



Friday 8th October 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Our Christian value in focus this term is Generosity and we have been thinking about ways we can live this value and the Shine party was a direct example of generosity in action. It was an absolutely incredible event which celebrated both the generosity of our community to enable the build of the Learning hub and the generosity of those who planned and volunteered on the day to make the amazing party happen.

If you were able to come to the Shine party, you will have seen first-hand what a wonderful event this was on so many levels: we celebrated all the efforts to fundraise and build our wonderful Learning Hub; we celebrated 150 years of the Village School; we celebrated being able to bring the community together after the trials of the last many months. We certainly do have lots of local musical talent within our community and it was wonderful to bring this together in one joyous event.

The sun shone for us all and it was an incredibly unique event that managed to reunite a community and bring together many generations of people, all connected through the school. I had some wonderful conversations with past staff, pupils, Governors and parents, all of whom were able to give such a different perspective of the school over time; all were really delighted to see how the recent build developments have massively improved the school.

Children told me "Mrs Saville, that was the best day of my life" and this made me think how much we have missed the opportunity to be together as a community. One of the cards I received from a local resident told me how it was a chance to forget about all that we have collectively been through and to look forward instead, which was just what was needed. I really had underestimated the positive effect this event would have in bringing this community safely back together; the school is at the heart of the community.

Officially opening the David Tarr Learning hub and getting the opportunity to publicly thank David Tarr was just so special. David Moss, Chair of the Development Trust, gave a really heartfelt speech of thanks to the whole community for the fundraising and Bishop Lee blessed the hub which was very special indeed.

I made sure thanks were given to all who made the Shine party possible and I reiterate these thanks to all who performed, gave to the event in terms of donations and of their time. There were a lot of unsung heroes working hard behind the scenes setting and clearing up, planning and organising so thank you all. The Foaks team are incredible, all giving of their time freely and Emma was brilliant in overseeing the whole event to ensure it was just perfect. So much hard work went in to this event on many levels and we are thankful to every single person involved, thank you.

Thank you also to our wonderful photographer Abi Williamson.

To see all the brilliant photos that Abi captured of the day, please view them here <https://your-story.abiwilliamson.com/Your-Stories/AK-SHINE>.

If you would like a copy of a specific photograph, please contact Abi using the contact details on her website.

The Shine party was also to celebrate the 150th Birthday of the school. For months leading up to this, the school have been doing a Local History Project about the school and drew upon the villagers to share their experiences of the village and school from the past. We were joined in person and via zoom by many wonderful people who spoke with our pupils to teach them about the school they knew. Thank you to all of



those who either spoke or sent in photos, news cuttings or memories. We really did appreciate it. Daniel, chair of FOAKS, spent months working on this with the school and we are so thankful to him. They are still working on publishing a book about the villagers' memories which will be on sale once it is complete. Last week, Class 5 did an assembly to parents and carers about the History of the school and they used so much of the visitors' information to show how much they have learned about the school and how it has changed over the past 150 years up to today. It was a brilliant mix of Historical fact, children's work that they have produced, inspired by the project, all presented through excellent drama, music and with a fabulous amount of humour to entertain us all.

The children and staff worked with local artist Kathryn Gray and the community to design a beautiful 150th Anniversary commemorative community celebration tea towel. Proceeds go to a range of village causes including AK pre-school so please support if you can: <https://forms.gle/xcYJqAEVRv4Nk29y6>

Parents Evenings- We will have parents' evenings after half term, during the week of 7th November. The live booking system will go up from Monday 1st November at 3.30pm when you will be able to book your slots online. Mr Hockaday will send a parent mail to give instructions for this for our new parents and carers and as a reminder for us all. We are offering a mix of face of face and zoom to ensure everyone is able to attend comfortably.

Tuesday 8th November 3.30-7pm Face to face in each classroom

Wednesday 9th November 3.30-5.30pm face to face in each classroom

Thursday 10th November 3.30-5pm on ZOOM

You can book one slot of 10 minutes either face to face or Zoom. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss how your children are progressing. For face to face appointments, your children's books will be put out for you to view in the learning hub: Classes R, 1 and 2 will set out their books in a separate area for you to find your child's books and bring into the classroom for your appointment.

Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 will be outside their classes. You will leave via the back door to the outside from each appointment to keep a one-way system flowing.

For zoom meetings, teachers will send you a zoom link before the evening. This will be just on the Thursday evening.

As we are out of practice with face to face appointments, please be reminded that appointments will be 10 minutes long and staff have to keep to time to ensure the evening runs smoothly for all and everyone gets their appointments. We appreciate your understanding of this. The next parents evenings will be in March when you will receive a mid year report for your child, with a final annual report in July. All dates will be coming out to you very soon in the new AK communication strategy I am writing.

