

An enriching Curriculum Teaching British Values & Diversity through a Royal Celebration

At Bedford Hall we believe spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) underpins everything we do and this includes actively promoting British Values. We encourage children to embrace difference and diversity.

The wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle was a momentous occasion for several reasons. It was the most culturally diverse wedding ceremony of the British royal family – where Meghan celebrated her African- American roots. The couple made the celebrations as diverse as possible, inviting members of the public as well as loved ones and invited a gospel choir to perform. The royal family plays a symbolic role in our society, so the symbolism of this ceremony, which struck a clear note of inclusivity and diversity, was significant.

Being such a historic occasion, we felt all children should celebrate this.

On Friday 18th May, Bedford Hall held a day of celebrations to mark the royal wedding of HRH Prince Harry and American film star, Meghan Markle.

Children and staff dressed in Union Jack colours and as Wedding guests. Across the day the children participated in a range of activities based around the history of royal weddings and the diversity and difference of this wedding from previous ones. Activities also explored the fundamental British Values of democracy; the rule of law; individual liberty; mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and those without faith.

A whole school assembly looked at the different heritages of the bride and groom; plans for the wedding - including the history of St. George's Chapel (where the wedding was held); the diverse guest list and the breaks from royal tradition.

In the afternoon the whole school (from 2 year old nursery to Year 6) were invited to a mock royal wedding ceremony for Meghan and Harry in the Chapel. The service was led by Reverend. Vivien Smith. Head Boy and Head girl took the role of Harry and Meghan and year 6 children took on the role of best man and bridesmaids.



Following on from the wedding; the whole school was invited to a wedding reception on the mschool field – where the children enjoyed a royal picnic in the sunshine. Like the royal wedding, this was day to remember.



ACORN TRUST NEWSLETTER

Summer 2018



Sowing Seeds for a Brighter Future

It is almost 5 years since the Acorn Trust was created. Finding the right name for a Trust is not as easy as it might seem. We explored so many different names and then someone mentioned the Acorn Trust and immediately we knew it was the right name. The phrase 'from tiny acorns mighty oaks grow' came to mind and I knew it summed up what we wanted to create.

At the time I was the Headteacher at Bedford Hall and unlike many schools, along with Westleigh, we became Academies in order to preserve our curriculum that was bespoke to the needs of the children in helping them to achieve.

The year we converted the SATs results at Bedford Hall demonstrated such good progress for pupils that they were in the highest 2% nationally. No matter what their starting point the children were flourishing and growing and developing. It was this that we wanted to nurture and build upon.

The picture of the tiny acorn being planted and then being looked after, supported to

flourish until it grew and grew and grew, becoming something far greater than we could have imagined.

That's exactly what we wanted the Trust to support and nurture. That we plant seeds in children, we support them in developing strong learner qualities until they flourished into confident and successful lifelong learners.

This is how we developed the motto 'sowing seeds for a brighter future'. The motto reminds us about why we do what we do and ensures we are still striving to help our children be all they are capable of, not just academically but in all aspects of life. This is why we put on so many trips to widen the children's experiences. It's why we buy into specialist sports coaches, pop UK and many other specialist activities. So we can support all the children in flourishing.

We also recognise the same journey for our staff and try to create opportunities for staff to grow and develop. We recognise leadership qualities and place young staff on leadership training.

We enable more experienced

staff to share their skills and knowledge through encouraging them to become accredited specialist leaders of education. We're excited to launch a development program for senior members of staff that will further develop their skills and knowledge as they contemplate that next level of responsibility.

There's a quote that I love that says 'The True meaning of life is to plant a tree under whose shade you do not expect to sit'. As we develop our children and our staff and further equip them to be all they are capable of being, what they become is far greater than we are. We are sowing seeds for a brighter future.



