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Chair of Governors: Mr P Nicholls  
Vice Chair of Governors: Mrs A Butler



From: The Chair of Governors of the Bowes Cotherstone Federation

Dear Parent/Carer,

## **CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER 2021**

### **Introduction**

As we reach the end of the Autumn Term and the end of the 2021 calendar year, it is well worth looking back on another momentous year that has been largely overshadowed by the threat of COVID-19. However, the hard work and industry demonstrated by the children, their teaching and support staff and the respective Friends of the Schools has been commendable.

We also mark in January, the first anniversary of the Bowes Cotherstone Federation (BCF) which has seen our two distinct schools, each with their own unique character, working together to ensure the best possible outcome for our pupils.

Put simply; **Growing together, learning together.**

### **COVID-19**

The overriding message as Omicron surges is to make every effort to avoid a new lockdown of schools. In the UK as of 15<sup>th</sup> December, 51.3m people have received a first vaccine dose, 46.8m have received a second vaccine dose and 24m have received a booster.

The Government has promised that every adult over 18 will be offered a booster jab by the end of December. That is a further 18 million people. The reality of course is that being offered a jab is not the same as receiving one and at current rates of approximately 530,000 per day it will take until 20<sup>th</sup> January 2022 to ensure that all entitled adults have received their booster.

It also brings into focus the need for care and attention to hand hygiene and the wearing of masks in appropriate situations. This will help safeguard individuals who may be at greater risk through underlying health issues or severely weakened immune systems. Please stay safe.

### **School Activities**

I have previously mentioned the joint activities, but please remember that the BCF allows both schools to retain their own identities and so a balanced curriculum is taught at both Bowes and Cotherstone.

## **Cotherstone**

Little Learners continues to thrive and, from the photographs, are enjoying themselves immensely. Class 1 have been using Google Earth to enhance their Geography learning and have been able to use aerial photographs to home in on many places including their own village of Cotherstone.

Class 3 introduced for Remembrance a very interesting and thought-provoking piece built around famous WW1 poetry. By focussing on key words from the original text they made new poems.

The Pyjamas and Spotty day for Children in Need raised £57.02.

I also liked the idea of an Odd Sock Day. As someone who is notorious for wearing odd socks, I was pleased that the children focused on the uniqueness and individuality that wearing an odd sock gives you. I warmly encourage parents and carers alike to give it a try. You could say that it is a darn good idea!

The visitor to school who brought in a new John Deere tractor and told the children about food and farming was well received by KS1 and KS2.

As a Charles Dickens fan, I was pleased to read that the children were looking at Christmas mysteries by creating character descriptions based on Ebenezer Scrooge, a cold-hearted miser who was brought to redemption by three spirits. A Christmas Carol is considered essential reading this festive period.

Today (Wednesday) I attended both Cotherstone Christingle Services, Penny Sunderland led our worship and the children were a credit to the school and it was good to see some parents/carers in the congregation.

## **Bowes**

Stepping Stones studied food chains and created mobiles with different animals and made the link between predator and prey. The castle within First Steps and Stepping Stones looks impressive and clearly took some time to construct.

On Armistice Day, the school children assembled outside the South Porch at the eleventh hour to hear the School bell rung once more. It has been lovingly restored and refashioned by Martin Sayer and he had the honour of ringing the bell to mark the start of the two-minute silence.

Later in the afternoon, and in their bubbles, the children delighted with poignant and thought-provoking Remembrance services in church led by Penny Sunderland.

The school raised £190 for Children in Need which was a magnificent effort.

As I pen these thoughts the children are preparing for their Christingles in Church to be followed by the Christmas Fayre which had been postponed when the electricity supply was cut off after Storm Arwen struck on 26<sup>th</sup> November.

## **Nativity Plays**

I have had the privilege of attending three out of the four Nativity plays staged by our schools this year. The COVID restrictions forced a return to bubbles and so separate KS1 and KS2 plays were staged.

All re-told the Christmas story and in an entirely different way, but whatever your view about “The Greatest Journey” or “Straw and Order” or “Christmas Counts” or “The Magical Christmas Jigsaw” one thing is certain, each captures the unique story of that first Christmas more than two thousand years ago. The journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem as made by Mary and Joseph would have been more than 90 miles, a difficult one made more so by Mary’s imminent birth of the little baby Jesus and scholars believe that they journeyed for about 10 days, a punishing schedule.

I am always humbled by the quality of the performances and this year we were royally entertained by children who acted superbly, learned their lines tremendously well, sang their hearts out, danced with great enthusiasm and wore their costumes with great distinction.

The teachers and support staff had relatively little time to put the plays together, but they should all be applauded for staging such professional and inspiring dramas.

The Nativity play always marks the start of the Christmas season and this year we were honoured to witness such great spectacles.

## **Friends of the Schools**

The Friends of the two schools are charitable-based organisations who exist solely to serve the interests of the children at both schools. Every penny raised for fundraising goes to their respective school to supplement educational excellence. Any additional parents/carers who wish to join either Friends organisation would be more than welcome.

### **Friends of Cotherstone School (FOCS)**

FOCS held their AGM in the Fox and Hounds on the 12<sup>th</sup> November. Kelly Green was elected Chair, Rachel Atkinson Vice Chair, Claire Carr Treasurer and Vicky Hindle Secretary. I was present at the Cotherstone Christmas lights switch on 1<sup>st</sup> December to see the Christmas Tree lit plus the First Advent Window reveal. Proceeds that evening amounted to £128.05.

Their Christmas Fayre raised the magnificent sum of £457 and the Nativity plays monies were being counted after the evening performance in Cotherstone Village Hall.

### **Friends of Bowes School (FOBS)**

FOBS held their AGM in the School Hall on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November. Tina Bainbridge was elected Chair and Vicky Addison Vice Chair. Laura Drew is Treasurer and I am the Secretary.

The Nativity plays were hugely successful and £425 was raised by the raffle and £719 for ticket sales. More than 180 people attended the productions.

## **Teaching and Support Staff**

I previously mentioned in the Autumn newsletter the impact of COVID on some of the teaching staff at Cotherstone School earlier in the term. This only seeks to reinforce the fact that in spite of the detailed risk management practices employed at school, COVID is very real indeed.

Our teaching and support staff are at increased risk, not only because of their need for vigilance whilst at school, but also when they go home to their families. This double whammy requires the utmost care in managing in order for them all to stay safe.

Once again, our grateful thanks go to those staff entrusted with the education of our children. When you sit down to your Christmas lunch with family members please think about the sacrifices made by the teaching and support staff within our schools and remember them as they too settle down to spend some quality time with their families.

It just remains for me, on behalf of the Bowes Cotherstone Federation Governing Body, to wish you and your families well over this Christmas period.

We look forward to welcoming you and your children back in 2022.

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all.

Please Stay safe.

*Peter Nicholls*

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The First Christmas