

OUR TRUST

CHILDREN FIRST, ASPIRE, CHALLENGE, ACHIEVE



THINKING
SCHOOLS
ACADEMY TRUST

DECEMBER 2018 | ISSUE 8



Merry Christmas to one and all!

TRANSFORMING LIFE CHANCES

WELCOME MESSAGE FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Welcome to the Christmas 2018 edition of Our Trust magazine.

The summer's KS2, GCSE and A Level results seem like a distant memory but I would like to thank everyone for their hard work and dedication in ensuring our students achieved some excellent results across our schools. The steady transformation of outcomes for students at Cedar Children's Academy, from the lowest performing school in Medway when they joined us to one of our best performing Primary schools for progress this year, is a particular highlight.

I have been delighted to hear about the enthusiastic adoption of the Swivl camera technology in many of our schools to capture, share and reflect on classroom practice and help support the development of all our staff. In the coming months I know that Hanna Miller, our Thinking, Teaching and Learning lead, will be using these videos to further enhance our online support for anyone interested in the use of metacognition in the classroom. I expect us to become a recognised sector leader in this area during the next few years.

I am very pleased that our success in enhancing the opportunities of all students has been recognised with a government grant of over £3.5 million to enhance the facilities at Rochester Grammar School in order that the school can take an additional form from September 2020. As a result of this the school will amend its admissions policy to prioritise disadvantaged students and students in the local area. This is in addition to the £5.6 million investment that The Portsmouth Academy have received to increase the number of places available to students in the local area.

These are exciting times for all of us as we continue on our journey together, delivering great outcomes for students through the effective understanding and use of metacognition.

With my warmest regards, I wish you all a relaxing and enjoyable festive break.

Stuart Gardner

Stuart Gardner, MSc, NPQH, NLE
Chief Executive Officer

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THINKING SCHOOLS RAISE OVER £2,230 FOR CHILDREN'S CHARITIES!

Charity and helping those in need has always been a very important aspect of school life for our academies, which was proven more than ever this term.

Children in Need saw many of our pupils and staff wear their Pudsey ears to school for the day.

The school council at Newbridge Junior School arranged a 'bring and buy' sale where children were able to buy items donated by parents and staff; pupils all dressed up with the theme being something beginning with the letter 'P' for Pudsey. Newbridge Junior School raised a amazing £1018.13 through their efforts – a record for the school's Children in Need contributions!

Pupils at Meon Junior School came dressed to school in either Pudsey outfits or non-school uniform, giving a donation to the charity. The school raised £283.46 for the worthy cause. Also in Portsmouth, children at Moorings Way Infant School wore their PJs for Pudsey into school and have so far raised £122.00 for this worthy charity.

Children at New Horizons Children's Academy also took part, through contributing to a non-uniform day with many of them wearing wonderfully colourful Pudsey clothing and raised an impressive £343 by selling delicious Krispy Kreme doughnuts during their lunch break.

Another charity that is close to our hearts this time of year, is the Shoebox Appeal. We are proud that our schools show their support for our local communities and further afield by decorating shoeboxes and filling them with donated goodies. Throughout the schools there are piles of wrapped shoeboxes, ready to be collected by Shoebox Appeal charities.

Meon Junior School collected a total of 16 boxes this year, which will be sent to Moldova for less fortunate children at Christmas time. Contributions at Holcombe Grammar totalled a magnificent 100 boxes.



Newbridge Junior School pupils



Meon Junior School - Shoebox Appeal



Moorings Way Infant School - Children in Need

Along with Children in Need and the Shoebox Appeal, The Victory Academy had their own 'Victory Breakfast' this term, where pupils and staff were served a delicious breakfast by the senior leadership team. The event raised £106 for the Winter Night Shelter Charity which will be given to the charity along with food donations.

As we look to complete this publication, Newbridge Junior School has told us that their children have very recently raised over £360 for Save the Children in addition to the money raised for Children in Need.

A huge thank you must go out to all who took part in and donated to the Shoebox Appeal, your time and gifts will make a difference to so many this Christmas, and thank you to all of our schools who took part in fundraising for a variety of amazing causes this term.

Together our schools have raised over £2,230.00 for amazing causes, and all should be very proud of their achievements in providing for and supporting communities not only locally but around the world.



Meon Junior School - Children in Need



New Horizons Children's Academy
Children in Need



Holcombe Grammar School - Shoebox Appeal



The Victory Breakfast - Winter Night Shelter Charity



THE VICTORY ACADEMY TAKES FIRST PLACE IN THE SOCIAL NETWALK CHALLENGE

Medway Council supported national 'Walk to School Month' in October in partnership with the KM Charity Team and invited local schools and academies to take part. The campaign is designed to encourage physical activity in a child's daily routine in a fun and innovative way and in turn help remove the number of car journeys associated with the school run.

Across Medway 27 schools and academies took part and completed a total of 64,367 walked journeys. Primary schools took part in the Hedgehog Hike and secondary schools competed in the Social Network.

The winners of the Social Network Challenge was The Victory Academy in Chatham. More than 75 percent of pupils walked to school as part of the challenge.

Last year, The Victory Academy took part in the Medway Walk2Count Challenge, which also saw them coming out on top, having securely won the challenge.

Monika Oravcova, lead for the Social Network Challenge and Community Liaison Officer, is always at the forefront working with the school and community to build and strengthen bridges. Monika will be nominating The Victory Academy for the KM Green School Awards in February 2019 and we wish her every success with the various projects that she is currently involved in.



The Victory Academy

Has been recognised by Medway Council's Safer Journeys Team for having won the following National Walk to School Month 2018 event:



Secondary School Winners [1-19 October 2018]

You were one of 27 participating schools in Medway that made 64,367 walks as part of the school journey.

As a result, 75.4% of students attending The Victory Academy travelled to school on foot during the three-week campaign.

Congratulations and keep walking to school!



ROCHESTER GRAMMAR SCHOOL GO 'INTO ORBIT'

The RGS Robotics Club has competed in the First Lego League tournament held at Kent University in Canterbury, competing against a dozen other local schools in a series of challenges.

The Robotics Club has been working to prepare for the event for many months by meeting together during lunchtimes and after school. They were led by Mr Jackson and Sixth Form student David Fadare who served as the coach for the team.

The theme for this year was "Into Orbit". The team researched and presented on the challenges of space flight and focused their efforts on how a base could be built on Mars. They further explained the steps that would be necessary to terraform the planet to support human life. Although they were under intense pressure in front of the judging panel the students were impressively calm and confidently presented their ideas and research.

They then competed in the robotics portion of the tournament by designing, building, and programming a robot made from Lego technic pieces. The robot had to complete a series of tasks within a certain time frame. The students then explained the design of their robot to a panel of judges. In true Rochester Grammar School style, they incorporated a number of Thinking Maps into their presentation to show the steps taken in the design process.

