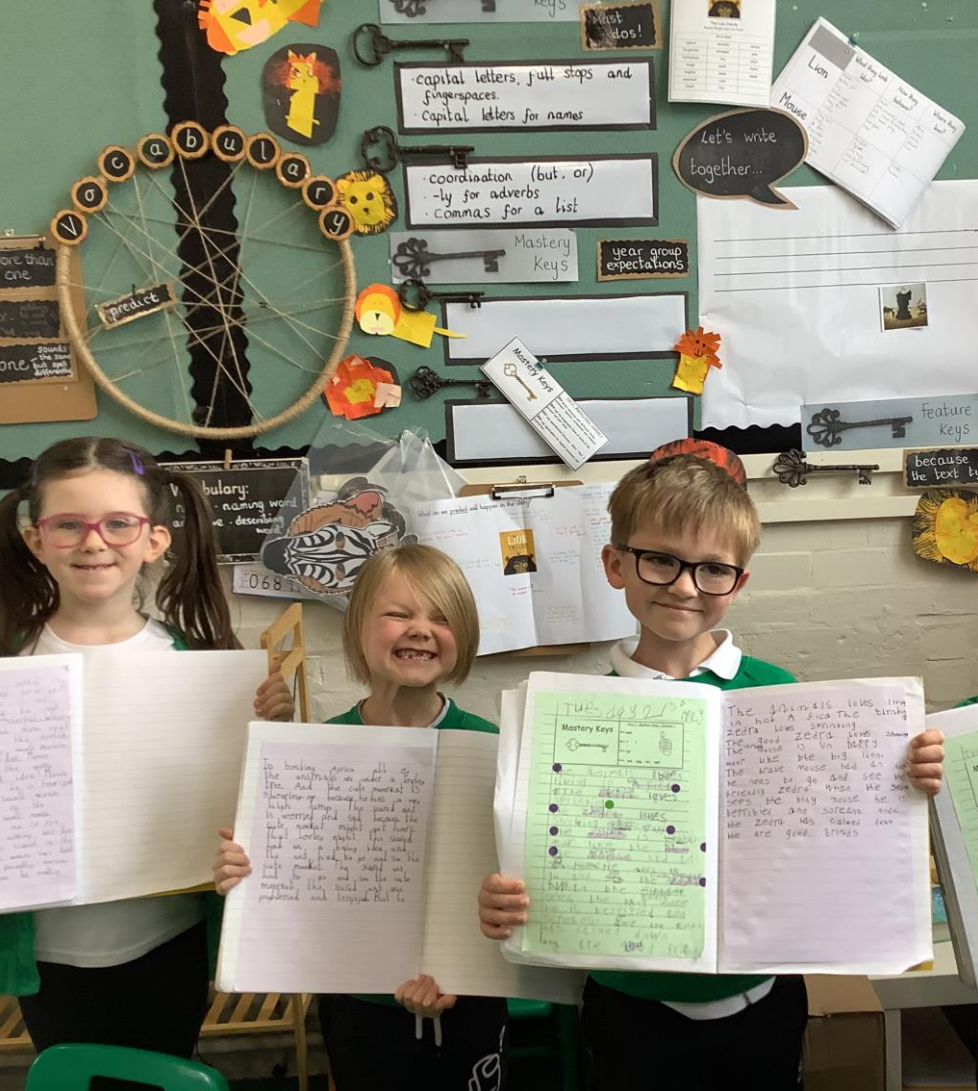


The 'We Thrive' survey results demonstrated our staff feel valued and supported. As a team, we have worked hard to reduce unnecessary workload and have prioritised the purchase of high-quality schemes of work to support teachers with lesson planning, which has been gratefully received. Weekly meetings adhere to time with clear agendas, a collegiate approach and shared actions with realistic deadlines. Teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time (PPA) is protected and there is the flexibility to take this at home if desired.

Workload is still cited as a factor causing some anxiety amongst staff. Following the We Thrive Survey, a Trust focus group has been set up to investigate possible solutions to the issues. We look forward to implementing any recommendations that come out of this important work.

PEOPLE FIRST





3. People First

We have continued to ensure that talent within our team is managed through the National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) and wider school professional development. The needs and growth of our staff members are vital to the success of the school. Our staff voice activities and regular check-ins enable any training needs to be addressed efficiently.

