

# OUR TRUST

CHILD FIRST, ASPIRE, CHALLENGE, ACHIEVE

Autumn 2023 | ISSUE 21



THINKING  
SCHOOLS  
ACADEMY TRUST



TRANSFORMING LIFE CHANCES

## WELCOME MESSAGE FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

### Welcome to the 21st edition of Our Trust, and what a fantastic start to the academic year we've had so far!



On 1st September, I had the pleasure of visiting our South West schools in sunny Torbay to officially welcome Paignton Academy, Kings Ash Academy, and Curledge Street Academy to the Trust.

It is amazing to think that only a couple of years ago we were a Trust based in the South East with 16 schools and we are now 26 schools stretching from Plymouth in the South West to Colchester in the East. It is not surprising that, given this level of growth in our Trust, our Board have decided that we need to focus on a period of consolidation to ensure that we bring together all our schools so that we can work as effectively as possible for the benefit of all our students. This work will focus on developing our culture of staff well-being, the effective use of data in the organisation and a review of working practices to ensure that we are as effective as possible as an organisation.

Paignton Academy is in Torbay and becomes the largest school in our Trust, teaching students aged 11-16 over two sites. The school encourages their students to 'Believe and Achieve' with a commitment to equipping them with the skills and knowledge needed to lead successful and fulfilling lives in today's world. Kings Ash and Curledge Street Academies, also based in Paignton, are both Primary schools that strive to create a learning environment that enables children to be 'Knowing, Aspiring, and Achieving' and provides a 'Flying Start to Lifelong Learning' respectively.

Joining the Trust is a natural progression for the schools, sharing the Trust's ethos of putting children at the heart of decision-making and

ensuring that the development of teaching and learning is a core priority.

On 4th September, we also welcomed our first alternative provision school to the Trust, Lodestar Academy, based in Torquay. Similar to the other schools within their hub, Lodestar Academy shares the same values and vision as the Trust, believing that every young person in our community deserves to have the best opportunities in life regardless of their individual circumstances. We could not be more thrilled to have them on board and benefit from being part of the six schools working in Torbay, along with Brixham College and Furzeham Nursery and Primary School, to transform the life chances of young people in the area.

Colchester Royal Grammar School joined our Trust in May this year, becoming our fourth grammar school. Named East Anglia State School of the Decade by The Sunday Times, CRGS is a boys school, ages 11-16 years, with a co-ed Sixth Form and Boarding and has more than 1000 students on roll. Their achievements and successes are the by-product of an ethos in which individuals are encouraged to enjoy challenge, aim high, and prepare accordingly.

This summer, our Year 11-13 students awaited their GCSE and A-Level results, and we could not be prouder of how they performed. I wish our departing cohorts every success for the future as they head on to new careers, life experiences, and further education at university or with apprenticeship schemes.

Please enjoy this latest edition of Our Trust.

*Stuart Gardner*  
Stuart Gardner, MSc, NPQH, NLE  
Chief Executive Officer

### In Loving memory of Michael Bailey

#### Board Director for Thinking Schools Academy Trust

Michael was devoted to the Thinking Schools Academy Trust and a strong advocate for our students, staff, and Trust. Over many years, he gave his time and support to our Trust, particularly our Kent schools and Holcombe Grammar School, where he began in his governance role. Michael leaves a legacy of exceptional business acumen and a passion for ensuring that we always put our children at the centre of our decisions to transform the life chances of young people in all of our schools.



Welcome to  
our community!

Search for  
Thinking Schools Academy Trust

#WeAreTSAT #WeAreOne



## IN THIS ISSUE

- 01 Torbay Hub grows
- 03 Results days
- 06 Refer a friend
- 07 TPA Global
- 09 Archaeological finds
- 11 Ralph motorbike
- 13 The launch of Thinking Food
- 15 Mental Health
- 16 Festival of Metacognition
- 17 Sieze the Day
- 19 Artsmark
- 21 #WeAreOne
- 23 Meon Way launch
- 25 Robotics Win
- 26 Energy Saving
- 27 Little Eaters
- 28 Professional GB athletes visit Penbridge Junior School
- 29 Rights Respecting
- 30 Thinking Fitness
- 31 Goodwin Summer Art Show
- 32 New Horizons Children's Academy welcomes local author
- 33 Meon Way Federation Attendance
- 35 Welcome to Colchester Royal Grammar
- 38 Lets talk Mens Health

We're always keen to hear from our readers, so if you would like to provide feedback on this publication, you can by scanning the QR code below.



# Our Family of Schools in Torbay have grown

This academic year is set to be another exciting adventure for the Thinking Schools Academy Trust as four new schools join our journey in transforming the life chances of young people in our community.

On Friday, 1st September, the sun was shining as we officially welcomed Bay Education Trust and their schools Paignton Academy (KS3-4), Kings Ash Academy and Curledge Street Academy (both EYFS and KS1-2).

During the celebratory launch, school staff were introduced to our Trust's Chief Executive Officer, Stuart Gardner, Director of Culture and Development, Mandy Gage and Head of Business Operations for the Torbay Hub, Carol Durrant. These academies will continue to benefit from the support of our senior leadership team and share knowledge, resources and best practices with other academies via the Trust's collaborative networks.

Gavin Jones, Chair of the Paignton Regional Governing Body, said, "We are delighted to be able to embark on the next phase of our journey. As a small trust, the opportunity to join a larger trust that is so well regarded in the sector would provide us with many excellent opportunities. This will support a greater capacity for providing quality first education for our students and will also provide some exciting opportunities for collaboration with other schools both locally and further afield. This larger learning community will provide further opportunities for us to inspire success in all that we do."