The team excelled on the teamwork portion of the event. Half the team were shown a complex structure made of many different Lego bricks of various sizes and colours. They then had to instruct the other half of the team, who hadn't seen the structure, how to assemble it from the many disassembled parts. The students quickly devised a strategy to divide the task into small portions for which each member was responsible. They perfectly completed the task in an astonishingly short period of time. The judges were very impressed with how they made this task seem effortless and awarded them the first-place trophy for demonstrating the core values of teamwork.

Many of the students for this event have been members of the Robotics Club since its start three years ago. The Year 7 students in the Robotics Club are currently learning the basics of the programming software, so they can participate in the upcoming Tomorrow's Engineers Lego Robotics competition that will be held in February 2019.



STUDENTS ACHIEVE SILVER & BRONZE IN THE UKMT SENIOR MATHS CHALLENGE

Congratulations to Stefan (Year 13) and Artjoms (Year 12) of The Victory Academy who achieved Silver and Bronze certificates respectively in this year's UKMT Senior Maths Challenge.

Over 80,000 pupils from across the UK returned scripts for the Senior Maths Challenge with the top 10 percent receiving a gold certificate, the next 20 percent gaining silver and the following 30 percent achieving bronze.

The Senior Maths Challenge is run by the UK Mathematics Trust and is supported by the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries. The challenge is aimed at students in Year 13 and below.



PORTSMOUTH ACADEMY SHOOTS FOR THE STARS

The Portsmouth Academy hosted the outreach team from Portsmouth University's Institute of Cosmology and Gravitation recently. The team brought their mobile Astrodome, a blow up planetarium big enough to hold an entire class.

Over the course of three days all Year 7 classes had an opportunity to go into the dome to stargaze and watch an amazing 3D video about the possibility of life on other planets. This was followed by a Q&A session from the knowledgeable team and the opportunity to look closer at some of the planets.

Jamie, a pupil at the school said: "Amazing!" and Bavy shared his thoughts by saying: "It was a really fun and a good experience. We got to see the planets up close and think about what could be in space".

Mr Horton, Science Teacher at The Portsmouth Academy, said: "It was aspirational for students to see what is actually out there".



CAPITAL WORKS

As a Trust, we are continuously researching ways in which we can deliver funding, either from within the Trust or externally, to help schools continue to develop so that they can provide children with the facilities needed to progress in their education. In turn, facilities can be made available to local communities to help support groups in the services they provide, so that everyone can benefit educationally and lead healthier lifestyles.

We have a number of projects this year that have taken place during the summer break including the build of a new dance studio at Holcombe Grammar School and a 3G football pitch that New Horizons Children's Academy has access to. Holcombe now has four additional classrooms in the maths department along with toilet facilities.

Cedar Children's Academy has undergone works to their corridors which were not practical or fit for purpose, bringing new life to the school. Part of Cedar's works have also included a new heating and enhancements to the boiler system.

All Faiths Children's Academy has a new IT suite that will accommodate 32 pupils, including new computers, seating and flooring.

Gordon Children's Academy now have a new entrance reception area and their play areas have been developed.

Rochester Grammar School has undergone major electrical works.

Holcombe Grammar School - Dance Studio



Holcombe Grammar School and New Horizons Children's Academy - 3G Football Pitch



Cedar Children's Academy - Walkways



The Portsmouth Academy has had a new IP based CCTV system installed, to increase security ahead of Phase 2 works that start January 2019. The school has also had a number of its windows replaced to increase energy efficiency as part of the whole school rollout. In addition, the entire sports hall floor has been renewed and the school were thankful to the Family Church for moving their services around to accommodate the work during the summer.

Newbridge Junior School's lower school hall has been refurbished in preparation for their new library equipment. There has been structural changes which provide a light and refreshing entrance area for pupils and staff as they enter the building. The remaining upper school building has also had its windows replaced.

Meon Junior School's office and reception area are now larger and more inviting to parents and school visitors.

Many of the schools have also had refurbishments to classrooms including lighting, new furniture and decorating.

The Portsmouth Academy - Maths and Sports Hall



Newbridge Junior School - Refurbished Classrooms



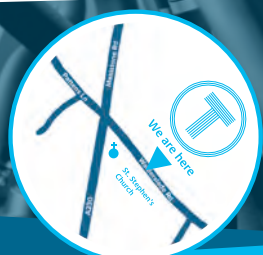
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OPENING TIMES

TERM TIME
Mon - Fri: 5pm - 10pm
Sat: 9am - 6pm
Sun: 9am - 6pm

SCHOOL HOLIDAYS
Mon - Fri: 9am - 10pm
Sat: 9am - 6pm
Sun: 9am - 6pm

Find us on Facebook



GRAMMAR SCHOOL AWARDED FUNDING FOR EXPANSION

Rochester Grammar School is one of only 16 schools nationally to have been awarded funding from the Department for Education (DfE), to create new facilities and widen opportunities for disadvantaged students.

They are delighted that their application to the DfE's Selective Schools Expansion Fund has been successful. It will see the school receive £3.5 million in funding in total, which will allow the popular oversubscribed school to expand by 30 students per year group – to 205 students per year.

The funding will enable a huge enhancement of the facilities at the school – including brand new sporting facilities, a new arts and design technology block, and the conversion of existing classrooms into science labs. Rochester Grammar School are really looking forward to seeing these improvements take shape over the coming months and years.

The successful application to the Department also sets out the school plans to prioritise disadvantaged applicants. Only schools with the most ambitious plans to help disadvantaged students were awarded funding, after a rigorous selection process.

Specifically, the plans mean that from September 2020, Rochester Grammar School will change their admissions so that children from Medway who pass the 11+ entrance exam, who are eligible for pupil premium funding, and live near the school will receive preference – whereas previously, students were accepted in order of their performance in the test. This will further strengthen the school's ties with the local community, as they look forward to welcoming even more local students from Medway and Kent.

Students at existing Thinking Schools primaries will of course also continue to receive preference, so that we can continue to offer them and their parents the option of a Thinking Schools education across primary and secondary school.

The funding that has been received will allow even more students to benefit from the outstanding education and facilities the school provides, which means they will be able to offer opportunities to students of all backgrounds.



EXPANSION FUNDING AWARDED

PENHALE INFANT SCHOOL GIVE THEIR PUPILS A WINTER WONDERLAND

Penhale Infant School, which joined our Trust this April, introduced their Key Stage 1 children to two new exciting topics when they returned at the start of their first term. Year 1 learnt about the Arctic and the Antarctica with staff turning their classes into a winter wonderland and dressing up as winter explorers.

Year 2 set their focus on learning about inventors and inventions with the children and staff dressing up as scientists and carrying out investigations on skittles. They then focused on the wonderful book 'Ada Twist Scientist', written by Andrea Beaty. Ada is a character of colour with a boundless imagination.

The Nursery children have been working on patterns and the Reception children have been learning about what's under the sea and started their half term off by going to the Sea Life Centre. Penhale Infant School call these sessions 'creative kick starters' and use them to engage the children into their learning at the start of each topic.

Kate Keller, Headteacher at Penhale Infant School, said: "I do appreciate the time and effort that the staff go to in order for this to happen, as I know it sometimes involves them coming into school during the holiday to set up their classes, which is much appreciated.

