

Kelly Yeo – Class Teacher *Bearnes Primary School*

My journey with the Trust started when I was working as a class teacher at Stoke Gabriel Primary School. At the time, Stoke Gabriel was part of the Totnes Schools Federation and they joined together with the Newton and Teign Federation, forming the Link Academy Trust in 2016. In 2018, Nicky Dunford (CEO) asked if I would consider a move to another of the Trust's schools in Newton Abbot to further my career and take up the role of EYFS Lead at Bearnes Voluntary Primary School. This move enabled me to gain experience of running an effective team and create fantastic relationships both in school and Trust wide. I am passionate about children's learning and development and have established many new initiatives with the full support of the Academy Head. A few of these that I am most pleased with include developing the phonics and reading schemes for EYFS and KS1, revamping the EYFS provision and setting up a community Parent and Toddler Group. I am proud to be part of our school community and the visions and values we have embedded in our setting and also of the relationships we have with our wider local community.



In 2019, I was invited to be part of the Curriculum Leadership Group Hub as the EYFS Hub chair and representative to focus on the improvement of teaching and learning across our schools. This has enabled me to work collaboratively with my EYFS colleagues across the MAT, gain experience and develop new leadership skills. This year, I have also had the opportunity to develop my leadership further and I am now attending the Trust's prospective academy head training and undertaking an NPQSL course – there is a lot to learn, but I am really enjoying the experience!

I am continually looking to develop myself and I have attended many high quality CPD training opportunities both internally and externally whilst working for the Link. I am currently part of the Oracy Project and I have the support of our Oracy Hub and bespoke leadership coaching sessions with Sarah Clarke, the Academy Trust School Improvement Lead to assist me with rolling the project out school wide.



The Link Academy Trust is an inspiring, forward thinking organisation to work for and recognise their staff's hard work and dedication. I feel blessed that my well-being and work-life balance is taken seriously and I can always ask for advice should I need it. We also enjoy an additional day off as recognition for all our hard work during the year. Usually, I take my birthday in June as my 'Give Back Day' and hope for sunny weather!



I am immensely proud of what I have achieved over the past few years with the support and encouragement of my colleagues in the Trust and I look forward to seeing what else I can achieve in the future.

**It is true – Small Schools, Big Opportunities!**

**Karen Barlow – Class Teacher *Landscape Primary School***

I joined the trust for my training year as part of the School Direct teacher training programme with an autumn term placement in Year 3/4 and a Spring/Summer placement in Year 5/6.

Towards the end of my training, the teacher who was my mentor in Year 5/6 was moving to another school within the trust to take a senior leadership position so I applied for her post, was interviewed and was successful.

Having already taught half the class during my training, the transition into my NQT year was relatively smooth but still a massive learning curve having to be responsible for every element of teaching and learning and all the administration that goes with it! I was able to build and develop the relationships I had with staff in school and their help and support was invaluable. I also had a comprehensive NQT training programme covering a variety of topics and the opportunity to talk to other early career teachers was great on both a professional and personal level.

Having come into teaching later in life, I was able to draw on my previous experiences and bring elements to my current role which have been particularly useful for the curriculum leadership roles I was assigned.

The next academic year will be my fourth year of teaching and I plan to undertake the NPQML qualification. I will also be moving schools to take

on extra responsibilities in the role of senior teacher. I very much look forward to seeing where this leads.

**Georgia Gilby – Class Teacher *Diptford C of E Primary School***

I started with the Link Academy as an NQT, fresh from University and not knowing what the real world was about!

The Link gave me invaluable support throughout my first year; including days out of the classroom to meet with other Early Career Teachers across the Trust. This was a great opportunity to speak to others in a similar position but also to gain extra skills and knowledge from members of staff and leadership in a range of schools.

Since completing my NQT year, I have been given numerous CPD opportunities. I have been part of the NCETM Teaching for Mastery Research group for the past two years, again allowing me to develop an area I am particularly interested in. From this, I have had the chance to lead Trust wide training sessions in areas I have worked on and developed through my research and practice.

I have been fortunate to teach across the whole of KS2 and even when being the Y3/4 teacher, was given chances to teach Y6 for SATS sessions, as this was a year group I enjoyed teaching and wanted to develop. The following year, I was then asked to teach the Y4/5/6 class, which I have absolutely loved.

SLT within the Trust are always approachable and you are always listened to when asking for advice or support with your career. I had discussed future plans to progress and within a short space of time, have been approached to become Senior Teacher of my school. I have felt empowered that I am capable of progressing with my career, despite being relatively young – this is something I feel is a massive strength of the Trust as you are not judged on your age or experience but rather your determination, drive and ability.

I am currently undertaking my Master's Degree in Education and Educational Leadership, something which I have been encouraged to do by the whole Trust, from other teachers I work with, my Head Teacher, the CEO and even Directors! Everyone wants to help you and boost you to achieve your goals.

You are definitely made to feel appreciated and nothing is too big or too small. We are one big family, both within my own school but also across the Trust and this is what makes working for the Trust so special.



**Olivia Gentile – Class Teacher** *Hennock Primary School*

I joined The Link Academy Trust in my second year of teaching where I was given the role of KS1 and Reception teacher at Hennock Primary School. I was lucky enough to work with a small team of experienced teachers who were hugely supportive and spent my first year with a wall covered in post-it notes detailing useful things they said and ideas I had magpied from their teaching practices. I was also offered a place on the early careers programme run by the academy to further develop my classroom practice.

With a background in theatre and the arts, my skills in this area were quickly utilised by my school. After taking a directorial role on the Christmas productions, I was given the opportunity and the funding to run the Arts Award for the children in my school. Through taking part in this, the children developed their understanding and skills in the real, modern world of art and received a personal, recognised qualification that held the same status as the Duke of Edinburgh award. This venture also demanded that I develop my own skills in running a fairly large-scale project involving a lot of stake holders.



My school were lucky enough to be funded for teacher CPD. I attended courses on subject leadership and middle leadership and this began my journey into taking on greater responsibilities within my school. I have developed a particular passion for working with teaching students and supporting them to develop their personal teaching practice and educational ethos so that they are ready to take their first steps into the world of teaching.

Despite the recent lockdowns, I have been supported to Foundation unit across the Pre-school and Reception/Year 1 another, thereby allowing each individual child to access the day. I lead a team of EYFS staff who work closely to identify classes that is going to suit their needs and support their develop the school grounds, specifically the EYFS outside space,



progress into the role of Foundation Lead and have developed a classes in my school. The two classes now work fluidly with one learning environment they need at particular times during the each child's needs and develop a curriculum across the two development in the moment. This role has also allowed me to to purchase and create an environment and equipment that is

suitable and used effectively to develop learning.



Additionally, I have taken on the role of English lead and am beginning to develop my ability to work with other experienced teachers, analyse our individual teaching practices within the subject area and encourage reflection to develop a foundation subject in the school.

I have been lucky enough in recent weeks to have been given the opportunity to be part of a new and exciting oracy and vocabulary project. I hope to continue to grow my practice through this venture that may begin to expand my teaching impact beyond my school and into other parts of the academy.