Our Professional Performance Reviews are structured so that targets are set at the beginning of the year, which support our school development priorities. This year, our school focus related to implementing Teach Like a Champion (TLAC) strategies to instill strong classroom cultures with a view to improving behaviour for learning. Mrs Reynolds and Mrs Hipkins were inspired by the Olympus Trust TLAC training, and this expertise was shared with all staff. You can now clearly observe TLAC practices in all classrooms throughout the school; this is having a clear impact on outcomes.

This year's collaboration days have been fully utilised enabling staff to come together to share knowledge and to plan and implement further school development. Projects undertaken this year include creating a two-year rolling enrichment plan, implementing our Children's Health Project and creating an agreed Writing Principles whole school approach.





3.1. Wellbeing

It is recognised that having an appropriate work-life balance is paramount for the wellbeing of school staff. The Department for Education Workload Reduction Toolkit highlights three main areas as key to reducing unnecessary workload: planning, marking and data management. Our school team have worked together to reduce these to an agreed, acceptable level, to support with staff wellbeing whilst continuing to provide the highest possible education for our children.

In addition to our work, The Marches Academy Trust have implemented a workload focus group to demonstrate the ongoing commitment to managing workload.

The Health and Wellbeing support provided by Schools Advisory Services is an important aspect of maintaining our staff's wellbeing. This is readily available free of charge to all staff.

3.2 We Thrive survey

The annual We Thrive Survey demonstrated significant improvements in staff satisfaction from last year. This was particularly strong from our associate staff who rated their satisfaction levels as 90%+ in all areas of the survey. They shared that they valued the wide CPD opportunities that have been offered to them and feel this has developed their confidence in delivering quality support to children and colleagues.

All staff feel a sense of belonging and enjoy Lower Heath's 'happy and productive working environment'. The whole team support each other and feel we have nurtured an 'open and honest workplace'.

Our dedicated staff work above and beyond to deliver high-quality education, despite operating at minimum staffing levels due to budget constraints. This was identified as an issue that puts strain on the daily lives of our staff. As a small school, any staff absence is felt by everyone. Supply teachers cannot always be sourced, and the quality of this service is often inferior. Our staff team must be commended on their willingness to adapt to changing circumstances ensuring that the quality of school life for our children is never compromised.





3.3 Professional Learning – developing a culture of continuous learning

As a school, we take advantage of all CPD offered by the Trust, which is of high quality and supports school development priorities. The Professional Learning Modules this year have, for example, developed our reading culture and supported our inclusive classroom practices.

All teaching staff have been supported to have time out of class to pursue National Professional Qualifications for their own personal development. Our Early Career Teacher has been mentored superbly by Mr Holt-Williams and has benefitted from the face-to-face sessions provided by the Trust.

Our Teaching Assistants have all spent a day at a partner trust school to observe a similar class to their own. This strategy boosted TA confidence and confirmed to our staff that they are a highly effective team.

As a small school, funding CPD is often a challenge. As a result, Lower Heath have begun leading training sessions and inviting other schools to attend. This strategy has enabled us to fund a 'Literacy Company' consultant to support with our writing development and Shropshire Wildlife Trust to lead outdoor learning training in preparation for next academic year.

Our school governors continue to be proactive in developing their skills and have independently accessed a significant number of external courses as well as attending CPD within school.



