

OUR TRUST

CHILD FIRST, ASPIRE, CHALLENGE, ACHIEVE

APRIL 2021 | ISSUE 15



LONG SERVICE AWARDS

Our Trust employees take centre stage

SARAH DAFFEY

"No child should ever go hungry"

TESTING TIMES

Our Trust teams reveal how they pulled together

METAMEMORY

How are we further enhancing our Thinking Toolkit?

TRANSFORMING LIFE CHANCES



WE ARE ONE

TRANSFORMING LIFE CHANCES

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Awards**



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AWARDS
2021**

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WELCOME MESSAGE FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Welcome to the Spring 2021 edition of Our Trust!

This issue of Our Trust is a very special one for me as it celebrates the launch of our Trust Service Awards. The recognition of the work, dedication

and loyalty of our colleagues is incredibly important to me, and as the HR team pulled it together I was humbled by how many of our staff we were able to recognise for their service.

We specifically chose the word “service” when considering these awards, as we believe this accurately reflects the importance of all our roles in supporting and developing others. Service is defined as, “the action of helping”, and what better description can there be for the role we play in young people’s lives and our ambition to support them to be their best selves.

When I began my career, many moons ago, working in education was described as a vocation as well as a profession. While I hear

this less often today, I still believe that our sector has a special calling for many of us and that we find meaning and fulfilment in our roles far beyond that experienced in other sectors. This is directly linked to service and the huge psychological benefits of knowing that we have been of service to others and made a positive impact on the lives of those we work with.

I think it is also worth noting that, throughout the Covid-19 Pandemic crisis, the education sector has been described as an essential service, reflecting the incredible importance of the role we play in society that can sometimes be forgotten in normal times.

Therefore, I would like to thank all our staff for their service, and I am delighted that we now have a formal mechanism to recognise this in the future.

Please enjoy this copy of Our Trust,

Stuart Gardner

Stuart Gardner, MSc, NPQH, NLE
Chief Executive Officer

TEACHER AWARDS 2021

Say “thank you” - scan and nominate your teachers today!

Long Service Awards

A first for our Trust is the Long Service Awards, where we will be celebrating staff within teams across all areas of our Trust.

We are delighted that our Trust Long Service Awards was launched this year. Our Trust is underpinned by our teams; their consistent efforts reinforce our values, and their commitment supports our high standards and quality of the learning journeys our students take when they join a Thinking School, and for that we truly thank all of our team, from I.T. to teachers, administration staff to central. Every member of staff, whether at our Trust for a year or 30 years, is talented, valuable and deserves recognition during their time with us.

Stuart Gardner, CEO of Thinking Schools Academy Trust said: "I am thrilled that we have launched this celebratory initiative within our Trust. This service award symbolises our team members and their fantastic contributions to the lives of the young people throughout their time here. It is

also a recognition of their ongoing acknowledgement and commitment to our Trust values of Child First, Aspire, Challenge and Achieve. I look forward to hearing all the amazing stories of years spent working within our Trust."

Here at our Trust loyalty is genuinely having our, and our students' best interests at heart, and for the longer standing members of our team, you have proven that honoured that commitment year after year. Our Long Service Awards recognises and celebrates the immense value of long-term contributions, efforts and constant commitment to transforming the life chances of children.

The key milestones for recognition are five, 10, 15, and 25 years of continuous service with the Thinking Schools Academy Trust.



15 Years

James Fenlon, Head of Estates and Health & Safety

I started at The Portsmouth Academy (formerly known as City of Portsmouth Girls' School) in 2003 as a Science Technician, and one of the questions I remember from my interview was; 'would I be willing to dress up in women's clothing for the annual Pantomime?', from that year on I dress up every Christmas as it's just such great fun!



Great friends, good chat, and the opportunity to encourage students has kept me at our Trust, I've had the privilege of taking students on great trips over the years - even to the Houses of Parliament to interview astronauts, and MPs. It really has been incredible.

The best bit of advice I could give anyone starting at our Trust is to talk to people. Get to know everyone, get a feel for the place; talk to the cleaners, talk to the people serving you lunch – it makes everything nicer if you just talk to people.

We now have Plymouth High School for Girls on board and it's been amazing developing a school at such pace; revamping the computer systems, and re-building and re-flooring – it's all go!

15 Years

Wendy Tanner, PA to Principal at Holcombe Grammar

I joined Chatham Grammar School for Boys, as it was known then, on 2nd May 2002 as an Admin Assistant for maternity cover. It was the perfect job to fit in with my children, and I could walk there in 20 minutes! On my first day, I worked in an office which housed all of the student records, and the one and only photocopier/printer in school.



The maternity cover turned into a permanent role and an eventual promotion to the Head's PA and that's where I have stayed. The main change I've seen is joining the Thinking Schools Academy Trust in 2014. It was a challenging time with significant changes – all for the better. I didn't expect to say so long but working with amazing people at Holcombe and our Trust has made me want to stay.

My advice for anyone starting at Thinking Schools Academy Trust would be work hard, be 100% committed, be professional and always be prepared; think ahead to enable you to deal with situations. The last 19 years have been a real pleasure.

10 Years

Clare Brinklow, Principal at The Rochester Grammar School

I joined RGS as a Newly Qualified Teacher, teaching History, and I've been part of our Trust since it was founded in 2010. Working here has definitely kept my career on its toes, my skill-set has developed immensely and I feel challenged and supported in everything I do. This kind of loyalty; 5 years' plus, isn't bought it's earned by employers, through commitment to its employees, seeing their potential and helping them to deliver on that. Plus, being part of such a collaborative team is great, they see my potential and believe in what we're all working towards.



Here at Thinking Schools I feel you're not set up to fail, you are fully supported to be your best in every aspect, and that's the reason I've stayed at Thinking School's Academy Trust for this long.

5 Years

Lee Lucas, Head of Safeguarding

It was around 2015 when I first met Stuart Gardner at the Thinking Schools Academy Trust while working in another secondary school in Chatham.



Working as a safeguard lead is challenging and rewarding, life's hard and for some children it's really hard; but to know I'm making a difference is worth it.

I've stayed true to our Trust as I've been able to develop my skillset with continued support and encouragement to always keep learning. I also love that I get to help schools outside of our Trust too, share resources and signpost them. It's very flexible here and I get to touch base with the children, for me the voice of the child is what matters. Ultimately, while at our Trust I know that I'm able to effect change.

As the Long Service Awards continue we look forward to hearing more of our staff stories and sharing their celebrations with you - watch this space for more!



SCAN ME



TEACHER TRAINING

in partnership with  GLF Schools' Teacher Training

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STAFF PULSE SURVEY FEEDBACK

Our Staff Pulse Surveys are short and anonymous. The questions help us to take the 'pulse' of our Trust.