"I was particularly pleased to see how the children's learning evolved and the way the staff wove the 'Thinking Keys' into their learning as the term progressed."



CONSTRUCTING WITH RECYCLABLES

Children at All Faiths Children's Academy have been working with Volker Stevin Construction company to create two recognisable Medway structures.

Years 3-5 pupils used recyclable materials to recreate model versions of Rochester Castle and Rochester Bridge as part of the Honor Goodsite Big Build Competition.

The children had lots of fun creating the structures.



MINISTER FOR SPORT UNVEILS STATE-OF-THE-ART 3G FOOTBALL PITCH

Students and staff at New Horizons Children's Academy and Holcombe Grammar School celebrated the official opening of Chatham's latest state-of-the-art 3G football pitch on Friday 14th September.

They welcomed guest of honour Tracey Crouch, the Minister for Sport and Chatham's local MP, for an action-packed launch of the pitch – which is set to be shared between the two schools and will be open to the community during evenings and weekends.

Pupils and their parents were excited to have a go at the beautiful game using the new facility, with 200 footballs available for them to test their own skills with the help of coaches from Maidstone United Football Club.

There was also a free raffle with a wide range of prizes, including three months' membership to the onsite gym Thinking Fitness, in Park Crescent. To celebrate the new Football Academy partnership between Maidstone United FC, Holcombe Grammar School, and The Victory Academy, Maidstone United FC donated a Family Match Ticket for a home game.

Year 6 pupils from New Horizons were eager to voice their excitement at the new facility:

- “It's is an amazing addition to our school – it will really help us develop our sports skills.” Isaac, aged 10
- “They are awesome! We are so lucky to have these!” Alex, aged 10
- “The grounds are brilliant! I can now really develop my skills to help me pursue my goal of being a professional sportsman when I grow up.” Tyler, aged 10



Their enthusiasm was echoed by Holcombe Grammar School's 1st XI football team, who praised the new pitch as “a great facility which will allow us to train more frequently and to improve” and how it creates “more opportunities for all to participate and get involved.”

Mandy Gage, Executive Principal of Holcombe Grammar School, said:

“Sport is such a hugely important part of our school spirit here at Holcombe, so I am hugely pleased that our students will have the opportunity to access such a state-of-the-art facility and continue to hone their talents as sportsmen and women.

“This is a brilliant and very welcome addition to our thriving school community, and it was great to see the launch turn out a fantastic day for both parents and children.”

Jody Murphy, Executive Headteacher of New Horizons Children's Academy, said:

“We are thrilled to have these wonderful new facilities right on our doorstep. It gives our talented children the opportunity to continue to play well and develop their sports skills – as emerging sportspeople of the future, I know that they are incredibly excited to get on the pitch and start playing.”

Tracey Crouch, Minister for Sport and Member of Parliament for Chatham and Aylesford, said:

“Congratulations to Thinking Schools on the fantastic new 3G pitch at New Horizons Children's Academy and Holcombe Grammar School.

“I am passionate about the many and varied benefits sport can bring – both at school and to communities – so it was a real pleasure to join students, staff, and parents for such a memorable opening.

“The pitch is a brilliant state-of-the-art addition to Chatham, and I look forward to seeing it used year-round by the local community and students.”

BLACK HISTORY LIVE

Rochester Grammar School met with Yassmin, a member of the Medway African and Caribbean association, and Ally, a researcher from the Chatham Historic Dockyard, last year. They both eagerly spoke to the school about the plans to create a massive exhibition, highlighting the untold stories of the revolutionary men and women that played a huge role in shaping our country and how they all had one place in common: Medway.

They initially asked Rochester Grammar School pupils if they knew of or were taught about any African or Caribbean people that were celebrated in Medway and they answered with a unanimous 'No'; however, they saw it as an opportunity to learn more!

They then wasted no time and set to work, not only teaching pupils of their lives and stories but also opening their eyes to the revolutionary feats that these incredible people accomplished, in a time where doing so would have been seen as impossible. Following this, the pupils put their heads together to come up with a way of displaying all of this information to the public in an interesting way.

The plans for 'Untold Stories' exhibition had been in the works for five years, so both Yassmin and Ally presented pupils with their suggestions but also allowed the pupils to comment on what they believed would appeal to people their age. As the team of pupils spanned across several year groups, they were able to come up with a wide range of ideas. For example, the pupils suggested that there could be more women from today that inspire them like the renowned author Malorie Blackman. Another suggestion was to have music through the ages playing as you walk through the exhibition and lots of interactive activities. The idea of having interactive activities resulted in the pupils creating a giant magnetic crossword of some of the people's names, which is now mounted on the wall as a permanent part of the exhibition.

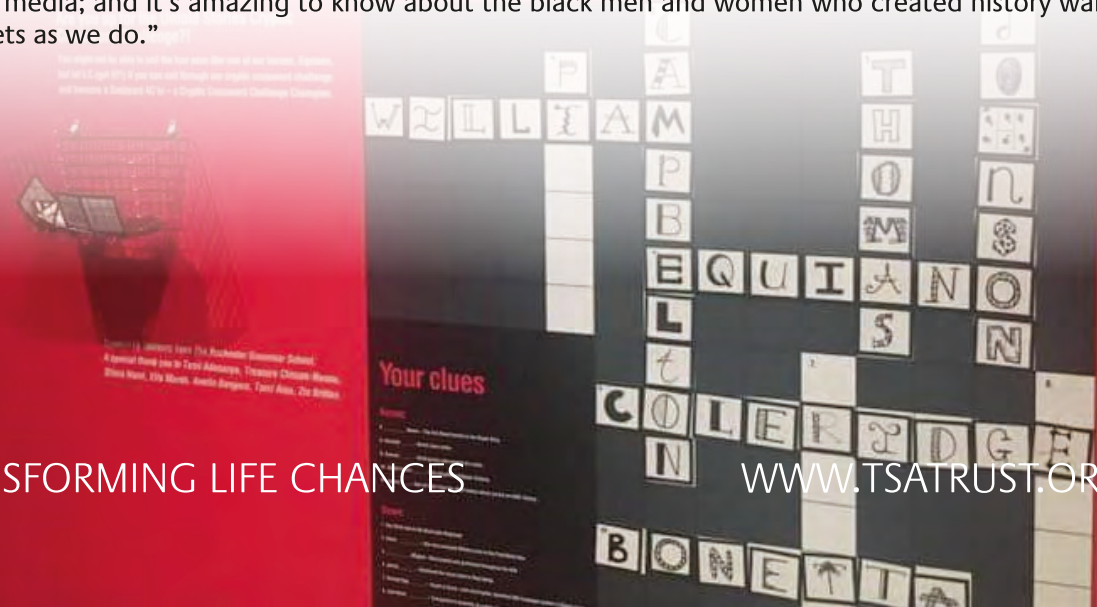
The pupils said: "We could not even have imagined how amazing the final product would be and how fun it would be to take part in the launch and learn even more about their legacies and the impressions that they left on the world. Seeing all of their contributions to the exhibition come to life was a truly gratifying experience."