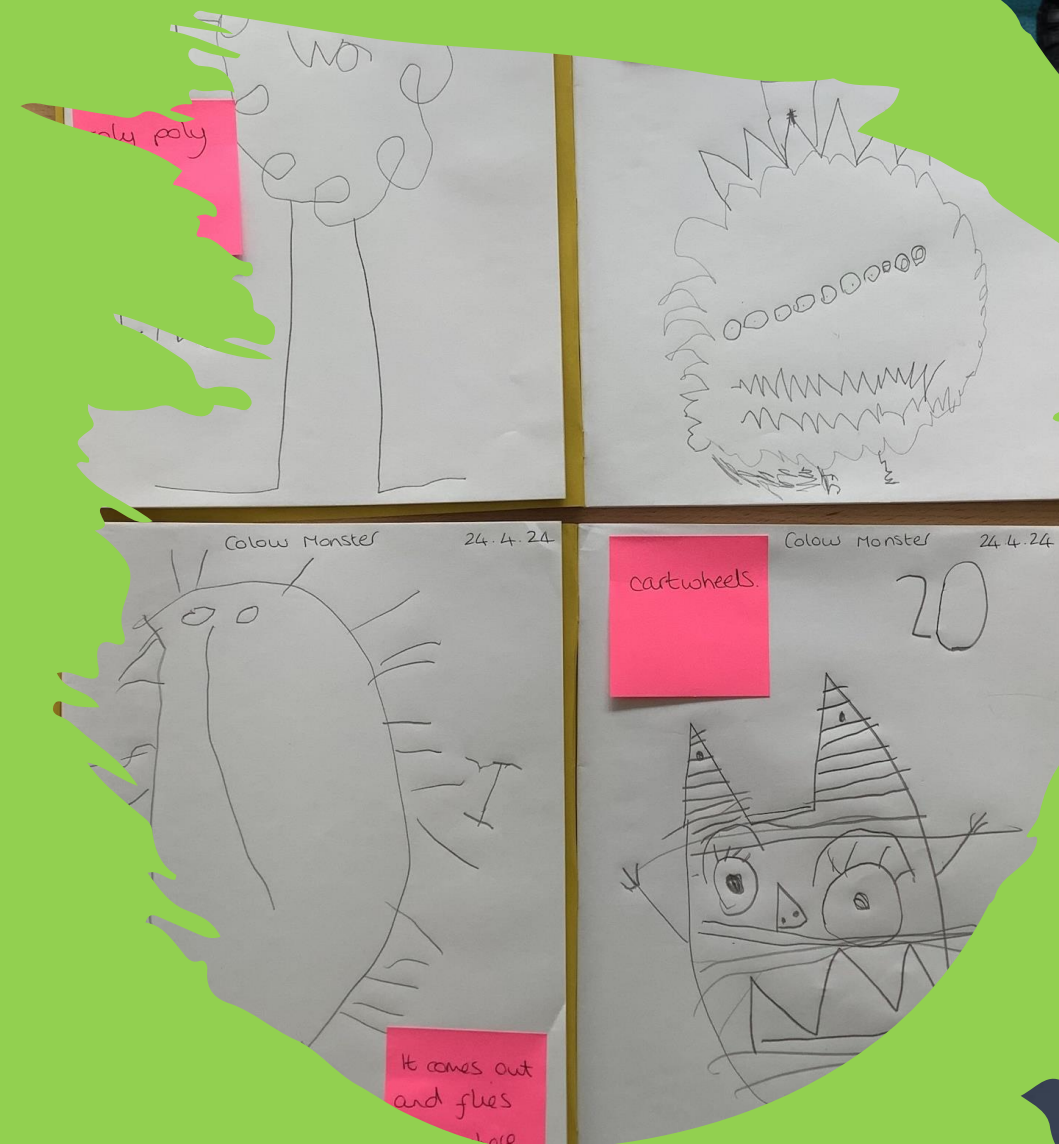
3.4 Talent Pathway – investing in our staff and their progress

With a small, dedicated team and ever decreasing government funding, investing in our staff is of paramount importance at Lower Heath. This ensures our team are equipped with up-to-date skills based on current research.

Our Teaching Assistants have been upskilled to become 'experts' in the delivery of certain interventions such as Talkboost or Little Wandle Rapid Catch-up. As the designated expert, each TA will work with children throughout the school – not just those in their class. Our TAs have fully embraced this responsibility and have been empowered to make their interventions their own.

Lower Heath has benefitted from improvements brought about through the NPQs. A maths lesson study suggested as an NPQ activity identified our 'Turn and Talk' TLAC practice was not effective due to the seating of children. As a result, Kagan mixed ability table grouping was introduced which has had a positive effect on pupil engagement. Through the NPQEYL, our EYFS leader has implemented the highly successful Drawing Club to enthuse our youngest learners with their writing. This strategy will now be extended into KS1.

Whilst budget constraints make CPD more of a challenge, seeing our staff inspired after investment in their development more than outweighs the cost.



3.5 Equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging (EDIB) impact

This year, we have appointed a new EDIB ambassador – Mrs Jill Leighton – who has been immersed in the EDIB programme since the spring term. She has led all the EDIB professional learning modules and is beginning to make important changes to our school curriculum and environments to further the EDIB agenda.

We have recently adjusted our reading spine to incorporate texts from a diverse set of authors who have written stories to represent a variety of cultures and events such as urban life or the story of refugees. In addition, our long-term enrichment plan exposes our children to visits to alternative places of worship. Our Spiritual Garden, designed by the children and refurbished this year, celebrates the major religions in the UK. Further work is required to establish visits to more diverse communities in cities.