Over time, these surveys help us to understand employee satisfaction, implement change and define company culture.

JANUARY

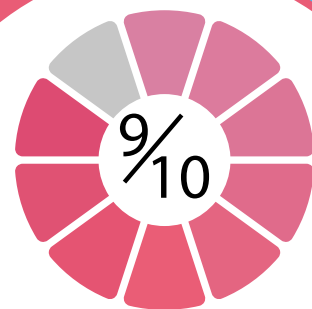
We asked teams across our Trust to reflect on the transition to remote teaching and remote working.

Our staff scored a 3.4 out of 4 showing that 9/10 members of staff who responded to the survey felt truly supported with their remote teaching and working. While a whopping 92% of our Trust teams who responded to the survey said they knew where to go and who to talk to when they needed help with remote learning / teaching.

FEBRUARY

We wanted to know staff thoughts on communications across our Trust. We found that the majority of staff agree that they're getting the information needed via Trust wide emails. There is only a 4% difference between staff getting the right amount of updates compared to too many.

We can see from the statistics that our internal and external communications are appreciated and also recognise that there is room for improvement as we continue to provide and further enhance our communications.



Staff felt supported with remote teaching

The pulse survey questions can take a number of forms, from simple yes or no questions through to star ratings, number scales, or social reactions to collate feedback.

Winning Design Taken to Antarctica

Year 7 student's creation made the intrepid journey to icy climates.

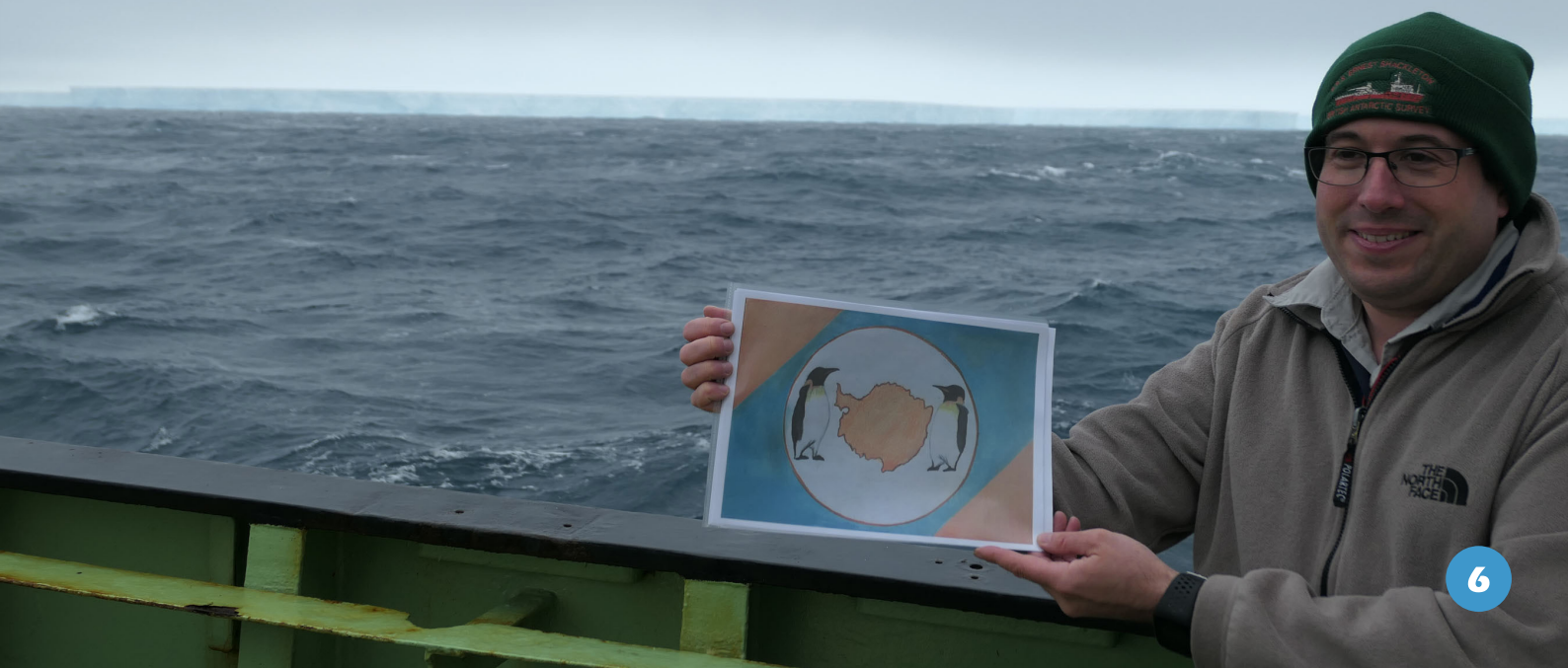
In celebration of Antarctica Day, The Rochester Grammar School students flexed their creative minds to design an original flag which they felt represented the icy continent. There were several detailed and creative flags submitted but this one was chosen as it clearly met the competition brief, as outlined by UK Polar Network.

The winning flag (right) was by Saniya Nair and it was taken to Antarctica by a group of research scientists.

In the photo below is Physical Oceanographer Povl Abrahamsen, holding the flag in front of iceberg A-68A, the largest remaining part of iceberg A-68, which broke off Larsen C Ice Shelf in 2017.



As Antarctica does not have its own official flag, the UK Polar Network (UKPN) asked schools to design one which they believe symbolises this continent. UKPN then pair the flags with researchers that are heading down to Antarctica for the Austral summer (October-March). Upon the flags return, schools receive proof of travel with a certificate and photos of their journey.



Comic Relief & Red Nose Day

Schools raise money while having a chuckle.

If ever the nation needed a laugh it was 2021, and if we can raise money too, then all the better. Across our Trust all schools took part in the annual event, whether with crazy hair, dressing up, superhero costumes, quizzes and fun and games. Taking part in charity events is important as children learn that they are part of a bigger movement, raising money for others.



Cedar Children's Academy

Children at Cedar Children's Academy wowed with amazing multi-coloured big curly hair, gravity defying plaits and even a loo roll! To raise money they all enjoyed a Crazy Hair Day.

New Horizons Primary School, in Portsmouth, raised an impressive £505.51 with their fantastic fancy dress, from Superman and classic clowns to Frozen's Elsa and everything in between, it looked like the children enjoyed a great day!

All Faiths Children's Academy was a beautiful sea of red, raising £170 and looking bright and rosy too.

Our four Medway Primary Schools celebrated Comic Relief with a little 'rock down relief', taking part in a Top of the Rocks Timestables Rockstars competition.