Heroes and Heroines In the interest of everyone's well-being, we are adapting this due to the weather. In the Summer we were able to enjoy sitting together on the field but in the Autumn and Winter this is not possible. With COVID 19 still around, we are not yet in a position to all meet in the hall as we simply do not have the space and ventilation to do this as I'm sure you understand and we have to protect one another. We are offering an alternative, but it may not be to everyone's liking but at least it is an offer. On the last day of the term, Tuesday 19th October at 2.30pm, we will get together. If the weather is fair and dry, we will aim to bring the children out onto the playground and parents and carers are welcome to join around the edge. We will try to set up a microphone so that you can hear the staff member speaking, but it may be benches/standing around the edge. If it is not totally dry, we will bring children and staff indoors and parents and carers can watch from the outdoor canopy to the hall and we will try to bring out benches out for you or it will be standing. If we have torrential rain, then we understand if you don't come!



Opportunities to come together to celebrate are so important but we have to keep everyone safe still ,so thank you for supporting us as we find a way through this for now.

Parent/ Carers into school

We are doing Class Assemblies to parents again, which is fabulous. We have one class of visitors into the hall with ventilation at a time and we did this successfully this week with Class 5 and the smiles on people's faces summed up how much this was appreciated. Each class will get this chance, Year 6 will be at the end of the year for their leavers assembly and in addition to class assemblies, Class R will do their own Nativity to parents and Years 1 and 2 will join together to do one for their families too. Dates to follow.

Harvest festival

On Wednesday, the children will go to church to celebrate Harvest Festival. We are collecting for the food bank again but we are not collecting food donations but rather asking for a voluntary donation of 50p or £1 which will be collected in class and taken to the church. We did this last year to great success and it was so appreciated. We support our families with the food bank and therefore we like as a school to support this vital charity at harvest time. I hope you can help us.

iSing Pop

You will have received my letter about iSing Pop concerts on 24th November. We are producing the tickets at the moment and they will go on sale soon. The church is such a tall old, well ventilated space, so perfect for the concerts. Another fabulous chance to celebrate together.

So as you can see, this newsletter has been about reopening (safely) and providing more opportunities for us to be together and this is what our school community has missed. This is a positive message for all and we will continue to work hard to ensure this is done safely and in line with what is expected from us.

I am currently working on the annual dates for the Year and this will update the School Calendar on the website as we are now able to plan for more opportunities and events. I am also working on a new communication strategy to help us all work together to ensure that systems for communication are clear and efficient after so much change. This will be with you as soon as it is ready.

I continue to be ever so proud of your children and of my staff team who work tirelessly to ensure every day is the best it can be for your children as we renegotiate our way through new systems. We have lots of wonderful things coming back to us such as Whole School Pantomime trips and I've organised a new residential for Year 4 pupils in December which means Year 3 pupils will be able to do the summer camp out on the field in June which is very exciting for them and means we have progressive residential experiences across all classes in KS2 now. We have emotional 'Beanology' days, school council are organising our 'Say one kind word' experience for Anti-bullying week, we have Harvest festival in church and a new service for Year R children and their Year 6 Buddies which Year R families are invited to in church next week. We have a crime scene investigation day coming up and so much more planned. All of this takes careful planning and risk assessing and time, but I know what a difference these opportunities make to the school experience for your children and how they light up our AKPS 'Shine Curriculum'.

Alongside all of this, we continue to work hard for external reviews of and visits to the school from the local authority which we have termly, Challenge partner review in January and we can expect a visit from Ofsted at some point this year or possibly next. In all of these inspections/reviews I want our school to shine and be



acknowledged for what we do well every single day but all the systems behind this take lots of preparation and work which is ongoing.

In terms of school improvement we have 3 areas in focus this academic year:

1. We continue to work on Global Advocacy to submit an assessment to get a gold accreditation this year, develop our outdoor spiritual area and continue to develop our Christian distinctiveness throughout and across the school.
2. We are working on continuing to support mental health of pupils and staff including through the work of our wellbeing team, emotional coaching work across the school and going for the school happiness award
3. We continue to develop our unique to AKSP 'Shine Curriculum' and ensure that alongside the national curriculum, we offer a bespoke, full and rich curriculum to ignite the learning of all of our pupils. Staff leaders will continue to be developed to ensure progression, coverage, and development of their areas for all pupils.

Each leader has exciting developments within their areas for example Mr Hockaday who leads Sports has introduced a challenge for the running track and a staff and pupil running club on Thursday lunchtimes to utilise our new running track and encourage fitness and improve activeness. He will also be developing sports leaders and house sports competitions and clubs as the year progresses. We have a new PE AKS hoodie being designed which will be for sale very soon.

In IT, Miss Igoe is working with Governors to have a full infrastructure overhaul of our IT systems which is well overdue but is costly so has had to be budgeted for. Miss Redman has ensured we are part of an excellent national programme for maths and Mrs Crowley our EYFS lead has ensured we were part of the new EYFS curriculum early adopters last year so we are ahead of the game this year and our EYFS curriculum is really effective. Miss Thomas continues to lead our Global advocacy across the school and we are really focussing on Diversity which can be evidenced across everything we do. She also ensures that we are teaching all religions well and incorporating some visitors from other faiths.