Through the 'Faith and Belief Forum', Lower Heath have established a link with Nishkam Primary School, a multi-faith primary in Wolverhampton. Next academic year, we will work on projects together, culminating in a visit to Nishkam for some of our children, in the summer term.

EDIB is a culture within Lower Heath which we fully believe in; we are proud that our children are taught about respecting everyone, whatever their race, religion or culture.



3.6 MAT networks and collaboration

A clear benefit of being part of the Marches Multi Academy Trust is having access to high quality support from within. Lower Heath are building on this support by independently contacting staff in similar roles in partner schools to share expertise and observe each other. All primary teachers across the trust joined together to engage in writing moderation which enabled everyone to 'magpie' tips to bring back to their classroom.

The Trust Networking meeting's structure is working through teething problems to enable curriculum leaders to meet regularly with a set agenda linked to school improvement. Currently, the network meetings are not working for all schools; the Executive Team have recognised this and are listening to and acting on feedback to make the networks as productive as possible.

Three of the Trust's primary schools (Lower Heath, Tilstock and Oakmeadow) have Church of England status. We now work together to focus on our Christian Distinctiveness, sharing good practice and developing joint school initiatives. This collaboration has brought 'Space Makers' to all CE schools in the Trust – a 'contemplative toolkit' to provide children with strategies to benefit their wellbeing and good mental health.



LEARNING FOR LIFE



4. Learning for Life

Our robust curriculum offer has been fully established this year, providing exciting learning opportunities both inside the classroom and through school trips, visitors, assemblies and residential. Our after-school clubs have been well supported, in particular cookery and boxing. Our clubs offer opportunities some of our children would not otherwise be able to experience.

Following our OFSTED inspection, we have worked on building the 'personal development' aspect of our curriculum. Two key components of this have been the Children's Health Project (CHP) and our Courageous Advocacy (CA) initiatives. The CHP provides children with a clear understanding of how to keep physically healthy through nutrition and movement plus how to stay mentally healthy by increasing positive thinking and developing good lifestyle habits. Our CA projects have been a huge success; children take the lead on making change, whether that be small actions such as recycling paper or larger – by organising a whole school fundraising event.

We have extensive outdoor facilities, which the children have access to daily. All children take part in weekly outdoor learning in our 'Allwood World' which is led by our excellent P.E. coach and Forest School Leader. Our children also take full advantage of the Trust Varsity events which included a fully funded trip to Alexandra Stadium Birmingham. These additional experiences teach our children the value of Fellowship and contribute significantly to health and wellbeing as well as giving them long-lasting memories of their primary school years at Lower Heath.



4.1 Wave system and the development of behaviour and SEND

We are proud to be a fully inclusive school; the provision for our children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities is strong. Part of this success is the close relationship we have with our families; they feel confident to approach our staff to raise any concerns they may have. In addition, our work on adaptive teaching and the inclusive classroom has become fully embedded this year. Children falling behind are quickly identified, classroom practice is adapted, or interventions put in place to close learning gaps.

Attendance has improved and is now comfortably about National figures. Our pastoral support and the systems put in place to enable children with SEMH needs to be identified have enabled our children to flourish.

Children behave well at Lower Heath. Any issues are dealt with quickly by our Team Teach trained staff. All staff are familiar with our behaviour policy and follow our 'appendices' when dealing with issues. Children understand our whole school values and can explain what they need to do to 'Let their light shine'.

Our challenge moving forward is to develop the leadership skills of our children as they really do have the potential to do great things! We will be investigating the English Speaking Board examinations and maybe even developing a 'headteacher for the day' initiative.



BELONGING





5. Belonging

At this year's Trust Conference, Owen Eastwood, author of 'Belonging: The Ancient Code of Togetherness' shared his extensive work on developing team cultures through his premise that as humans, we really need to feel like we belong; we respond significantly to a sense of shared identity.

Our OFSTED inspector commented on how well our children socialised together and, in particular, how the older children cared for the youngest. Our whole school 'Buddy' system, suggested by the children, is used a great deal such as playground support and our incredibly popular weekly 'Buddy Reading' sessions. Another one of our strengths is that all our staff know our children and families very well; we are all part of the Lower Heath family.