Crowned the winners, The Gordon Children's Academy came in first, sweeping the table with 68,805 points, All Faiths Children's Academy weren't far behind with 62,301 points, New Horizons Children's Academy came in with 58,255 followed by Cedar Children's Academy with 22,275 points.

Huge well done and congratulations for all taking part!



Cedar Children's Academy



All Faiths Children's Academy



All Faiths Children's Academy



New Horizons Primary School



New Horizons Primary School



The Gordon Children's Academy



The Gordon Children's Academy



Penhale Infant School



Newbridge Junior School



Brain Tumour Awareness Month was launched in 2004 and The Gordon Children's Academy gave its support by joining in the hattastic event on March 26th to help find a cure for this devastating disease.

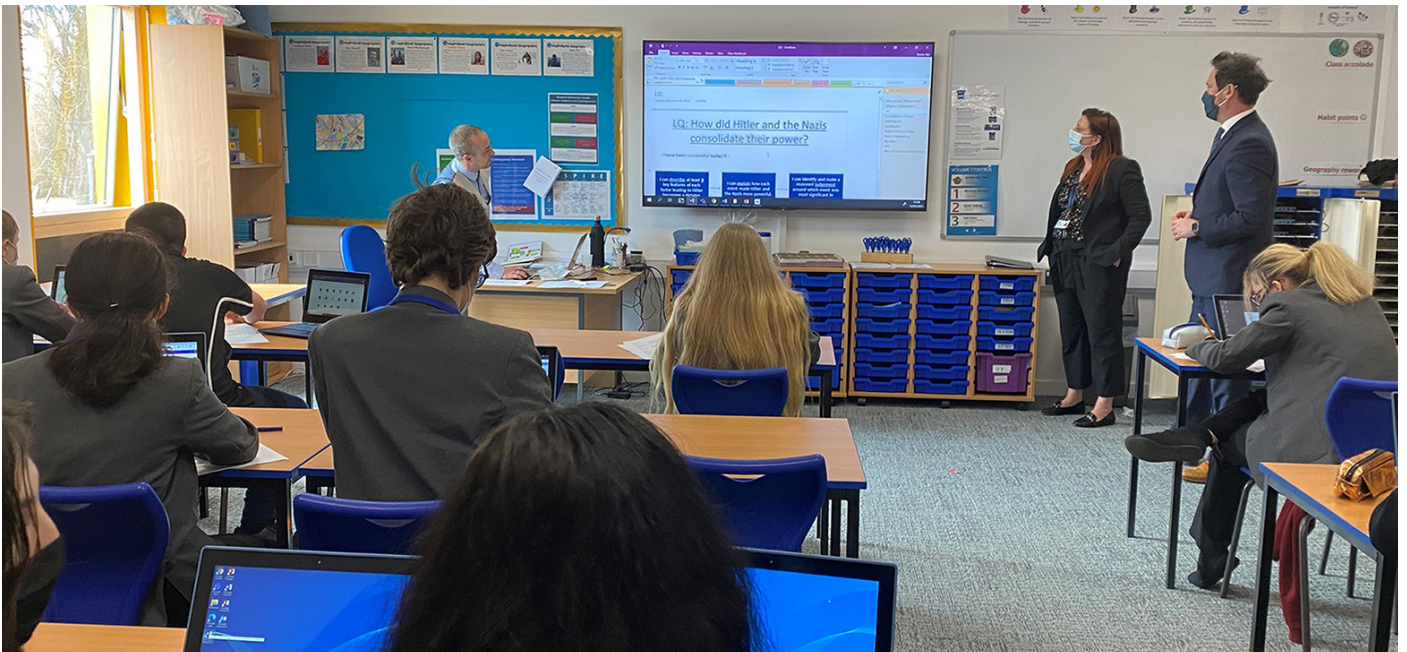
Despite the challenges of Covid-19, Wear A Hat Day brought hope and inspired the nation alike. This year the event is celebrating Key Workers who have played a pivotal role throughout the pandemic, going above and beyond in the most unprecedented of circumstances.

Here are the children and staff at The Gordon Children's Academy looking pretty hatty with themselves.

HAT HAT HOORAY!

Wear A Hat Day is one of the UK's most celebrated brain tumour awareness and research fundraising events.





Local MP praises staff for tireless dedication during visit to The Portsmouth Academy

Stephen Morgan MP, a former Newbridge Junior School pupil and frequent visitor of our Thinking Schools in Portsmouth, visited The Portsmouth Academy during their first week back.

The Portsmouth Academy's Principal Mrs Grey, who was thrilled to be able to share with Stephen the Aspire Building, the school's £5.3m project, said: "It was lovely to have Stephen Morgan MP visit TPA. There was a real buzz of excitement in the air as our students begin to get back on track with face-to-face learning. I was proud to show Stephen our newly finished Aspire Building, and talk with him about how our investment in the arts is supporting children's mental health and wellbeing."



Stephen Morgan MP tweeted; "A huge thank you to teachers and staff across Portsmouth for their tireless dedication and hard work during the pandemic and for putting in place measures for young people to get back on track. Pleasure to catch up with the brilliant Mrs Grey and tour The Portsmouth Academy."

World Book Day

World Book Day celebrated in style by our Thinking schools. From Cruella De Vil to Alice in Wonderland, Mr Men and Harry Potter, all the classics were represented in this annual and global affair!

In 2021 World Book Day provided great opportunities for pupils working remotely and in school to take part in dressing up competitions, read, and be involved in many activities.

Moorings Way Infant School shared Masked Reader videos throughout day with children in school and at home, inviting everyone to vote for who they thought were behind the masks, culminating in a big 'Take It Off!' reveal of staff! The Gordon Children's Academy also pulled together an amazing 'Masked Singer' offering, a literary version of the prime time Saturday night show. Reception year enjoyed a Where's Wally hunt with magnifying glasses in their outside area, plus they held story time on Teams with the teachers throughout the day.

Our CEO, Stuart Gardner said: "During this last year our Trust schools have continued to astound me with their level of determination, creativity and passion, and this is especially true of their efforts on World Book Day 2021. It was very different this year, but everyone really pulled together to enjoy all the activities!

All Faiths Children's Academy



“The costumes were amazing, both children and staff alike, and I especially loved watching the Masked Reader at The Gordon Children’s Academy!”

It’s worldwide days like these that not only help to encourage a love of thinking, reading and imagination, they also create warm memories for children to look back fondly on – and that, along with nurturing a lifelong love of learning – is what school years are all about. Well done everyone, an exceptional effort was made all round!”

In true Trust style all of our schools – from Kent and Medway to Portsmouth and Plymouth - dived in with excitement, enthusiasm, an infectious love of reading and some amazing costumes.