Re-Opening After Fire Damage

As one academic year comes to an end, time is often spent reflecting on the year that has passed, celebrating achievements and contemplating new initiatives and learning how we will drive the school towards more successes in the coming year. The end of 2017-2018 left me reflecting on an event that will be stamped firmly into the history of Westleigh Methodist Primary School forever.

I remember vividly the ordinary Sunday morning, March 25th 2018 where four simple words received in a phone call would inform me of an extraordinary event, "School is on fire." I didn't quite comprehend immediately the extent of the fire but it wasn't long before social media played its part as I began to receive video messages that showed the blaze at its worst. Arriving at school that morning, the reality of the destruction hit me. A large part of our beautiful school, our second home, stood smouldering. Staff, pupils and parents had gathered in disbelief and from amongst the crowd came a voice that asked "Miss, what about our SATs? Will we have to move schools?"

In true Westleigh spirit, the community came together to overcome what was possibly the biggest challenge the school had encountered. Immediately an overwhelming amount of support and offers of help came flooding in from parents, members of the local community, members of our local church community and from schools around the country. Staff stood firmly together in the immediate aftermath and began planning and working to get the school back up and running at the earliest opportunity. A togetherness I will fondly remember as we worked to find a way to keep the Westleigh family together.

It was an unusual summer term as the big rebuild went underway with staff and children working in every inch of available space around school but a term made much easier with the positive can do approach from the whole school community. We saw parents overcome with emotion as they expressed gratitude for the hard work and efforts of the staff which spurred us on as we slowly but surely moved back towards normality, which at some points seemed far away in the distance. Then came the moment we had all been eagerly



awaiting, the re-opening of the school.

Regaining access to parts of the building that had been out of bounds for so long gave us all a huge sense of relief, one that perhaps we hadn't anticipated as we had been swept up in motions of 'keep calm and carry on'. There was a real buzz of excitement among the staff. Things we had once taken for granted; the staff room, the library, the hall, the staff toilets and the school kitchen, all felt like real luxuries that brought a wealth of gratitude as they were once again ours. It wasn't long before the classrooms were looking amazing and ready to welcome the children back after the summer break.

On returning in September we looked back on the events and celebrated how we had all worked together to overcome such a challenge. A blessing of the school was led by Reverend Paul Martin and some of our pupils were asked to share their thoughts and feelings surrounding the fire. It was only then that the actual reality of what we had been through hit me. Standing at the back of the hall, listening to their words left me overcome with emotion, not driven by sadness but the pride I felt to be a part of such a resilient school community. A community that stood firm in the face of adversity.

Demonstrating Resilience

On 25th March 2018 firefighters arrived at Westleigh Methodist Primary School to tackle a large fire just before 11am on Sunday morning. The fire started on the roof of the main building destroying a number of classrooms, office spaces, the stock room and the library. Thankfully nobody was hurt and we are grateful to the fire service for preventing the fire from spreading to other areas of school.

Despite the devastation this caused and the high level of media interest, leaders from the school and Trust pulled together to ensure the school was up and

running very quickly after the event. The Acorn Trust team worked tirelessly with the school and other services including the fire service, Local Authority, local schools and the community to secure the high morale of all involved, despite the emotions that such disasters create. Although staff at the school are very strong and determined the overwhelming priority was to ensure that the pupils' well-being and education were as unaffected as possible.

We have been touched by the generosity of the local and wider community. The amount of donations from far and wide have been unbelievable, from

gifts of money, loving prayers and cards, resources for the children and many amazing brand new books to help us restock our library. The kindness and thoughtfulness of so many people have allowed us to retain some normality to daily school life. We are extremely grateful for all the help and support offered and continue to be deeply touched. Our family values of love, thankfulness, generosity (and so many more) have been the driving force that have kept us all going through recent months.

Westleigh Methodist is privileged to be part of such a warm and loving community and we look forward to our school building being ready for the start of the new term in September 2018.



