

Dear parents, carers and teachers,

It's been a couple of months since we last sent out our 'monthly' FOCUS newsletter, so please accept our apologies for this overdue communication. And while the FOCUS newsletter may have paused temporarily, the FOCUS team, together with our superb class reps and an army of other unsung volunteers, have been hard at work to support our community and raise vital funds for the school. These fundraising activities are all the more critical, given the nationwide issues around school funding (as highlighted in Dr. Biddulph's email from 8 March).

In this edition of the newsletter, we wanted to highlight all the exciting progress that the **Gardening Club** has made and warmly invite anyone with an interest in this area to get involved.

We also want to draw your attention to some of the **super-easy** ways that we can all help the school to continue realising its imaginative ambitions for our children's education. Please do take a look at the details on how to set up a UCPS [AmazonSmile](#) account, as well as a reminder about setting up an [easyfundraising](#) account - both of which have the potential to raise big bucks for the school whenever you shop online. We also want to raise awareness of FOCUS's [Green Shoots Fund](#), for which we would love to increase participation across the parent community. Please also take a look at the information that we have included about **Payroll Giving** and **Match Funding**.

We recognise that this newsletter has a strong emphasis on ways to give, but in the next edition, we will aim to redress the balance by sharing more details of how the money that you have generously donated is being spent for the children. Thanks so much as always!

The FOCUS 2019 team (email: focusucps@gmail.com)

Celebrating our volunteers

Our class reps were recently treated to a special school tour led by Dr. Biddulph, which was followed by lunch and playtime on the grounds. This gave our parent 'ambassadors' the opportunity to see the school's innovative practices and values in action, and offered the school a way to show its appreciation for their volunteerism. One parent rep said of her time on the tour:

"I thoroughly enjoyed Dr. Biddulph's tour [of the school]...Some highlights were sitting in on the Gratitude Assembly, watching the kids utilise the learning streets and philosophy nooks, speaking with a group of KS2 mediation peers and being invited by a group of kids to join their table for lunch. The effort that UCPS staff make to continually challenge themselves to do better was evident - from the Rainbow Challenge (Reception) and Diamond Challenge (KS2) to the leadership team creating opportunities to be critically evaluated by their peers (a headteacher from another school was doing an evaluation during my visit). As I left the school, the words of one child stayed with me: "being kind is the most important thing in the world.""



A belated but very big thank-you to our younger Winterfest helpers

Winterfest, held ALL the way back in December, was a huge success. One set of volunteers stands out because the activity was organised and run by students (and siblings) Ceyhun and Dilara. Their balloon shape activity was extremely popular and raised a whopping **£51.70** for the school. Thank you so much Ceyhun and Dilara for helping to make this such a successful event! Your efforts are hugely appreciated!

FOCUS would love to hear from any students that have similar ideas for showcasing their community spirit or raising money for the school. This could be at a future event, or something that you do outside of school. Like Ceyhun and Dilara, your creativity makes a real difference!





Building the willow dome and cloister



The area above will be rewilded as a water wildlife garden

An update from the Gardening Club

Gardening Club came out of hibernation early!

With the funds raised through various activities this school year (including over £800, with GiftAid, during the most-recent bake sale/jumble sale), we have built a willow dome and tunnel in the forest and will support the much-anticipated water wildlife garden.

We have planted blackberry bushes and on the allotment, we've planted 50 early and late-season raspberries, which will crop a little this year, and a lot next year! We've also built the first part of a willow cloister around the boundary of the allotment, which will provide extra habitat for children and wildlife, and increases the play space as the existing fencing comes down and is recycled (drum roll please!) into a boundary for the new water wildlife garden! We already have yearling toads hiding in the compost heaps that we built last year, and Dr. Biddulph has applied for permission to convert the water pump area to a new water wildlife area, with wildlife corridor through to the forest. **Dr. Biddulph has secured a £2000 grant to help fund this project, but our target is £5000!**



'I Build this Garden for Us': joining Gardening Club

For anyone who is interested in being a part of garden club, the only requirements are enthusiasm and the completion of the school's volunteer course, followed by a DBS check. Please get in touch with Mrs. Watson via the school office.

If you're keen to get involved but have not yet done the volunteering course or had the DBS check, please get in touch regardless. We will hopefully be running some family Saturday sessions as well!