After speeches from Carol Stewart, who is the chairwoman of MACA, and the performances from the gospel choir and the orchestra, the pupils were finally able to see the exhibition, for which the opening ribbon was cut by the great-great grandson of Sarah Forbes Bonetta; who, in short, was a Yoruba girl who was the goddaughter of Queen Victoria.

One pupil said: "It was rich; rich in colour, rich in representation and rich in education. The second you walk in, the bright walls reveal stunning artwork pieces of black women with positive imagery. Seeing the words 'Pride' and 'Power' above the halos of the dreadlocks and the afros of the women in the art immediately brought about a sense of familiarity; the faces of beauty and liberation were brown like mine."

The exhibition was split up into sections, each section having a different colour and a different aspect of history, like Sport or Medicine. And each section contained a range of people, from Norwell Roberts, who was the first black police constable in the London Metropolitan Police in 1960, to Malorie Blackman, who is know for being the author of the highly recommended 'Noughts and Crosses' series.

A pupil at the school said: "I think I can speak for everyone when I say that a lot of the people in the exhibition were people who we knew nothing about prior to this. It's refreshing to learn history that we aren't taught in school and in the general media; and it's amazing to know about the black men and women who created history walking on the same streets as we do."



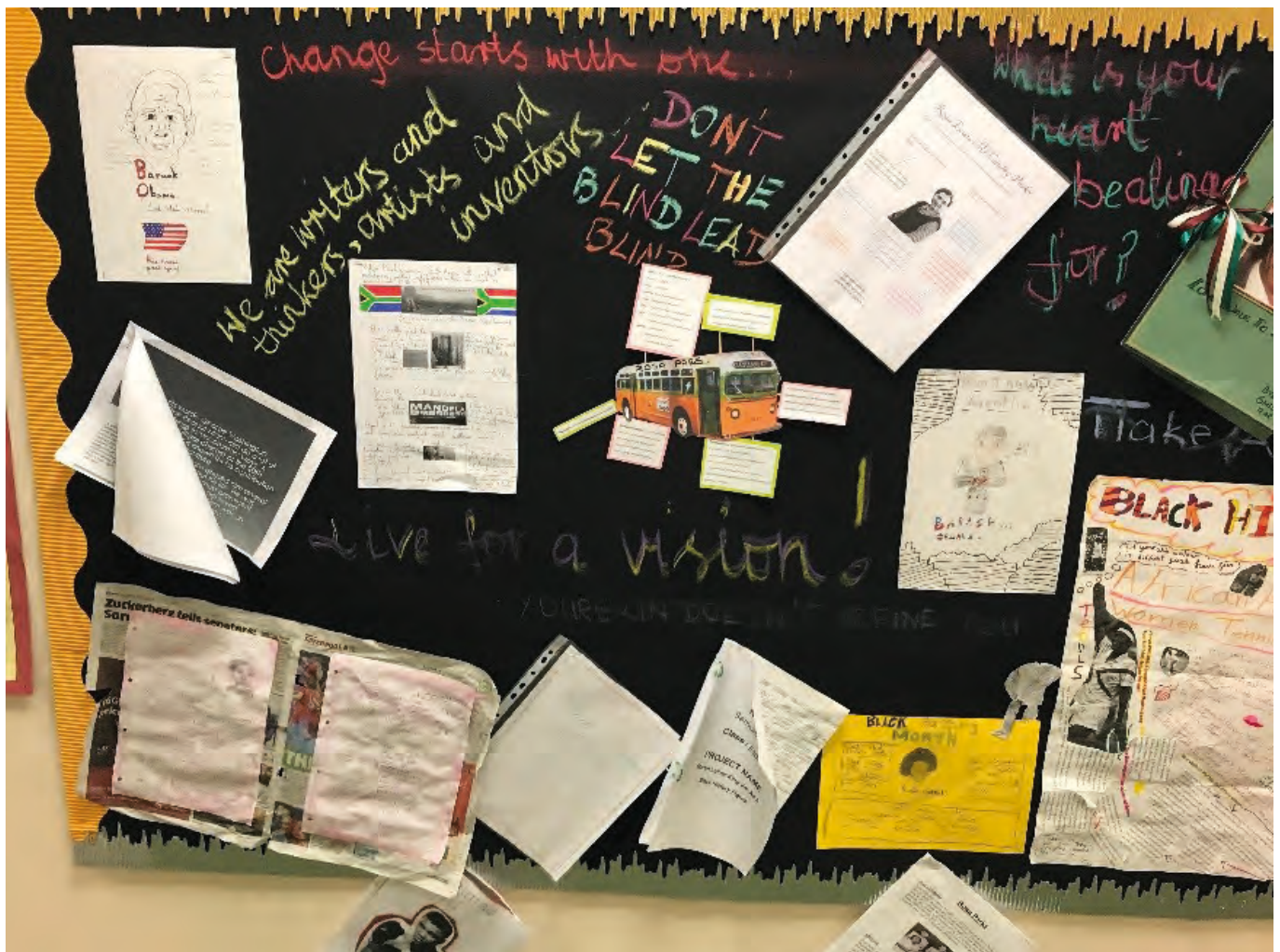
BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Pupils in Year 6 at New Horizons Children’s Academy took part in a homework project for Black History Month in which they could demonstrate their understanding and learning as creatively as possible. The children learnt about the Civil Rights Movement and were able to research a historic figure within class. They spent time investigating the meaning of Black History Month and its contemporary importance, and why it’s important to look at and learn from the work of the Civil Rights Movement. The children looked at spoken word poems and then wrote, performed and filmed spoken word poems about what Black History Month meant to them.

Mandi Halpin, a Teaching Assistant at New Horizons Children’s Academy and part of the charity Medway African and Caribbean Association (MACA), said:

“MACA has an annual awards evening to celebrate the achievements of young black people within the community. There are also Young People United Awards for those aged 5-25, to encompass people from all backgrounds with two awards; the Diversity Award for those promoting diversity and the Inspirational Award whereby one young person nominates another young person for being an inspirational figure.

“This year the awards include the Windrush Awards to coincide with the 70th Anniversary of the arrival of the MV Empire Windrush Ship, where awards are given to those in the community, of that era, that have made a positive contribution to society since their arrival. MACA hope to promote positive relations with and within the community to provide more diversity and inclusion of all to contribute to a more cohesive society.”





THE VICTORY ACADEMY CELEBRATES THIRD ANNUAL VICTORY DAY

Students, staff and parents at The Victory Academy enjoyed a day of entertainment and celebrations for the third annual Victory Day on Friday 28th September. The Academy, in Chatham, opened its doors for a full programme of naval and creative activities and workshops.

To celebrate three years since the official opening of the Academy, the community was welcomed for an afternoon open hour, featuring a wide variety of activities including arts workshops with primary children. Guests were treated to a tour and were able to see students at work – before being invited to join an after school event with refreshments, live music, BBQ and performances to celebrate the anniversary.