Progress in Partnership



Mrs Bate, Nursery Manager, Westleigh Methodist Primary School

I work as a Nursery Manager in the 3-4 year old Nursery at Westleigh Methodist Primary School. This is an Early Years Foundation Stage class run by three practitioners which is led and supported through school. The team provides high quality learning experiences for children and families who live in the local area. This often includes working alongside families to support learning in the home environment and gain a greater understanding of development and age related expectations.

This term, I have been working alongside the Westleigh Start Well Family Centre Early Years Worker with families and children to support their transition into school through Progress in Partnership. It's common for us to encounter families who are feeling nervous about this next step in their child's education. By offering these weekly, practical sessions we are working together to help children achieve their age related goals so that they are ready for Reception.

Helena McGuiness, Early Years Worker, Westleigh Start Well Family Centre

My role involves delivering projects with young children and their families to improve school readiness in the Leigh, Lowton and Golborne communities. By working alongside the Nursery setting, I am able to not just deliver sessions but support school staff to continue a standalone delivery. It gives me a rounded view of a child's learning and next steps and helps me build on existing relationships with families. It's also an opportunity to disseminate the key message that Early years research tells us that parental involvement from an early age has a significant impact on a child's educational achievement through to adolescence and adulthood.



Jevgenia and Kiera, mother and daughter, Westleigh Methodist Nursery

We decided to join the Progress in Partnership project because we wanted to read more books and mix with other children and also both get to do activities together before Kiera starts school. Keira didn't enjoy reading books so much before attending, preferring to watch videos. Keira has started reading much more from attending the sessions. We now read a bedtime story and also read during the day. Keira's favourite story books that she has been able to take home from the sessions are 'The Smartest Giant in Town' and 'Super Tato'.

Westleigh and Bedford Hall Methodist

Westleigh and Bedford Hall Methodist can offer exceptional provision for 2 to 4 year olds in their nurseries run by highly skilled and experience staff. Open Mon to Fri 8:50am to 3pm with high quality indoor and outdoor provision. Places available as soon as your child turns 2 with 3 hour sessions only costing £12. 15 hours free funding for all children aged 3 and over and for eligible 2 year olds. 30 hours free funding if eligible for 3-4 years olds. Before and after nursery care can be arranged locally for children 3years+



Roll out the red carpet!

The end of every term at Westleigh is marked by the very prestigious and sought after Oscar Awards. Each term the children are selected carefully based on a range of achievements ranging from demonstrating the Christian Values that are fundamental to life at Westleigh and the Trust, to showing resilience and determination in an area of learning. The Oscars are loved and highly valued by the families, pupils and school community as they promote academic excellence as well as the overall development of individuals. The names of the winning children are kept a closely guarded secret until the ceremony itself with only the teachers and the parents of the award winning pupils in the know. Children arrive at the ceremony filled with anticipation as they watch a special VIP open the golden envelopes and reveal the winners. By placing values at the centre of everything we do, we provide firm foundations for our pupils to build upon, developing high levels of respect among them. The support shown by the pupils for one another is heartwarming as they smile and cheer, openly congratulating one another for their achievements, making the Oscars ceremony a truly special event. The pastoral team work incredibly hard behind the scenes organising the ceremonies and one of their most difficult tasks is recruiting a VIP to present the awards. VIPs are chosen for their achievements and have ranged from soap stars to sporting legends. Last term saw local legend Micky Higham take to the stage to present the awards sharing his journey to a successful career in Rugby and showing the children that with determination and effort comes success. This term we are set to impress and inspire with a special video message recorded by an Olympic sporting celebrity. We look forward to celebrating our summer term winners and their achievements very soon.



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Spotlight on staff

Mrs Coleman, Year 6 Class Teacher

My journey began at Westleigh Methodist in June 2015, when I successfully secured a job as year 6 class teacher for September that year. To get to know my first lovely class, I was invited to accompany them to a two day residential. I thoroughly enjoyed this experience and after getting to know a little about the Trust and its schools. I knew I had made the right decision. Already I could see the family values that the Trust held.