Being a school steeped in history, this year, we have revisited some of our traditions and connected with people who were part of our school in the past. Freda Ridgeway, who was hugely involved with Lower Heath over many years, was invited to open our new school buildings in September, along with Helen Morgan MP. And as a tribute to Freda, we have reinvigorated our Maypole tradition, which the children (and adults) think is amazing!

We have a growing number of loyal and committed parents who value the sense of belonging and immerse themselves in the life of Lower Heath. We have work to do to reach some of our more 'distant' parents to support them to engage more frequently both in school and with home learning; the home-school partnership is so very effective with this strong relationship.





5.1 Connecting with our communities and community plans

We regularly connect with our community through drop-in coffee mornings and a wide range of fund-raising events such as bingo, beetle drives and Christmas and Summer Fairs. Through these meetings, we identified a need to reinstate free school transport, which is now in place for those who are entitled to it. This year's outdoor school improvement project was supported by a loyal group of families who worked tirelessly to bring our Spiritual Garden to fruition.



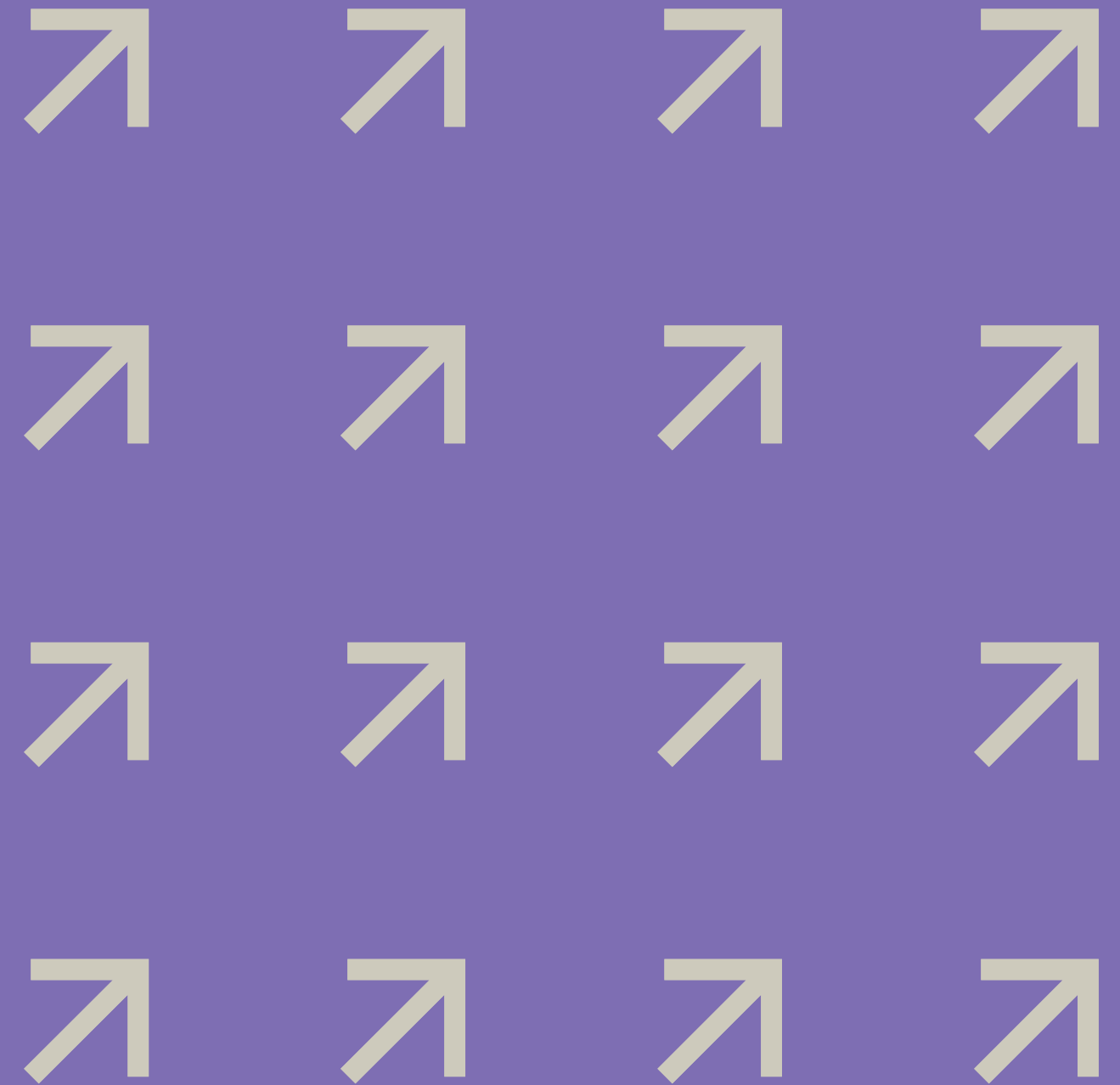
We continue to cherish our relationship with Holy Immanuel Church, Fauls, visiting for key Christian events, and we welcome Reverend Armstrong into our school to deliver weekly worship and for other significant events such as Remembrance. To support with our Christian Distinctiveness, we have built a strong relationship with 'Checkpoint', who visit us weekly to hold our ACE club (A Christian Ethos) and children have made monthly visits to Elmhurst Care home.