Lessons were suspended for the day, with children participating in activities to boost their team building, communication, and interpersonal skills, led by both staff and the Academy's wide variety of local partners. These include the Chatham Historic Dockyard, Sea Cadets, Fort Luton, Nucleus Arts and the Cabinet of Curiosities.

- Year 12 students oversaw a balloon launch in the morning by Year 7 students, in a competition to see whose balloon reaches the furthest distance from the school.
- Students also enjoyed a range of naval-themed activities, such as rope making, knotting rope, tug of wars, boat making, 3D ship designing, and dazzle ship making.
- They participated in in-house activities including battleship maths, recreating writing letters from Lord Nelson to Emma, posted into bottles decorated in Art lessons, both of which will be used to create an art installation.
- A climbing wall was set up for the day which saw students overcoming initial reservations to make it to the top in record time, and sporting events included a gun run and various team building sports and activities.
- The first group of qualified Victory TS Temeraire Sea Cadets showed off their naval skills to a wide audience in the after-school celebration, where they presented the Historic Dockyard Chatham with a piece of artwork, created by students to celebrate the Dockyard's 400th Anniversary.
- A range of Performing Arts students provided an evening of musical entertainment for all who attended, and the Academy's active PTA supported the event.

These are just a few of the brilliant activities provided by staff and friends of the Academy.

The Academy's strength in the Creative Arts and Sport in particular has been recognised by multiple recent accolades. Arts Council England's coveted Platinum Artsmark celebrates The Victory Academy's commitment to arts and cultural education and its strong partnerships with organisations in this sector; while the Academy has also recently achieved the Gold School Games Mark, which celebrates its commitment, engagement and delivery of competitive school sport.



Mandy Gage, Executive Principal of The Victory Academy, said:

“It was a delight to host our third annual Victory Day, which was another great success this year. Students and staff look forward to a full day of exciting activities, and we are always so pleased to open our doors to parents, carers, and the local community – showing them everything The Victory Academy has to offer.

“Victory Day is a great chance to celebrate the brilliant achievements of our students and school, and by engaging in a range of fun activities, students also get to develop some important skills for the future.

“We couldn't pass up the opportunity to show our fantastic school community our gratitude for their continued support, and I am really pleased that the day went so well.”



BAR MOCK TRIAL COMPETITION

On Saturday 1st December, 15 Sixth Form students from Rochester Grammar School took part in a regional bar mock trial competition at Maidstone Crown Court. Their participation in the competition was the culmination of months of hard work, which was predominantly student-led, that began with a successful application to the competition in the summer.

In September, the Sixth Form students, led by Year 13, Simren Chug, learnt that they would have to prepare a defence and a prosecution for two hypothetical cases, in which they would need to assume the roles of barristers, witnesses, court clerk, usher, and jurors. In preparation for the competition, they needed to familiarise themselves with the specific requirements of their roles, the details of the crimes that had been committed, and the statements provided by each witness.

The Sixth Form students worked tirelessly to prepare for the event, meeting regularly after school, often until late in the evening to ensure that they were prepared for any questions and curveballs their competitors may ask. The students were assisted for one evening by Danny Moore, a barrister from London, who had volunteered to offer his expertise and guidance to the students, something they were very grateful for.

For the competition, the students were assigned to be either the defence or the prosecution and go up against another school's defence or prosecution. The schools took turns to question their own witnesses and to cross-examine the other school's witnesses. The cross-examination required quick thinking on both the barristers and the witnesses part, as any slip-ups, inconsistencies, or fabrications resulted in a loss of marks. The witnesses had to be convincing in bringing their characters to life, and the court clerk and the usher were judged on their ability to maintain the formalities and order in the court. The jurors were assigned to cases involving two separate schools and were required to provide guilty or not guilty verdicts based on what they had heard and seen.

The preliminary stages took the form of three rounds against three schools from the south east, with each school being judged upon their performance on a range of criteria. Performances were judged by a real judge, who also presided over proceedings, giving students an accurate feel for how a real trial would play out. Following the three preliminary rounds, the top two schools (out of 15) advanced to compete against each other in the final trial later on in the day. Rochester Grammar School came up against strong competition from Maidstone Grammar School, Highworth Grammar School, and Maidstone Grammar School for Girls in the preliminary rounds, but displayed great ingenuity and improvisation to overcome the cross-examination from the opposition barristers and the responses to questions from the opposition witnesses.

It was clear that every school in the competition was well-prepared and had put in considerable effort, as did the students from Rochester Grammar School. The hard work and effort made by all of the Rochester Grammar School students was rewarded as they made it to the final, where they were to go up against Queen Elizabeth's School, Barnet, the winner of which would advance to the national final of the competition in Edinburgh. The final trial was close from start to finish, with both Rochester Grammar School's prosecution and Queen Elizabeth's defence displaying why they had both reached the final, much to the admiration of the judge. Unfortunately, pupils at Rochester Grammar School were narrowly beaten, finishing runners-up of the south east regional competition. Nonetheless, their performance in the competition was a huge success, even more so considering that it was their first time being at such a competition, and that the majority of their preparation for the event was student-led. All of the students should take great pride and satisfaction from their organisation and maturity shown throughout the process, and how strongly they represented the school.



NEW HORIZONS CHILDREN'S ACADEMY'S SCHOOL COUNCIL POSE QUESTIONS TO LOCAL MP

The School Council at New Horizons Children's Academy invited Tracey Crouch MP into their school, to ask questions about being an MP and how they could support their school and local community.

Children from the Key Stage 2 School Council gave a flurry of questions to Tracey Crouch, demonstrating a keen interest into the life of an MP and how it related to their role as School Council representing their peers. They asked fantastic questions including "Why can't children vote?", "What can we do to help our local community?", "Is it difficult to fight for the local community in parliament?" and the children also discussed Brexit and the Suffragettes.

Tracey Crouch was more than happy to share her experience and the questions and answers session gave a real insight into an MP's life and helped the children to learn about how important it is to work together and be heard. The children were very impressed with Tracey Crouch and learnt ways in which to improve an already successful school, but to also be involved in improving the local community.

Children at the school have already taken lead by introducing ways in which to be greener and now have a sub-committee that focus on finding ways to reduce plastic and help with sustaining the environment.

Tracey Crouch MP, said: "It was a pleasure to come into New Horizons Children's Academy to meet with the School Council. The children were intrigued and asked many important questions which demonstrated their determination to learn and find ways to help their school and the local community."

Jody Murphy, Executive Headteacher at New Horizons Children's Academy, said: "Our children recognise the importance of working together to find solutions that not only improve the lives of children at our school, but our local community and the environment as well. We look forward to seeing their ideas making a change for the better in the near future."

Ella Martin, Year 6 Teacher at New Horizons Children's Academy, said: "Working with the school council's children, it's a real pleasure to see how focused and supportive they are to each other, their peers and our school. We are very proud of each and every one of them."