Teachers drew inspiration from all kinds of books, from Disney and Roald Dahl to Mr. Men and Lewis Carroll, the costumes were truly magnificent!

World Book Day is a great excuse to get dressed up and indulge in creative activities - which is exactly what our Trust schools did!

The Victory Academy



The Rochester Grammar School



The Victory Academy cleverly weaved science classes in with World Book Day when discussing science fiction, and comparing how realistic is the science the books describe. The focus was on Mary Shelley's classic Frankenstein, which is considered the first 'science fiction' novel.

#WorldBookDay is much-loved – it's now acknowledged globally across 100 countries worldwide as a recognised annual charity event, led by Unesco, which has been going now for 24 years.

While it was created for children to discover a love of literature and reading, many a school teacher loves to join in too!

Due to the majority of learning taking place remotely, pupils were given the opportunity to use digital £1 World Book Day tokens to exchange for one

Moorings Way Infant School



Meon Junior School



of twelve special £1 World Book Day books or use as a discount voucher for a full priced book or audiobook.

World Book Day, in partnership with schools all over the country, distribute over 15 million £1 World Book Day book tokens to children and young people.

It's an amazing day for all involved to open their minds to new and wonderful stories and become immersed in worlds of fantasy, fiction and fact.



WORK

LIFE

Sarah Daffey, our Trust's Catering Assurance Lead and Community Development Officer. She lives in Chatham, has two grown up sons, two grandsons and a new grandchild due in a few months. Oh, and one 'grand dog' who moved in and became her lockdown companion.

My alarm goes off... At 6am, I use my phone but thanks to Chewbacca the dog, my grandson named him because he loves Star Wars, I'm usually awake anyway. Breakfast is cereal and fruit before I catch up on news online, see what's going on locally.

I'm responsible for... visiting schools at lunchtimes to monitor catering, investigate and respond to queries, and look at ways to promote school meals. Also, Community Development, I take bookings for our halls and outdoor spaces, anything from a wedding reception or NHS blood donor session to a charity football match, every day is different! I do tours of our facilities, forward plan events, answer queries and solve problems. I work with a wide range of key stakeholders within the Trust, from students through to Head teachers as well as the general public and community groups. As Catering Assurance Lead I work with Chartwells teams to improve lunch provisions. My passion is ensuring children get the best experience possible with school meals. I will always champion meals for Free School Meal students, no child should ever go hungry.

I got the job... I'm a chef by trade and have always enjoyed working with children promoting good food and healthy eating. After many years at one school I wanted a new challenge and to help achieve improvements in

school food so all children have the best experience.

My typical day... Lockdown has seen a change to my usual day, the main one being food parcel deliveries and supporting schools as we shared out Free School Meal vouchers to cover closures and holidays. I hugely appreciate what a great team we have at our Trust, with so many offers to help our most vulnerable families, I've been proud to be part of it. While days are busy I make myself stop for lunch, though I don't have time to go for a walk as I'm usually in schools. I tend to eat at my desk



before travelling or, if I'm really lucky, I'll get a hot school lunch! My afternoons can be full on, especially if there have been any problems over lunchtime, such as a cash register not working, I'd spend time following up. I tend to finish my day around 5pm, but I find it hard to ignore a new hiring query or a problem so will answer the odd email.



Right now I'm feeling... hopeful that the return to normal is around the corner, a chance to see children enjoying eating lunch with their friends and having the community back using our facilities.

When I'm stressed... I try really hard not to get stressed. But if I feel it creeping up I tend to stop what I'm doing and walk away for a few minutes.

My go-to work snack is... usually fruit but am partial to cake when I need a sugar rush.

My most memorable moment is... providing food to Free School Meal families when there was nothing else available during lockdown. There were a lot of very grateful families and working with the team to successfully deliver this will never be forgotten.

After work... I take the 'grand dog' out for a walk in the countryside. Pre Covid-19 I'd spend time with family being 'nanny'. I also play netball competitively, I'm part of a team who have played together for a long time, not sure how we will cope after a year off! I can't wait to see return of live music and go to the theatre, I'm also really looking forward to the return of Pilates at Thinking Fitness.

IT'S OKAY TO NOT BE OKAY!

Cedar Children's Academy wow with Mental Health Award.

Cedar Children's Academy wins notable Mental Health Award for their admirable efforts to maintain wellbeing throughout their school.

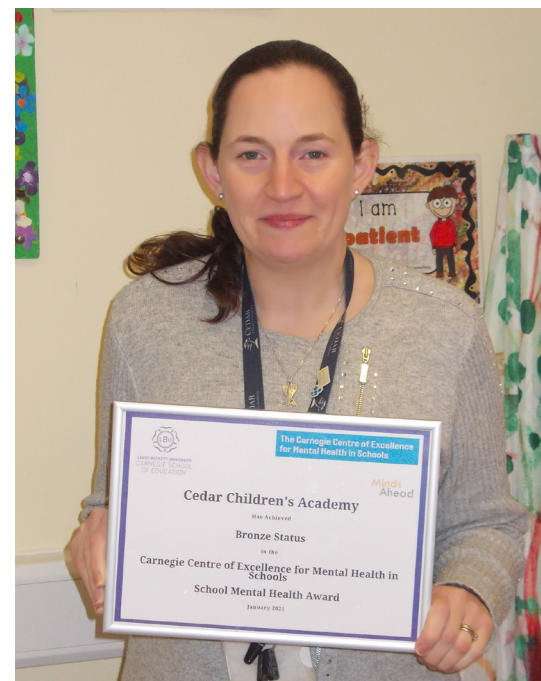
The school is very proud to have been one of only three schools in Medway to be awarded the Carnegie Centre of Excellence Mental Health Award for Schools. The award recognises the efforts of the school to provide an outstanding mental health and wellbeing provision for all of its children and staff.

As we all know, 2020 had been a challenge and affected so many people, young and old, in so many ways. Maintaining a healthy mind and body during unprecedented changes to the "norm" have been driven from within Cedar Children's Academy, demonstrating that the health and wellbeing of their children and staff is given full focus.

Wellbeing is so important in improving life chances which is at the core of all schools in our Trust, and we are very proud of the school's achievement.

The report went on to say "It is clear that the school has embedded good practice across the whole school..." and "...and ensure there is consistency and impact."

The report showed that the school are embedding the eight competencies of the Mental Health Award for Schools which include support for staff and pupils; professional development and learning and working with parents, carers and external agencies.



Kirstie Jones, Headteacher at the school, said: "Children aren't that different from adults – we know that you can't perform at your best if your mental health isn't in a good place. So across the school, we stress the importance to children that they can know that it's okay to not be okay."