In English we continue to ensure writing is enjoyed, is progressive and developed across all learning and with our new library, our culture of reading is strong and Miss Igoe is working to ensure phonics teaching and early reading provision continues to be highly effective, including offering training this year and support for parents and carers. Mrs Serle is helping us go for a Science award and working to combine Science, technology and Engineering (including DT) to work with national hubs to design a brand new STEM lab in the school to enable our children to develop this area even further which is very exciting!

These are just a few examples, there are so many more. I have not even mentioned the new forest school area for Class R and the development of our progressive forest school curriculum for all classes including our ongoing work with celebrity gardener Lee (The skinny Jean Gardener) as one of his Ambassador Schools. Every single subject has exciting development which my staff (who are all leaders) work so hard beyond their class teaching to develop and as your Headteacher, I strategically plan, develop them as leaders and ensure things come to fruition. You can see how the staff are continually reaching for the stars and in fact have never stopped doing this throughout the pandemic. We want the very best for our school and for the pupils in our care to grow and flourish.



Clubs for pupils are starting to open up again; we are doing our very best with this and so far have football club, taekwando, choir and running club (lunchtimes). Once Mr Tanner's new baby is born (any day) he will be starting his sports clubs for KS1 and KS2 again. A parent asked me about netball club which we would absolutely love to get started back up again. Firstly, we need to get our new playground drilled to install our post fittings and then are looking for parent volunteers to help run this club to support us as we are currently at capacity. I would like to remind parents that clubs run by our teaching staff are done on a voluntary basis and as you have read the above you already realise how much they all do outside the classroom. It is my responsibility to look after their wellbeing and workload, so I am mindful not to ask too much of my team as they already give so much. Thank you for your support and understanding with this.

I have not stopped reaching as your Headteacher either. The pandemic has taught me so much; patience, resilience, thinking on your feet when things come to you out of the blue, and steering a precious ship through the unknown including tackling some very deep waves and storms! During this time, I have led us safely through but continued to work hard beyond the pandemic to develop and improve the school. We have been externally reviewed, developed our leaders, ensured the best provision for all pupils and supported wellbeing of staff and pupils(including the challenge of staff and pupil absence), built and kitted out the hub and new build with high quality interactive displays and art installations and developed the grounds to make them better for our children especially during lunchtime. I have also done a very challenging qualification during the pandemic and recently learned that I have passed my NPQEL (Qualification in Executive leadership) which I have been doing for almost 2 years in my own time and has taught me so much about business management and given me the qualification to be an Executive Headteacher and in the future lead more than one school at the same time. Currently I am utilising these skills to work in partnership with the Local authority and I am delivering training too in their schools around the support for Disadvantaged pupils in schools, teaching writing and developing leadership. I have also become a trustee on a couple of further education and hub boards to be more outward looking for our school. All of this has been achieved alongside the pandemic and although at times it has really tested me, I think it shows resilience and my absolute drive and passion to provide the very best I can for this school and for the other schools I work in partnership with. All with the desire to improve opportunities and outcomes for as many pupils as I can. In addition, I secretly rehearsed for months with the Aksionals to be a lead singer for the shine party, pushing me out of my comfort zone but it was a brilliant and fun secret challenge which I think everyone enjoyed.

I just wanted to give you a bit more information about some of what is happening at AKPS behind the scenes. There is so much more I have not covered! I am often given feedback from parents and I always do my best to listen, reflect and adapt where required. Last week my team and I received such lovely feedback from a couple of parents which I have to say was massively appreciated- thank you! I am never sure what parents and carers understand about the way our school works but the teaching and learning and opportunities for your children are most visible to you but the strategy and work behind it sometimes goes unseen and I think it is really useful for you to see how our school is continually modelling its vision and reaching for the stars by challenging ourselves continually so that we can shine very brightly in what we provide for and achieve with your children.

I look forward to seeing you at some of the upcoming events. I hope you feel proud of your school.



Mrs Saville
Head Teacher

All dates for the year are on the calendar on the school website on www.akps.org.uk to help you plan ahead

Date	Event
Tuesday 19 th October, 2:30pm	Heroes and Heroines Assembly
Tuesday 19 th October	End of term
Wednesday 20 th October	Teacher development day
Monday 1 st November	Term Starts
8/ 9/ 10 th November	Parents Evenings
21 st November	iSing Pop Concerts

ASHTON KEYNES

Church of England VC Primary School

SHINE BRIGHT ★ REACH FOR THE STARS



Gosditch, Ashton Keynes, Nr Swindon, Wiltshire SN6 6NZ Head Teacher: Mrs S Saville Tel/Fax: 01285 861436 Email: office@ashtonkeynes.wilts.sch.uk www.akps.org.uk