SPORTS ROUND-UP

On Thursday 22nd November, New Horizons took part in the Badminton Mini Youth Games at Medway Park. Donning their smart NHCA sports gear they arrived keen and raring to go. During the day, the pupils took part in 8 matches of mixed doubles, girl's doubles and boy's doubles. The team played fantastically, winning 6 out of the 10 matches. This led to the school receiving fourth place in the cup out of 19 schools. Furthermore, the school achieved the 'Fair Play' award over the forty schools in the cup and plate for the second time in three games. This means the NHCA team were noticed and voted for by match officials, other teams and other teachers for being the team which played the fairest and demonstrated good sportsmanship. This is the second time this academic year that this has been won by a team from NHCA.

All Faiths Children's Academy pupils shared an equally excellent result by winning the Medway Basketball Competition. Working together, they showed excellent skills as they went up as their competitors, justifying their achievement as title holders of the basketball tournament.



New Horizons Children's Academy



All Faiths Children's Academy

The boys at Holcombe Grammar School are a credit to their school, having participated in the handball competition at the Kent School Games. Their Year 10 team finished in fifth position overall, a very commendable effort given that they are relatively new to the sport.

Very much like the Year 10 boys, Holcombe's Year 8 team took on their opponents with determination and produced an outstanding result, taking first place and winning the competition overall.



Holcombe Grammar School



AUTUMN RESIDENTIAL

In our summer edition of this publication, we shared with you great stories of pupils taking part in residential trips in Kent and Portsmouth.

During November, Cedar Children's Academy had their residential trip for their Year 6 pupils and visited Marchant's Hill for a fun packed weekend with opportunities to experience outdoor activities whilst developing their courage, perseverance and resilience.

After meeting with the PGL Leaders and eating dinner, everyone made their way to their first activities, including the Challenge Course, buggy building and abseiling. The challenge course was a particular favourite, with everyone coming back caked in mud and proud of themselves for what they had achieved on their first day and couldn't wait for their first evening activity which was campfire. With everybody wrapped up warm, they made their way through the dark woods where they gathered around the campfire, learning many new songs, played games and were told stories.

During their second day they took part in archery, Jacob's ladder, orienteering and the zip wire. Although the weather wasn't kind, everyone was raring to go! The pupils learnt many new skills, for example: During Jacob's ladder everyone learnt how to belay. Also, during zip wire, lots of children demonstrated their perseverance and resilience to overcome their fear of heights and did an amazing job of making sure they gave it a go, even if it meant only going to the top of the tower. Due to bad weather during the evening, the children chose to watch *The Greatest Showman*, having a wonderful time watching and singing along into the night before going to bed.

A highlight on this final day was the Giant Swing. A healthy dose of perseverance and courage was needed, especially during the continued downpour and bitter wind! The weather only increased the challenge of both the Giant Swing and the Challenge Course which was full of mud and puddles. Everyone enjoyed overcoming the obstacles and it was really pleasing to hear of pupils supporting each other to get the whole team around the course. Nobody finished the course without becoming covered in mud from head to toe!

All of the pupils should be very proud of their achievements on the residential, giving them more confidence in their own ability to achieve things they did not think were possible. They worked really well to collaborate in completing the tasks and supporting each other to overcome their fears. A real team effort! They also learnt many skills in becoming more independent as they had to organise their rooms and make sure they kept all of their belongings together. Organisation and preparation were needed to make sure they had everything they needed for the different activities, thus giving them independent learning skills they will be able to transfer back to the classroom. Their behaviour was excellent, and the children were a true credit to the school.



THINKING SCHOOLS ACADEMY TRUST HONOUR REMEMBRANCE CENTENARY



Thinking Schools in Kent pay tribute to those who sacrificed and lost their lives in battle to mark the centenary of World War One coming to an end.

Thinking Schools Academy Trust schools in Kent took part in varying activities to learn about World War One and the impact it had on the lives of soldiers, their families and those caught up in the terrible events that took hold.

New Horizons Children's Academy pupils and staff wore red in honour of celebrating the importance of remembrance. Pupils took part in their 'Poppy Day', decorating biscuits with poppy designs writing thank you letters to soldiers who fought in the war, analysing 'Flanders Field' and creating watercolour pictures with silhouettes of soldiers. The school participated in two minutes silence at 11:00am and all year groups entered artwork into The Royal British Legion art competition.

Jody Murphy, Executive Headteacher at New Horizons Children's Academy, said: "Celebrating remembrance is an important annual event in New Horizons calendar. Taking time to reflect and thank those from many countries around the world who served, sacrificed and changed our world forever is central to our children growing and developing into wonderful citizens."

Pupils at All Faiths Children's Academy took part in collective worship led by Year 6 pupils. The Gordon Children's Academy and The Rochester Grammar School, an Ofsted 'Outstanding' school, recognised remembrance through assemblies and activities which reflected on the importance of the World Wars. The Gordon Children's Academy had the pleasure of visitors from Brompton Barracks who shared their stories; explaining why they choose to serve their country and what the World Wars mean to them.

The Victory Academy were joined by Staff Sergeant Dobbie with the 'Last Post' being played by Mr Owens, Deputy Head of School for Behaviour and Welfare, signalling the beginning of the silence at 11:00am. A wreath was laid at the foot of the flagpole that resides in the centre of the school's atrium.

Goodwin Academy, one of Thinking Schools Academy Trust's latest schools to join the Trust, saw pupils in Year 7 create handmade poppies in remembrance of the fallen soldiers that were placed on every door in the Academy, with poppies being draped down from the balconies in the heart of the school foyer.



CPD DAY 2018

Towards the end of October, we held our second Trust CPD Day where teachers from our schools all came together at The Portsmouth Academy to hear thought provoking presentations, network with each other and take part in breakout subject groups, before finally competing to become 'General Knowledge Quiz' olympians.

During the morning, educational support staff attended their own CPD events which were held at The Victory Academy, in Medway, and Newbridge Junior School, in Portsmouth.

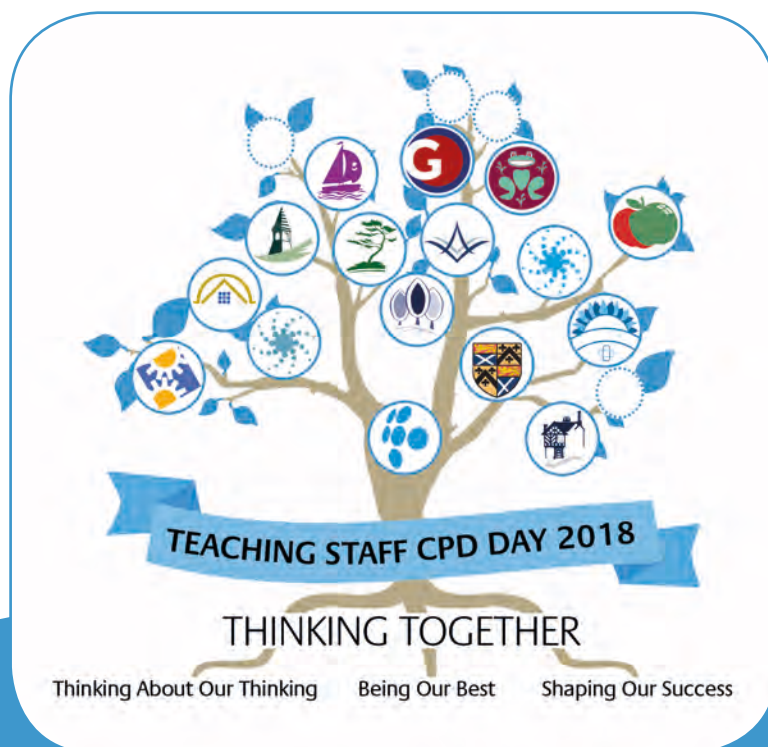
Recognising the importance of keeping up with technology, we used YouTube to provide a live stream to those who were unable to attend the event, which also meant that recordings were available later for those who had other unavoidable commitments to attend to.