"We are really open, supportive and inclusive, and our staff are committed to creating and maintaining that culture. Our children know that there is always someone who will listen to them, who is there for them and who can help them."

"It's an honour to receive the Mental Health Award and highlights our continual efforts to provide a balanced environment of learning for our children and staff while protecting their mental health."

Stuart Gardner, Thinking Schools Academy Trust CEO added: "I am so proud of the team at Cedar Children's Academy, it's great to see their commitment to children's mental health recognised with this fantastic award."

"Mental health is so important, never more so than during a global pandemic with lockdowns in place. This award and all the work that has gone into achieving it marks a great foundation for the school, and our Trust, to continue to build on and create a future where mental health continues to be treated with the importance it deserves, as Kirstie said; 'it's okay to not be okay'."

Mrs Kirstie Jones, Headteacher (left), Mrs Barbara Langiano (SENCo)



Holocaust Memorial Day

Children at All Faiths Children's Academy were asked to reflect and be inspired to 'celebrate the light and darkness' by lighting candles as a symbol of remembrance and hope which also included writing poems and prayers.

Year 4 children at All Faiths Children's Academy learned about the Holocaust and how awful life must have been for Anne Frank and the thousands of Jewish people whose lives were destroyed by prejudice attitudes and behaviours. While the children in Year 6 thought back to the Anne Frank topic they had been learning during Term 2 and tried to imagine what life would have been like if they were Anne.

Pupils at Holcombe Grammar School remembered by taking part in a writing competition and the winners received copies of *The Hidden Village* by Imogen Matthews.

As the years pass by and those who were once able to share the memories they experienced leave us, we turn to their stories and those before them to remember the terrible things that took place.

No single person or race should ever be singled out as diversity brings culture and knowledge, and more importantly it brings life and no matter who you are, you have every right to be counted equal and to be respected.

Our schools have been remembering with their pupils during lessons as part of the theme of 'Be the light in the darkness'.

The writing competition involved pupils writing a chapter from the novel at the point where the main character discovers Jewish people hidden in a secret village, dug out underground in the woods.

The Portsmouth Academy asked their pupils to reflect on something they had been misinformed about, how they had been misinformed and how did they feel when they found out the truth?

New Horizons Children's Academy created illustrations, posters and lego structures of candles and lights to remember. As did The

Victory Academy, capturing light and darkness in their artwork.

Plymouth High School for Girls has a long-standing relationship with the Holocaust Educational Trust. Pupils have taken part in programmes, becoming Ambassadors for the Trust and have shared their experiences in school. This year involved pupils taking part in a choice of well-informed activities.

Schools in our Trust reflected on what had happened, the impact it caused and the strength needed to carry on, with remote learning presentations and online discussions taking place to support the day.



COVID-19

TESTING TEAMS

On the 23rd March 2020 England's Prime Minister Boris Johnson told the country that people must 'stay home' and that certain businesses had to close, to keep infection to a minimum during the early days of Covid-19.

Since then, we've seen a further two more lockdowns with schools affected by the constant changes. It has been during this third lockdown that mass Lateral Flow Testing on school sites was introduced to reduce the risk of spreading the virus. As with other schools across the nation, all of our Trust schools had to go through risk assessments, training, maintain up-to-date communications with parents and build an army of volunteers for the in-school testing sites, while also adapting to new longer working days in order accommodate this requirement.

With all year groups having to complete three tests on site before starting school, our Trust teachers and support staff really stepped up to do this.

"Great team, students have amazed us - all been really compliant, great student interaction, all really polite and have enjoyed working with the great team of staff."

The initial scale of the mission was immense as there was an incredible uptake from staff and students, to take the tests. Our staff were thrown into unfamiliar territories in these unexpected times.

As we close this chapter in history, here's a look at the experiences of some of the staff and students who were involved with the testing.

Thinking Schools Academy Trust thanks all staff, parents and students in their efforts during the mass Lateral Flow Testing. We are extremely proud of the efficient service our staff were able to provide and the overall positive attitude from the students. Thank you.

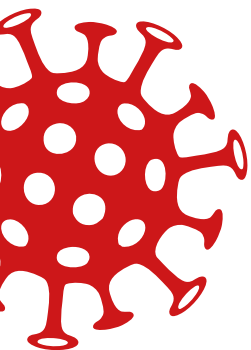
"The best thing about doing the testing is that I know that I do not have Covid-19 and it is not in school, it makes me feel safe. Also, it was really good learning how to do the test, it gave me independence. [staff were] really helpful and made me smile."



“We really feel like we have done something of value - and we felt valued and appreciated. Good to be able to tell others not to be scared of being in school as its safe.”



Holcombe Grammar School



“Testing has gone smoothly and the behaviour of students has been good. They have been co-operative and shown an understanding of why testing for Covid-19 is important.”



Goodwin Academy

“I’ve enjoyed seeing a different side of the students and having them appreciate you for your help I can’t wait to see family again and have everything back to normal.”

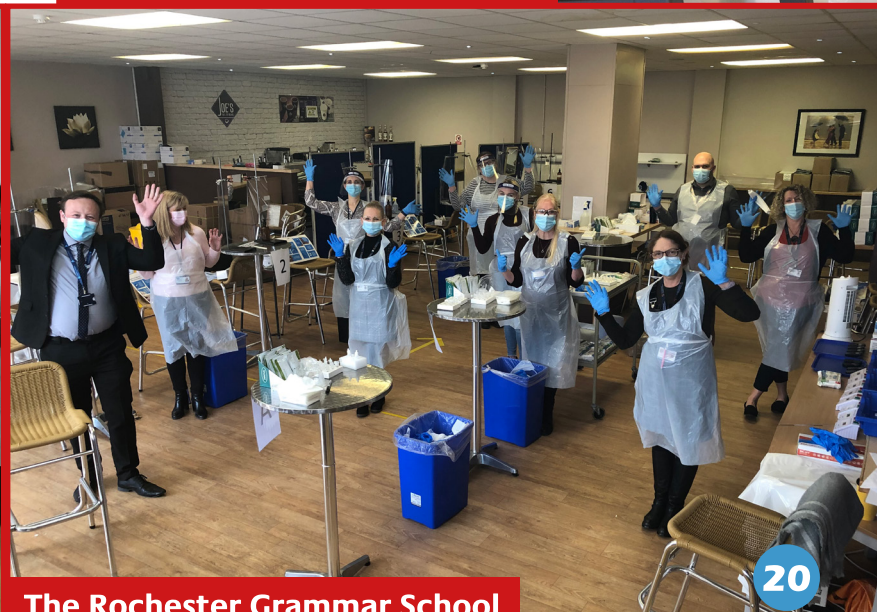


Plymouth High School for Girls

“I quite enjoyed doing the testing as it was an opportunity to see all the staff that were in and gave us the chance to fine tune our technique before testing the students, they were so good and adapted so well to the new situation. They just got on with it.”



