

GA Family
supporting...

Bretherton Endowed CE Primary School



Article written by

Lucy Atinseough-Wenham

Purchase Ledger Assistant / Content Writer

Myself and Abigail were recently given the opportunity to take a tour around Bretherton Endowed Primary School, just a few minutes' drive away from our bustling Plocks. Upon turning the corner into the village, we were greeted with lush green gardens, flowers of all colours and birds happily chirping. It became clear why Bretherton has won Lancashire's Best Kept Village Award.

As is common knowledge at GA, we're working for a community-centred and family-orientated business. So, in the typical GA spirit, we want to give back to the local area more than just a vague smell of pet food as you drive by Plocks, and one way we have done this is through Bretherton Primary School.



Founded in 1653, Bretherton Primary School has been the backbone of the area for nearly five centuries! Many GA colleagues, including myself, were once one of those children galloping across the playground. Those key skills of reading and writing taught by generations of dedicated teachers have led us to GA. It was so lovely to see some of my old (and admittedly favourite) teachers once again, especially as a representative for GA. It means a lot to be given the honour to write an article on the place where some of my most treasured memories were made.

The pandemic and financial strains on the country have, of course, affected us all in different ways. Headteacher Alison explains that everyone involved with the school had high ambition to support children in both during and after the national lockdowns, but there was not always the budget to do so; this is where GA stepped in.



Amidst the chaos that was 2020, we donated some laptops to the school to make online learning less excruciating (just the sound of the Microsoft Teams meeting alarm gives me flashbacks), which supported not only the children but their parents and staff as well. During the recovery, Alison says that providing additional Teaching Assistant hours has been invaluable in supporting teachers and in ensuring the individual needs of each child are met.

Predictably, the pandemic was a massive disruption to the children's academic and emotional development, and this is when GA began to expand its support with the school.

One of the major ways we have done this is through funding hours for a Teaching Assistant who specialises in Children's Mental Wellbeing.

Staff and parents, both locally and nationally, reported that on the return to school the following September, there was a noticeable decline in emotional regulation, concentration, abilities to share with others and, in particular, writing skills.



After two years of planned support from all staff and Teaching Assistants in her pastoral role, financially possible because of GA, staff have noted children are less anxious, increased academic results with English and maths, children being able to discuss their feelings more, and all children are accessing welfare, sports, and games clubs during lunchtimes and after school.

Building on work prior to Covid, through the funding, additional hours and resources were provided for their Teaching Assistants. One aspect, in particular, was their Pastoral Lead, who has been an invaluable help to the school and wider community as she's implemented a Peer Mediator mentor system during break times which gives children tools to help other children in building and developing their relationships and ensure everyone feels happy and included.

She's also focused their limited library funds on children's books that deal with difficult topics, such as grief and mental illness, to support children who are particularly struggling with these issues. She's also been involved in the school's Confident Me program, which gives children in their last year of primary school real confidence and an understanding of their emotions to help them believe in themselves going forward to secondary school and their wider lives, commenting "it's about giving them the ability to be resilient." All of this was supported by the donation provided by GA.

Now we're three years away from the initial lockdown. Although it feels like only yesterday we were going through another gruelling board games night and attempting to make sourdough bread in our delirium, schools up and down the country are still feeling the lasting effects.

Representatives from GA, such as myself and Abigail, have witnessed first-hand the benefits of this connection between our company and key figures in the local community, such as Bretherton Primary School. As we strolled through the corridors illuminated by sunlight pouring through the original stained-glass windows, we saw classroom after classroom of smiling children, and upon returning to R2, we were grateful to be collectively working for a company like GA that takes the initiative to support children in our community.

Looking to the future, Alison explains that the school is taking steps to achieving the Diversity and Equality Mark, making more efforts to become a greener school (a goal shared by GA) and increasing personal, social, health and economic enrichment to give children the tools for mental wellbeing as they progress through their education.

The ways GA is supporting them going forward is through donating money towards updating their library with many more books to be enjoyed, which will be directly funded by donations from GA Family Members from this year's Family Fun Day, joining their careers fair in May (their first since 2019!) and financially supporting the school to ensure that their Pastoral Lead can extend her invaluable time with the children for a further three years. She believes the support they are able to give children "will stay with them for the rest of their lives."

GA and the GA Family are all so grateful for the opportunity to support Bretherton Primary School and the wider community it cares for.