This year, a new 'Futures Focus Day' is planned to inspire children, giving them ideas for their potential careers. Parents and local businesses joined us to share a love of their work. It was a great community event involving, amongst others, personal trainers, a vet, estate agent, physiotherapist, radiographer and beautician.

The 4 All Foundation has begun to support our families and we look forward to continuing this relationship. The Story Sack Workshop was a great success, giving parents the skills and motivation to read with their children.

LGB AND GOVERNANCE



6. LGB and governance

Lower Heath are fortunate to have a strong LGB with a broad range of experience and skills. We have recruited an additional parent governor this year which will no doubt bring fresh ideas to the board. Governors have an extremely positive relationship with the Lower Heath staff and provide excellent support and challenge during half-termly meetings.

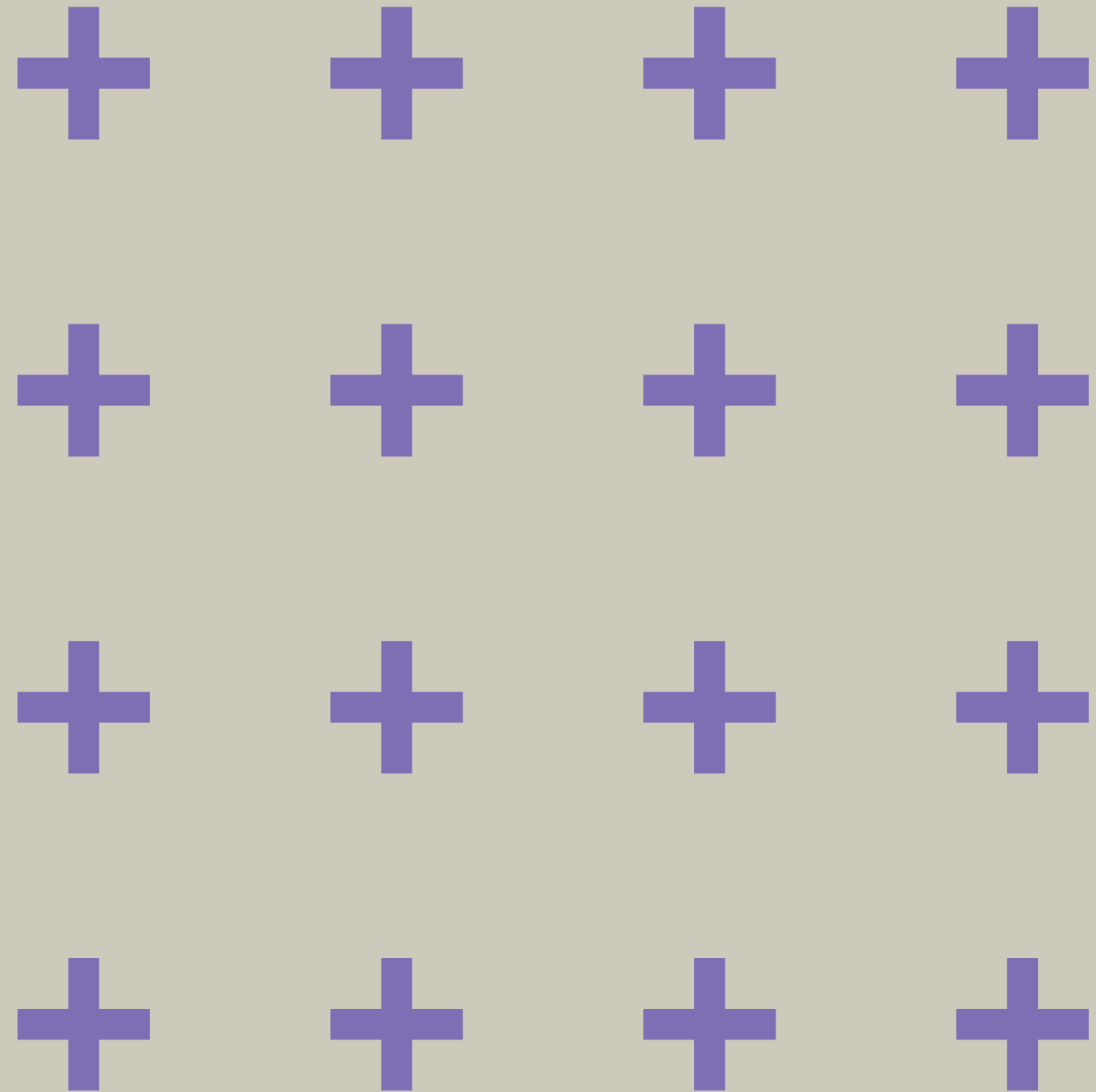
All governors have key roles within the school aligned with their interests and expertise and regularly meet with curriculum leaders as part of the annual monitoring cycle. Through this, their knowledge of school life has developed considerably, enabling them to raise pertinent questions as well as offering creative solutions.