The Portsmouth Academy



The Rochester Grammar School

Plymouth High School for Girls - The Journey So Far

Simon Underdown, Principal of Plymouth High, gave us the lowdown on why he chose to join our Trust



Why did you start thinking about becoming part of a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)?

I wanted to take some decisive action to be sure that we secured the future of our school. Schools thrive when people are focused on providing the absolute best learning environment and we do this with; financial security, astute site and amenity management and high-quality professional learning and collaboration. I was convinced that joining the right MAT would help us to deliver on these goals.

What were you hoping to gain by becoming part of a MAT?

Our aim was to enable colleagues to work in professional collaborative teams that share a common purpose. To remove barriers to progress and allow people to concentrate on their core role without distractions. Being part of a Trust would provide a vehicle for all our people to engage in a researched based improvement agenda and further enhance the quality of provision for all learners at Plymouth High. Working with a Trust would challenge and support us to become truly outstanding.

Talk us through your due diligence process – why did you decide that Thinking Schools Academy Trust (TSAT) was the right choice for you?

We wanted to consider Trusts that already had similar schools to ours and one that was high performing. We also wanted to join a Trust that put learning at the centre of all it does and one that had a culture of planned and sustained investment in schools. TSAT already had two Grammar schools, was founded by a Girls Grammar, is one of the highest performing Trusts in the country and is the only Trust to base its entire approach on the Thinking Schools approach. TSAT also had the backing and approval of the RSC and could evidence impactful investment strategies. With all these things in place, we felt confident in exploring the possibility of starting talks with TSAT.

Once you had decided on TSAT how did the relationship between your school and our Trust develop?

Even before officially joining the Trust, the support for our ICT system was outstanding. The Trust invested heavily in essential new hardware and on-site expertise. The improvement to our network reliability and effectiveness was transformational and the development kept on coming. Staff now have an increased confidence in our system both in terms of its functionality and the technical backup. Since joining the Trust, we have an additional permanent colleague in our onsite IT team whose recruitment and induction was managed entirely by Trust IT.

Part of the due diligence process uncovered site issues and concerns unknown to us at the time. All remedial work is planned and carried out by the Trust without taking up SLT time. Being released from dealing with day-to-day site issues has been fantastic for SLT. Site management has been outstanding, particularly with our newly appointed site manager.

Since you have started working within our Trust what have been the most significant benefits you would identify for you, your students, and your staff?

The benefits for me are removing issues unrelated to teaching and learning that were taking my time. Covid-19 support. Headteacher collaboration. Support on our improvement agenda. Feeling excited about what we can achieve as part of the Trust. For the students it is leadership opportunities. Assurance that we have a robust plan for year 11 and 13 in 2021. Potential for much improved facilities. The staff are working in collaborative teams. Exam board alignment. Knowledge that conditions improvement is happening and will be ongoing.

Now that you have joined our Trust what are your reflections on the difference between being part of TSAT compared to an LA school?

It is completely different. I feel supported by a team of people dedicated to helping me make Plymouth High the best it can be. By a team that removes obstacles and barriers and has a 'can do' attitude. I feel relaxed about what I am doing because I am fully supported. The funding model is exceptional and will enable us to make sweeping improvements across the school, for all our young people and staff to enjoy. We have secured a strong future for our school.

What is your vision for the future of Plymouth High School for Girls and how do you think being part of our Trust will help you achieve this vision?

To be the best secondary school in the City for academic progress, student happiness and extra-curricular provision. To enable staff to grow professionally and for them to stay focused on their core role without any distractions. The Trust removes barriers so that our teachers can focus on their students and our support staff can focus on their core role. The Trust invests time and money to help its people to be their best selves. There are no downsides.



Earth Alliance Team (Amy Higgins and Lara Brisden)

“Joining the Trust allows us to engage with more people about a subject that is so important to us and the students at Plymouth High. This prospect is rewarding for us it also means that our actions have a much broader reach and will affect positive change around the country. The conference that we are hoping to host is just one example of this.”



Head Student Team (Maisy Stapes, Jess Towers, Dominique Faranuanu and Naomi Agbobli)

“As student leaders at Plymouth High, joining the Thinking Schools Academy Trust has opened extremely exciting possibilities for us. The chance to work with schools and students outside of our area fills us with eagerness at the prospect of being able to have an impact beyond our school, making a real positive difference.”

CAPITAL Works

As a Trust we are always moving forward, evolving and building for the future of education.

Rochester Grammar School's major redevelopment started at the end of 2020 and plans are on track to finish on time in November this year. Included in these building works is the addition of two new classrooms, including an all-new science lab, and a major redevelopment of RGS' sports hall, which will have a brand-new Thinking Fitness gym; open to the local community. It really is exciting times!

Lee Miller, Deputy CEO at Thinking Schools Academy Trust who visited the building site recently, said: 'This development reflects the success of Rochester Grammar School, as they continue their commitment to education in the area through this major refurbishment. RGS students are so excited, they can see that they're being invested in; that the two new classrooms, including a science lab, and the redevelopment of the sports hall along with a brand-new Thinking Fitness Gym, is for them. It's fantastic that through this we will provide new opportunities to students to unearth their skills. Our Trust hopes these changes will provide the pupils with facilities that will add to their experience and enjoyment of school.'

Penhale Infant School and Newbridge Junior School have received a long-awaited boost to development plans, as confirmed by The Department of Education and Portsmouth City Council, resulting in both schools receiving a large cash injection. This revelation allows the schools to expand and refurbish in time for a fresh start of the September 2021 term.

As you can imagine, Headteacher Anna Webb and her team are very excited by this news. Anna said: "It was really overwhelming, hearing that we would have that level of investment poured into our schools, our teachers are passionate and do a great job and our schools have such strong links to the local community. All of our children are just amazing and they totally deserve this. I can't wait to see changes."

The funding will cover three large developments, due to take place between April and September 2021. Our focus is on creating a state-of-the-art Inclusion Centre which will serve both the Infant and the Junior School. The Centre will provide a 'one-stop-shop' for both schools and a permanent base to a dedicated Inclusion team.



The Rochester Grammar School Build



MARITIME ACADEMY - KEEP CONNECTED

In the last edition of Our Trust, we shared news of an exciting new school coming to the Medway Towns in Kent. Over the coming months we will keep you up-to-date on its development. As a Trust we are really excited by the things to come!

As with all our schools, the Maritime Academy will be placing 'thinking' at the heart of all that it does. The Academy will actively encourage young adults to use their voices, and empower them to implement our Thinking Toolkit and become lifelong learners.