If you have any questions, please get in touch with [FOCUS](#) in the first instance and we can put you in touch with the right people!!

Save the date

Friday 5 April, 8:30 a.m.
Family Friday in classes.

Date TBC (after Easter)
Easter egg hunt during school

Monday 29 April, 8:45 a.m.
Sri Lankan New Year parent morning



FOCUS is paying £61.25 for books distributed on World Book Day (7 March), enabling each student to go home with a book and to celebrate the joys of reading. Also this month, **FOCUS sponsored £300 for eco-friendly t-shirts** to support Year 3's sustainable fashion learning topic (see picture, left).

Sign up to the FOCUS UCPS AmazonSmile account

Thank you

Now when you shop at smile.amazon.co.uk, your purchases will support **Friends Of University Of Cambridge Primary School**.

[Change your charity](#)



Next, make it easy to return to smile.amazon.co.uk.
Install Amazon Assistant to ensure your purchases will support your charity.
We will always take you to smile.amazon.co.uk when you click on any link in the assistant.

[Install now for Google Chrome](#)

You can now support the school every time you shop on Amazon by signing up to the FOCUS account on smile.amazon.co.uk.

What is AmazonSmile?

[AmazonSmile](https://smile.amazon.co.uk) is a website run by Amazon, which identically replicates the shopping experience of Amazon.co.uk. However, when using the AmazonSmile 'shopfront', 0.5% of the net purchase price of eligible products are donated to the charity of your choice.

It takes only a minute or two to set up a UCPS AmazonSmile account!

Go to smile.amazon.co.uk to search for and then select the 'Friends of University of Cambridge Primary School' (see image above) as your charity. You may also be prompted to set up a web page bookmark and a widget on your phone, both of which are easy ways to ensure that the school benefits every time you shop on Amazon.

easyfundraising.co.uk

By registering with the UCPS-dedicated easyfundraising.co.uk account, we can raise money for the school when doing any online shopping on sites such as Amazon, John Lewis, Sainsbury's (and more).

81 parents/carers have signed up to the UCPS account, raising **£1,793**. Please help us to increase these figures: sign up by following the instructions on the [easyfundraising](https://easyfundraising.co.uk) website. Thank you!!

The Green Shoots Fund and payroll/match funding

As you may already know, we have had some early success with adoption of FOCUS's '[Green Shoots Fund](#)' (launched back in September). Through this simple monthly payment mechanism, members of the school community have committed around **£10,000** per year of discretionary funding for the school. Dr. Biddulph has reported to FOCUS that he will be using this money for some really fantastic learning opportunities for ALL the children later in the school year. These activities go well above and beyond what is possible under normal budgetary restrictions. Details are still being finalised, so we will leave it to Dr. Biddulph to share the great news!

Help us to increase participation in the Green Shoots Fund

We would really like to build on the momentum of our 'early adopters' by getting more parents signed up, so if you haven't set up your standing order, please do consider doing so today. More details about the fund, as well as the standing order form, can be found on our dedicated page on the school website (see above link). No matter how much you are able to give, every penny allows the school to confidently develop its already creative curriculum for the children.

Payroll giving and company match funding

A number of parents have asked if the Green Shoots Fund is eligible to receive contributions from schemes such as payroll giving or company match funding. The simple answer is yes, and if either of these schemes are offered by your employer, then they can greatly enhance the funds that you donate to our school.

Company match funding:

Although not common, some UK employers have match funding programmes in place, which provide a very effective way of giving money to a nominated charity. In brief, for every £1 that an employee gives to a charity, the employer also gives £1 (this can vary by company/employee). Please check with your HR dept to see if they can support this scheme.

Payroll giving:

Payroll giving is an HMRC scheme that allows employees to give money to a given charity without paying tax on it. Your employer must support the scheme by engaging a Payroll Giving agency.

If your employer subscribes to the scheme, payroll giving is **super simple** and tax-efficient because your donation is deducted before you pay tax. The benefits to the school increase in line with the rate of tax that you pay. Below is an illustration.

You donate	£5.00	£7.50	£10.00
Cost to you as a 20% taxpayer	£4.00	£6.00	£8.00
Cost to you as a 40% taxpayer	£3.00	£4.50	£6.00

Getting it all set up:

In the first instance, speak with your employer, but [FOCUS](#) is happy to help too! Please get in touch with us with any questions!!