As I officially began in September, I was faced with the daunting new National Curriculum. The difficulty lay in that the expectations for the end of year results had increased – the new curriculum was so uncertain and ambiguous as to what was ‘expected’ at year 6 – we had a challenging few months ahead of us.

To support me with this daunting task, the Trust recruited a new Deputy Headteacher with Year 6 experience to help guide me and share her skillset to help develop mine. Mrs Moragrega joined us in January of 2016 and soon made a big impact on the learning taking place in year 6. We worked collaboratively to develop the knowledge and understanding of the new curriculum.

I felt that I was lucky to have this opportunity to work so closely with someone so experienced, and once again the feeling of family values and collaborative support was evident.

Another aspect of my new role at Westleigh involved me being selected for Science subject leader. This was my first experience of leadership. Having the support from the senior leadership team allowed me to quickly learn what being a subject leader meant. All the staff were reassuring and understanding in working with me to improve the quality of science in our school. They trusted me to make decisions about how to move science forward and it was comforting to know that I had the support of my senior colleagues. This resulted in me completely falling in love with our school and spurred me to continue making a progressive impact: by further developing into leadership to be able to support others the way I felt supported.

This opportunity came along in spring 2017 when I took over as maths subject leader. This was the opportunity I was waiting for. During the past year

my role in school has gradually increased and I have been given opportunities to allow my leadership skills to flourish. I have worked hard to develop a mastery approach within teaching and learning. This has meant working with other schools in a mastery teacher research group and attending numerous conferences and professional development courses to gain the expertise required to drive this approach through school.

I have since revolutionised the way maths is taught at Westleigh and pupils and staff alike enjoy the exploration now at the heart of it.

I am now extremely excited to take this one step further next year and lead my subject to benefit not only my own school, but across the Trust. I think collaboration is key to sharing and evaluating good practice in order to progress. I feel privileged to have such opportunities from the Trust within my reach, I’m looking forward to seeing what the future holds and the next challenges for me to face.



Mrs Piper, Year 4 Class Teacher

I began teaching at Bedford Hall Methodist in September 2017.

I had previously taught for three years in inner city London and then a further four years in an affluent area of Kent (Tunbridge Wells).

I have been very grateful for the opportunities that have arisen for me since joining Bedford as an experienced teacher.

Firstly, I have been able to partake in my first KS2 teaching experience (I have previously only taught in KS1 and foundation stage). I have loved learning all about the KS2 curriculum and getting to know the older children.

My fellow KS2 teachers have been instrumental in helping me settle into my new role of KS2 teacher quickly.

I have been able to expand my extracurricular skills through leading choir and drama club, another first for me. I am very excited about our upcoming production of The Lion King. Part way through the year, I was offered the amazing opportunity to take on the role of Creative Curriculum leader.

This has allowed me to gain further leadership skills and see many subjects blossom.

Being part of the Acorn Trust,

has allowed me to discuss honestly and share aims and objectives with our partner school Westleigh Methodist.

I have met with teachers from Westleigh to discuss not only my classroom practice but also aspects of the Creative Curriculum leader role.

Having a joint vision has made me feel very supported and appreciated, whilst working in a nurturing environment, knowing guidance and help is more readily available than in a stand-alone school.

The collaboration opportunities have been amazing. Particularly the use of learning triads, which allows teachers to work together to plan and evaluate our practice. This was essential in implementing the new English teaching structure.

I am very excited about the prospect of the upcoming learning triads, where teachers will be collaboratively planning their yearly topics and first termly plan for Creative Curriculum next academic year.

It was very helpful to meet with the Creative Curriculum lead at Westleigh prior to this to discuss coverage of the curriculum and planning formats.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my first year at Bedford Hall Methodist School. All staff,

pupils and parents have been very welcoming and supportive, I am really looking forward to what next year has to offer.