Medway is a growing area in Kent with secondary school admissions predicted to expand by 3,000 pupils by 2024.

To support the increased admissions to secondary schools, the Maritime Academy will be part of the upcoming regeneration in the Strood area with great opportunities for children already at our Thinking Schools to continue

their journeys, using the same Thinking Tools to master their learning.

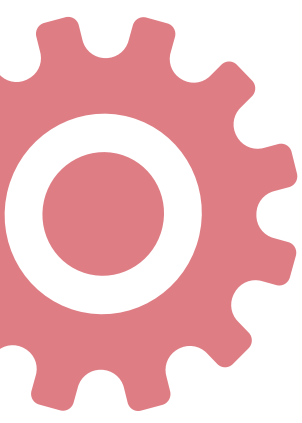
Our exciting new development will provide a learning experience second to none, with 1,150 places available for the children of Strood.

Maritime Academy's Principal will be Mrs Jody Murphy, a talented and passionate leader with in-depth knowledge and experience of the Strood community and has proven success in previous leadership roles across many schools in our Trust family.

As our new school builds momentum, we invite you to follow us on social media to keep up-to-date with the latest news and how children in the coming years can be part of a successful and growing community of Thinking Schools in Strood, from primary through to secondary and into Sixth Form.

**Scan, follow,
keep up-to-date**





Our Trust appoints new lead for Thinking, Teaching and Learning



In an exciting move that will mould the future of Thinking, Teaching and Learning at our Trust Laura Gladstone is 'delighted' with her new role.

Thinking, teaching and learning is the DNA running through our Trust, not just for students but for all staff. Every member of our Trust family is encouraged and expected to aspire to be their best selves, to face challenges with confidence and to achieve in all that they do. 'Our students' education is at the forefront of our Thinking, Teaching and Learning. We encourage and support all our Trust family to reflect on their practice and make changes as needed to move learning forward and further enhance our Thinking Toolkit.

Laura Gladstone is the new Trust Lead for Thinking, Teaching and Learning (TTL). Laura is a valued team member at The Victory Academy, and more recently at Holcombe Grammar School, as Head of School and Senior Leader for Teaching, Learning and Assessment; CPD; ITT/NQT and Senior Leader for Literacy. A Fellow of the Chartered College of Teaching, Laura is an avid researcher and a passionate advocate for metacognition and metamemory. "I am delighted to be taking on the role of Trust Lead for Thinking, Teaching and Learning. I am passionate about making sure that metacognition and high quality, evidence-informed practice is at the heart of our teaching."



Our Philosophy

Thinking, Teaching and Learning (TTL) centres on 'transforming life chances'. We aspire to enhance the learning of all pupils to equip them for life outside of school. As professionals, we are among the most powerful influencers to ultimately impact the pupil's relationship to learning in all areas of life, influencing how they engage with new ideas and attitudes. It is our aim to support pupils to think for themselves, through developing a thorough understanding of purposeful thinking tools to aid and monitor their own progress.

We also aim for staff to feel encouraged to think accurately and reflectively about their practice, and to understand a range of thinking tools that can be used to support student motivation and progress. Central to our Teaching and Learning philosophy are the Core 7 principles that underpin highly effective teaching and learning in our Trust (based on Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction, 2010) which form the basis of our lesson planning. Team TTL will continue to support schools with this agenda and look forward to sharing best practice at regular intervals throughout the year.

"I'm passionate about metacognition and ensuring that high quality, evidence-informed practice is at the heart of our teaching. I believe that to be our best selves we need to learn from each other, and I will strive to ensure that collaboration is our core way of working."

- Laura Gladstone

Core 7 Principles

Feedback to Feedforward

Metamemory

Questioning and Responding

Metacognition

Explanations

Subject Knowledge

Modelling

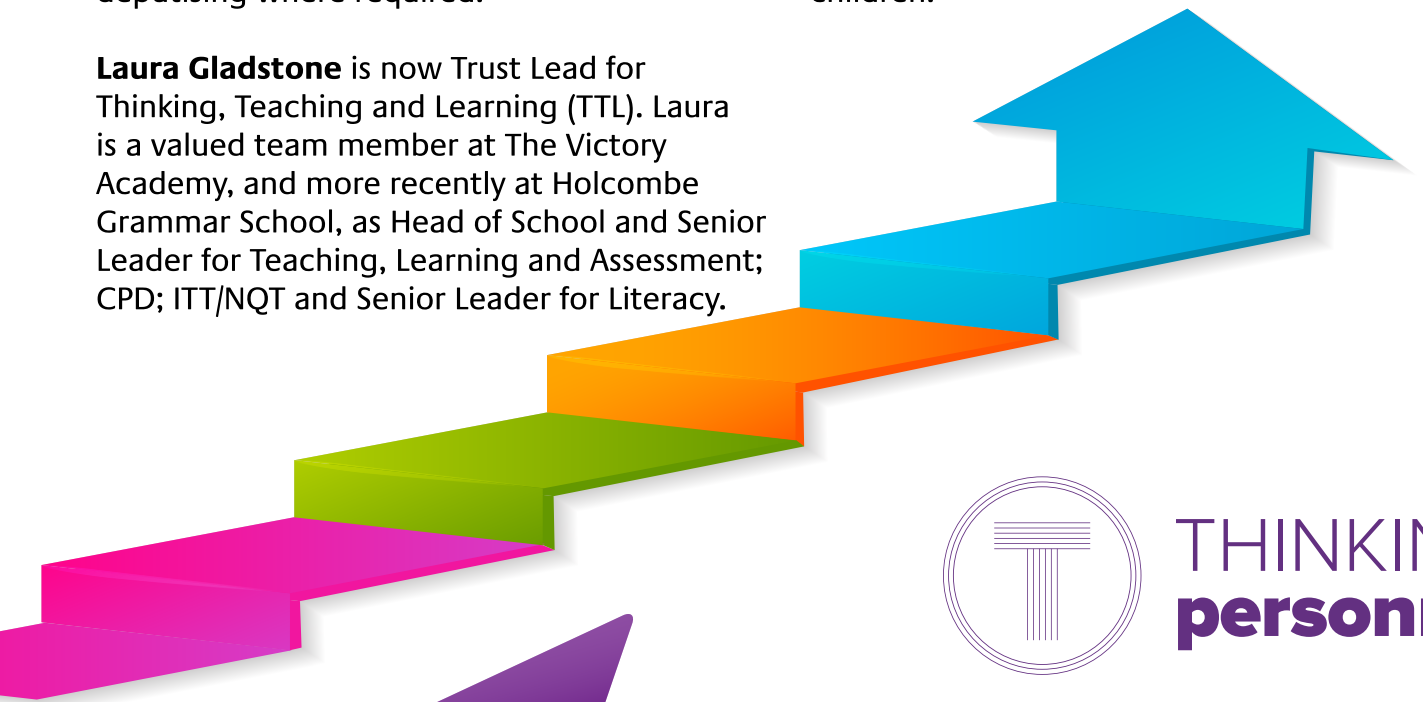
Check out our new section of our Trust site
tsatrust.org.uk/thinkingteachinglearning
to discover all you need to know about TTL

STEP UP

Tracy Rogers, HR Partner for Portsmouth, has accepted the role of Deputy Head of HR for the Trust. Tracy will continue to provide HR Partnering service to our schools in Portsmouth and Plymouth, alongside the development of the Strategic People vision for the Trust and deputising where required.