The day's activities unfolded with Stuart Gardner, our CEO, taking to the stage to give a welcome address to the attendees with words of passion demonstrating his drive, commitment and belief in everything our Trust stands for, highlighting successes and congratulating staff for their achievements.

We had the pleasure of Chris Brown, Professor of Education at the School of Education and Sociology, University of Portsmouth, as our key note speaker. His presentation titled 'The power of collaborative networking' was delivered with authority and provided our staff with further understanding of networking, to develop and scale up research-informed practice.

Hanna Miller, Trust Assistant Principal for Thinking, Teaching and Learning, introduced 'The seven principles of highly effective teaching and learning'. Hanna has a natural ability to engage with the audience and is thorough in the knowledge of 'Thinking' that resonates throughout our Trust. Staff also had an opportunity to look at how they would apply the seven principals to their current practices.

During lunch staff had an opportunity to find out more about our new wellbeing campaign 'Thinking YOU', and how our HR team will lead with the support of wellbeing ambassadors to develop healthier ways to work and live, so that everyone one of us can continue to enhance our lifestyles.



After a day of presentations, many staff had a chance to relax while they watched some of their colleagues take part in our general knowledge quiz with the chance to win the wonderful trophy for their school.

There was heart warming camaraderie amongst those taking part and the audience, and as rounds came to an end and points were tallied up, it was obvious that the pressure was on for the remaining schools in the final round to hold the trophy of success.

Upon the stage stood three remaining schools, Isambard Brunel Junior School, Penhale Infant School and The Victory Academy. The final was intense and congratulations go out to Penhale Infant School who took first place with The Victory Academy as runners up.

We would like to thank everyone for attending our CPD Day, in person or through our live feed and for those brave individuals who took part in the quiz as representatives of their school.





TRACEY CROUCH MP VISITS HOLCOMBE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Before Thinking Schools took over Holcombe Grammar School in 2013, the leadership and management of the school were judged inadequate and the teaching and attainment of students as requiring improvement. The motivation of students was reported as suffering due to the poor quality of teaching, having an impact on students' behaviour and their ability to learn.

Thinking Schools quickly turned around the fortunes of the school and the achievements of its students, culminating in a rating of Good from Ofsted this summer. The inspection report highlighted the school's "engaging and challenging" curriculum, a sense of safety and inclusion in the school, and the continued increase in attainment throughout, with tailored teaching ensuring that all students are taken into account. HGS is now led by Executive Principal Mandy Gage, who also oversees The Victory Academy, which is part of Thinking Schools.

Tracey Crouch MP's visit is a chance to reflect on and celebrate Holcombe's many successes, including many on-site additions including a new sports hall, classrooms and science lab, and the recent opening of a 3G pitch. Academic accomplishments include being ranked the third best school in Medway and in the top 12% of schools nationally, and achieving record-breaking A-level results this August.

All staff and students are very much looking forward to welcoming her to the school.

Mandy Gage, Executive Principal, said:

"Welcoming Tracey Crouch MP to come and see the fantastic progress that Holcombe Grammar School has made is an opportunity that we are all very excited for. As the local MP, Tracey is well placed to understand the challenges that the school faced and the accomplishments of our fantastic staff and students in the last five years.

"I know that she will be delighted to see the vast improvements that we as a school have made, and our students will make sure that she feels very welcome during her time here."

ALL FAITHS CHILDREN'S ACADEMY CONTINUE TO EXCEL WITH RENEWAL OF THEIR 'THINKING' ACCREDITATION

All Faiths Children's Academy has been recognised for its integration of our cognitive approach to education by the University of Exeter, having gained re-accreditation for a further three years.

Exeter University's Cognitive Education Development Unit has highlighted the shared philosophy championed by our Trust. Central to this philosophy is transforming life chances by actively shaping the minds and habits of young people using cognitive education.

The framework of cognitive education is constructed through the use of the Thinking School approach. Research has repeatedly demonstrated that when children understand how their brains work they achieve better academic and personal outcomes than those who do not.

The ultimate goal is that every individual, child or adult, in the organisation consciously recognises their own habits, strengths and areas for development and actively seeks to improve themselves thereby creating transformational change in each individual.

The report highlighted a wide range of strengths at All Faiths Children's Academy, including:

- The pupil drive team are confident with thinking skills and spoke in great depth about their knowledge in different year groups.
- In all classrooms there is evidence of pupils' work making use of Thinking Skills whether in books, on display or from pupils' dialogue.
- The school values its relationships with all stakeholders and uses a range of strategies and approaches to engage parents and carers with the idea of being a Thinking School.
- All developments are underpinned and informed by clear action planning linked to and part of the School Improvement Plan.
- Evidence submitted includes many exemplars of pupil work from across the school and across the curriculum in which thinking tools and strategies are being used very effectively to engage pupils in the learning, probe and challenge, deepen their thinking and generate higher order questioning.
- An Academy Quality Assurance report indicated that 'questioning was a strength, with most forms of questioning good and some excellent'.

The report concluded that since the initial accreditation as a Thinking School, outcomes in terms of attainment as measured by the end of Key Stage results particularly in Reading and Writing have improved consistently. The school has also received more reports of children being positive learners in class from teachers and parents, and when making external visits the feedback often refers to positive behaviour, engaged learning and good questions.

There is much to indicate that All Faiths Children's Academy has maintained their focus on developing as a Thinking School over the last four years and, from the evidence available, continues to meet all the criteria set by the University of Exeter.



ABCD AWARDS

It's unbelievable that a just over a year ago, we announced the start of our ABCD (Above and Beyond the Call of Duty) Awards. Every term schools nominate who they think has performed above and beyond that which is expected of them, and one member of staff is selected from those nominations.

Our previous Our Trust publication also recognised the overall winner for the entire year, which was Kayla White, a French and Geography teacher at The Victory Academy.

We've decided, with so many nominees, that this year we will be awarding two members of staff each term. Therefore, for Term 1, we would like to congratulate Emma Fox at Holcombe Grammar School and Tori Stevens at Moorings Way Infant School for their commitment to education.