Being so active in school, governors provide valuable feedback following school events to allow us to make positive changes throughout the year. Their outlook has assisted in improving communication and scheduling our family activities as well as providing insights into Lower Heath traditions that we have been able to reinstate e.g. Maypole dancing and representing Lower Heath at Fauls' Summer Fair. Another notable impact has been supporting the headteacher in obtaining Local Authority school transport for our families.

Governors have taken a keen interest in finance and Health and Safety. They have invited key personnel to present at meetings to enable the board to have a deep understanding of these areas.



SCHOOL HEALTH AND SAFETY - GDPR COMPLIANCE





7. Health and safety including GDPR compliance

Health and Safety is maintained to a high standard at Lower Heath with the support of Howard Prince, Operations Manager, who chairs our termly H&S committee meetings, coordinates our site and equipment checks and implements actions from audits.

We are adequately staffed with Designated Safeguarding Leads and First Aid trained practitioners. We have had no GDPR breaches this year and remain fully compliant. Termly Fire and Lock Down drills are scheduled and carried out efficiently.

Sarah Allwood, our H&S link governor is proactive in her role, attending all committee meetings and thoroughly scrutinising documents and risk assessments.

We have Safer School status, which is reviewed annually. The parent survey linked to the safer school's assessment highlighted concern about the busy traffic directly outside Lower Heath. As a result, a capital bid was accepted by the Trust and road improvements are to be made, which will take our family's cars off the road and onto the safety of the school site to enable their children to begin and end their days more safely.



SIAMS REPORT



8. SIAMS report

Our whole school Christian Vision and Values have been refreshed this year and our termly worship plan written to incorporate all of them through the year. Reverend Armstrong's weekly worships focus on sharing Bible stories which link to each value, demonstrating the theological links that are threaded through our daily practices.

Whole staff and governor CPD has taken place to increase awareness of the SIAMS expectations and inspection process as we are due to be inspected next academic year. The notion of 'spirituality' was a large part of this training; this knowledge is now ready to be shared with our children to enable them to explicitly understand how they are supported to flourish.

Our 'windows, mirrors, doors' structured approach to worship has enabled children to lead these, sharing texts linked with the half termly value. They certainly enjoy this challenge, demonstrating their use of TLAC strategies in the process. Using the 'warm fires and open doors' analogy, our daily acts of worship are inclusive, invitational and inspirational.

Links with are community are an important aspect of Christian Distinctiveness. Fauls PCC host a Harvest tea after our church service and kindly donated a willow tree for our Spiritual Garden. We were also lucky to receive a Fellowship Bench from Prees Parish Council.

Our Religion and Worldviews Kapow Curriculum has been adopted this year. This resource was quality assured by our CDA and covers all the major world religions, examines religious art and different scriptures.

At Lower Heath, our theologically routed Christian vision allows our children to flourish and live together in an inclusive culture.



Lower Heath CE Primary School

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