Laura Gladstone is now Trust Lead for Thinking, Teaching and Learning (TTL). Laura is a valued team member at The Victory Academy, and more recently at Holcombe Grammar School, as Head of School and Senior Leader for Teaching, Learning and Assessment; CPD; ITT/NQT and Senior Leader for Literacy.

Bethany Cookman passed her apprenticeship and is now a fully-fledged Teaching Assistant in Early Years Foundation Stage at All Faiths. Head teacher Marion Brown marked the occasion with celebratory flowers, chocolates and a round of applause from colleagues and children.



KEEP LEARNING

As we step into term 5, we look to our next theme for wellbeing.

Term 5 is all about 'keep learning', which falls nicely as a Trust, as we strive for all staff and students to develop a desire to continue learning.

We look forward to hearing about learning and planning in term 5 from all our teams across our Trust.



Digital Learning

Lifelong learning is a skill encouraged for everyone at our Trust

The year of Covid-19 pushed people to the brink in every way imaginable, not least learning new ways to continue the lives we have worked so hard to build. From repositioning how to teach a class of distracted pupils remotely, to navigating a new way of working from your living room, with your laptop balanced on a pile of books and the radio for company.

A huge part of learning how to do this was understanding and implementing a digital approach, from using Teams Breakout Rooms and tagging assignments to using One Note effectively and learning the best apps to use to ensure lessons were hitting home for students.

It was a steep learning curve for teachers, students and parents but ultimately we all pulled together.

Gwynn Bassan and Natalie Sheppard, both Directors of Education, worked tirelessly with Richard Denham, Digital Development Officer, to roll out this learning initiative. None of it could have been achieved without the amazing help of volunteer staff across our Trust, to educate, help and present to our teams across Portsmouth, Deal and Medway.



Staff feedback:

“The training was well presented and I learned a lot and feel I could now set up a breakout room.”

“The presenters of my session were really passionate and enthusiastic, they walked us through the process of using Notebook.”

“Our presenter was very clear in her explanations and reassuring that this was not the ideal solution but we are trying to minimise the disruption of learning in class and maximise the learning of the ones online.”

“I find these very useful and would like to share more good practice relevant to my area of teaching.”

“The presentation was really thorough and could be easy implemented.”

Parent Points

Parents take the time to stop and say thank you - and it means a lot!

Thank you!

Parents and teachers are a tag team, both with the best interests of the same child at heart, and it was this bond that was made all the more important throughout Covid-19. During 'Lockdown 3.0' there was a lot to learn, we moved to live lessons and camera's on to then introducing our students back into classroom learning - and here's what the parents had to say about it...

"I seize this opportunity to thank and praise my child's teachers for the quality of online lessons. Being live and having near immediate feedback makes a huge difference. We really appreciate all your efforts."

"I can only praise you for all the effort it has taken, both during the lockdown and as we prepare to resume our schooling back at Goodwin Academy."

"Live lessons were quickly implemented last April, via MS Teams. Communication has been timely and clear about how things will work and the ongoing expectations of the children. I have been impressed and grateful for what has been put in place by Goodwin Academy during this pandemic."

"I wanted to personally thank you and your wonderful team of teachers and support staff for their work this term. My child has benefitted from phone calls to check on his welfare weekly, bespoke and engaging lessons and learning that has challenged him to think beyond the smallness of his world as it appears at the moment!"

"Since the start of this pandemic, I can honestly say what a wonderfully, brilliant job Holcombe have done and I cannot praise you and your staff enough. No one has experienced anything like this before and the way that you and your team have implemented remote learning and adjusted when needed has been nothing but amazing. So I guess I just wanted to say a massive 'Thank you' to everyone at Holcombe for everything that they have done."

"We are grateful for the outstanding provision that your school has provided and that we have a child who is excited to join in her live lessons and continue her learning."

“The staff at Gordon are awesome and do an incredible job all year round. They are all amazing and do the children proud every single day. Never known such a hard-working dedicated bunch of teachers - pure heroes. You rock Gordon staff!”

“All teachers and assistants at Penhale Nursery and infant school and Newbridge Junior School, they have been fantastic in supporting all children through this tough time. And let’s not forget all the lunchtime assistants, care takers and office staff who have also done an amazing job!”

“All teachers and assistants at Penhale nursery and infant school and Newbridge Junior School, they have been fantastic in supporting all children through this tough time. And let’s not forget all the lunchtime assistants, care takers and office staff who have also done an amazing job!”

“All the teachers who taught 3C at Newbridge were amazing, especially Mr Jones and Mrs Cole who were amazing – I loved listening to their home-schooling. Then to Miss Collins, who always made me chuckle – we loved her!”

“I just wanted to send my sincere thanks for the hard work and dedication you have shown in the provision of the online teaching service. The sheer hard work and effort you have made to enable children to log on at 0915 today and begin their lesson is obvious and appreciated. I am really grateful and I think Oscar found it quite fun too!”

“Thank you to all the staff for everything that is being done at such short notice. Especially thank you for staying open to support critical workers, as myself and my husband are nurses. I am sure you are all as anxious as we are working on the frontline. Thank you again to all the staff that have made this possible.”

“Mrs Paine has clearly led the school with continuous compassion and creativity to keep children engaged and ensures the children and staff mental health and wellbeing is at the forefront of day to day schooling. Mrs Duncan and Mr Bennion have been incredibly dynamic flexible and patient to teach all children in a blended and fun way.”

“Amazing dedication to our school community. Our children are incredibly lucky and these teachers have helped to ensure happiness and learning continues in such difficult times.”

“All the staff members build amazing relationships with children and SLT are so supportive. My children love going to school even during lockdown and always complement the grown-ups that work with them.”

“I would like to say a big thank you for all the teachers that are trying their best to keep our kids safe. The changes that the Government had imposed on the school must be so hard on them!”



THINKING
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