Term 1 Winner - Emma Fox
Holcombe Grammar School

Emma has been diligent in her approach to learning a new role and ensuring Holcombe is compliant with regulations. She was a key contributor to the successful Medway Test session held at the school, which led to Holcombe being recognised and accredited as a model centre in Medway. Emma is continually reviewing and improving the school's procedures and protocols to ensure Holcombe students have a positive exam experience.



Term 1 Winner - Tori Stevens
Moorings Way Infant School

Tori has tirelessly worked to ensure the children at Moorings Way Infant school have the funds to buy resources that increase their enjoyment at school. She organises events such as the Race for Life and the summer, Easter and Christmas fayres. Tori is an amazing organiser and dedicated to supporting and championing the school. Not only does she raise money for Moorings Way Infant School, she also supports them by being a member of their Academy Advisory Board.

GCSE RESULTS 2018

Students and staff at our secondary schools have celebrated another fantastic set of GCSE results this year.

Students and staff at Rochester Grammar School were overjoyed to collect some brilliant GCSE results earlier this year – with a quarter of all results at grade 8 or 9 (equivalent to an A or A*).

An impressive 10% of GCSE students set the bar especially high by achieving no grade lower than a 7 (equivalent to all A or A*) – and 15 students achieved some of the top grades in the country, with all grade 8s and 9s in English Literature, English Language, and Maths.



Rochester Grammar School

A third of all GCSE results at Holcombe Grammar School were a grade 7, 8, or 9 – equivalent to an A or A* – and in Physics, Chemistry, and Biology, more than half of students achieved a grade 7 or higher. 90% of all GCSE students achieved a grade 4, which is a pass, or better, and 82% of results were a strong pass (grade 5 or better).

Holcombe Grammar School students rose to these challenges, with an impressive 29 students achieving a grade 7 or higher (A or A*) in both English and Maths.



Holcombe Grammar School

The Victory Academy, which caters for many students from disadvantaged backgrounds, has been on a remarkable journey of improvement over the last few

years – with extremely good progress achieved in Maths this year. One particular student, who will be going on to study at the Victory Academy Sixth Form, received a very impressive Grade 9 (equivalent to an A*) in Maths and three grade 8s (equivalent to an A). A grade 9 is the very highest score possible, with the regulator predicting that only 5% of awards nationally will be a grade 9.



The Victory Academy

Delighted Year 11 students at The Portsmouth Academy, more than half of whom are classed as “disadvantaged”, have achieved an average of eight GCSEs each this year – and nearly a quarter of all grades are at 7, 8 or 9, the equivalents of A* or A grades. Two-thirds of all GCSE grade were a grade 4 (a pass and equivalent to the old grade C) or better, with excellent achievement also at grade 5 or better, which is considered a strong pass. More than half of all students achieved a strong pass or better in English, Maths and Triple Science.



The Portsmouth Academy

Students succeeded in spite of this being the first year in which all GCSEs are at a new, tougher standard, including more challenging content and questions. Significant changes to grading have been introduced, while assessment is now based on exams only, rather than coursework. There have also been additional exam papers.

A LEVEL RESULTS 2018

Students and staff across our secondary schools were delighted with another fantastic set of A Level results this summer, allowing students to get one-step closer to the career of their dreams.

The Victory Academy is particularly proud to continue its excellent track record of success in the vocational subjects, where students made impressive progress once again. The school caters for many students from disadvantaged areas of Medway and saw amazing achievements and outcomes as a result of the commitment both students and staff have shown this year.

Their hard work and excellent results will see them take up a range of subjects as diverse as Business Management, Architectural Engineering and Design Management, and Physical Education and Sport Management.



The Victory Academy

Students at Holcombe Grammar school celebrated an exceptional jump in results as almost a quarter achieve A* or A. Almost a quarter of all grades (24%) at Holcombe Grammar School were A* or A, and half of all grades were A*-B (50%) – both of which are impressive improvements on last year and make for another year of extremely strong results at the school.



Holcombe Grammar School

Rochester Grammar School saw students collect standout results and secure places at top universities. The school maintained its track record of success in one of most challenging years to date, with reforms across many subjects. Nearly three quarters of students achieved A*-B grades, and 18 students celebrated all A* or A grades.



Rochester Grammar School

A Level Results 2018 continued...

The students' fantastic results have seen them win places at some of the best universities in the country – including Imperial College London, Exeter University, Durham University, University College London, Kings College London, and Bath University.

Rochester Grammar School's excellent results at A Level follow hot on the heels of its success in this year's International Baccalaureate (IB). Students achieved world-class results in the IB – with a third achieving an outstanding 39 points or more (eight points above the world average and equivalent to gaining four A*s at A level), and students off to top destinations such as Cambridge University.

Overall, the Trust saw fantastic outcomes for its students this year; we wish each and every one of our leavers the very best of luck in their next steps in taking hold of their own destiny.

THE PORTSMOUTH ACADEMY ARE AWARDED £40,000

Students and staff across our secondary schools were delighted with another fantastic set of A Level results this summer, allowing students to get one-step closer to the career of their dreams.

The Portsmouth Academy recently submitted a successful bid to the Wolfson Foundation and was very fortunate to be awarded a grant of almost £40,000.

The grant has enabled the Academy to purchase a laser cutter, 3D printer and a sublimation printer amongst other pieces of equipment.

Students have already been putting the equipment to good use and the school and our Trust can't wait to see what amazing things they come up with next.

Thank you very much to The Wolfson Foundation for their generous grant.



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IT MUST BE CHRISTMAS!

The Year 3 children at Cedar Children's Academy have been putting on a Christmas play called 'The Amazing Advent Calendar'. The play features the main character who is sent back in time to unravel the story of the nativity and understand the true meaning of Christmas.



Meon Junior School - Nativity Play

Meon Infant School children from Years 1 and 2 went to their local Tesco store to sing for the public on Friday 14th December (Christmas Jumper Day). They are raising funds to transform their environmental area into a sensory garden for the children to undertake a variety of activities during the year.



Meon Infant School - Songs of Christmas

Children at Meon Junior School have been to St James' Church to take part in Christingle and Newbridge Junior School took to the stage this year with their production of A Christmas Carol.



Meon Junior School - Christingle Celebration



Newbridge Junior School - Christmas Jumper Day



Penhale Infant School - Nativity Play



Newbridge Junior School - A Christmas Carol



Cedar Children's Academy - The Amazing Advent Calendar Play

CHRISTMAS CARD DESIGN COMPETITION 2018

This year's Christmas Card Competition delivered some very interesting designs from primary and secondary school pupils in our schools.

With so many pupils taking part, it was difficult to choose who would be the overall winner.

One particular design that caught our eye was from Sol, a Year 7 pupil at Holcombe Grammar School. Sol's design not only captured elements of Christmas but also encapsulated our Thinking Maps within his artwork.

We would like to thank everyone who took part and congratulations to Sol for winning the competition. We hope he enjoys his prize.





THINKING
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Artwork by Sol, Year 7 pupil at Holcombe Grammar School



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