The academies' names, admissions, values and staff, including headteachers and teachers, will remain the same. School governors will also continue to play an influential role in the running of the academies.

As highlighted on the day, these three schools are a wonderful addition to the Trust family and a natural progression in terms of our shared commitment to continually enhancing provisions for students and future proofing them with the skills and knowledge needed to lead successful and happy lives in today's world.

Stuart added, "We are delighted to welcome Bay Education Trust and all of its students and colleagues into the Thinking Schools Academy Trust community. We are a family of schools that work together to transform the life chances of all children and young people, and we are committed to providing outstanding education."

The celebrations and sunshine didn't stop there, as Monday, 4th September saw Lodestar Academy (formerly known as The Burton Academy) join the Trust. Lodestar Academy will be our first alternative provision school, and we look forward to supporting staff in their continued dedication to providing a positive learning experience for young people where mainstream education hasn't been the right environment for them.

This new chapter for TSAT and the Academy heralded a new name and identity. The name 'Lodestar' was selected as it means a star that is used to guide a ship or a person that serves as an inspiration. This echoes the academy's mission to guide, support and nurture its students through their education.

Steven Hulme, Headteacher at Lodestar Academy, said, "Every aspect of life at Lodestar Academy is being considered to ensure we are doing everything possible for our brilliant students. We have already begun collaborating with TSAT to provide students with the best resources and opportunities possible. Changing the school's name will allow us to further reset expectations and place a strong emphasis on the school's exciting future. This is why the work we are doing on our vision and brand is so crucial."

We couldn't agree more, Steven, and are absolutely delighted that Lodestar Academy has joined our thriving Torbay Hub, bringing the total number of Trust schools in the area to six. We're looking forward to sharing your students' success stories, as well as those of our students at Paignton Academy, Kings Ash Academy and Curledge Street Academy.

What a fantastic few days of celebration, sunshine and smiles for our new schools and the Trust as a whole - with of course, no party complete without goodie bags and cake!

**Paignton Academy, Kings Ash Academy, Curledge Street Academy and Lodestar Academy: Welcome to the TSAT family, we cannot wait to see what's next. Watch this space!**



**CURLEDGE STREET  
ACADEMY**



# Students Shape their Success on Results Days!

**Through dedication and determination, our students across the Trust celebrate and share their academic success!**

Although summer 2023 saw the somewhat unwelcome return of the pre-pandemic standard of grading to GCSEs and A-Levels, we are extremely delighted to report that our students have made fantastic progress and truly excelled themselves throughout their studies. A huge congratulations to students across our schools in Kent, Portsmouth, Plymouth, Torbay and Essex – you did it!

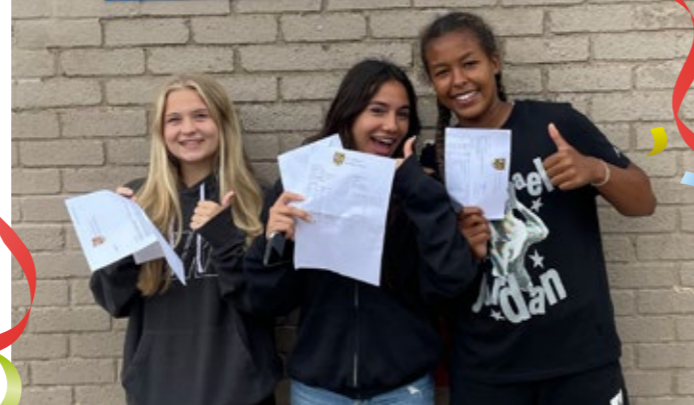


Firstly, Rochester Grammar School celebrated another outstanding set of International Baccalaureate (IB) results in July. RGS is an International Baccalaureate World School, studying the IB diploma as an alternative to A-Levels. Students achieved an average point score of 34, which is well above the global average of 30.24. This year, saw student Jessica Rooke receive the maximum score of 45 points, becoming one of only 25 students in the UK to achieve this, placing her in the top 0.5% of students who took the IB diploma globally. A truly remarkable accomplishment.



The A-Level Results Day celebrations kicked off on 17th August, with students across Holcombe Grammar School, The Victory Academy and Goodwin Academy (Kent); Colchester Royal Grammar School (Essex), Plymouth High School for Girls and Plympton Academy (Plymouth) and Brixham College (Torbay) collecting their A-Level results with much excitement and anticipation. They may have had a challenging time throughout Years 9 to 11, but our students' determination and diligence have produced fantastic and well-deserved results, with Brixham College celebrating their best ever post-16 results to date! This could not be achieved without the hard work of our students and support of teaching staff – with student Ellie of Brixham College attesting, *“I have had to work really hard; I know teachers have worked really hard and the support staff, it's all been a team effort. I know I wouldn't have been able to do it without all of those people telling me I can do it.”*

Ellie successfully achieved 3 A\* in Business Studies, History and Sociology and has secured a place studying Curating and Art History at York University. Well done to Ellie and to all of our students and schools across the Trust – we hope you are brimming with as much pride as we are! Big smiles all round!



We wish our Post-16 students good luck as they embark on a new chapter of transforming the life chances of themselves and others around them in their future endeavours.

Like Ellie, many of our A-Level students will continue to progress on their academic journey – with offers from universities across the country to study their chosen pathway, including Dentistry, Natural Sciences, Psychology, Nursing, Criminology, Ocean Exploration and Surveying, Business Management, Teaching, Sports Coaching, Economics, Politics, Law and many more.

Other students have successfully been awarded apprenticeships, secured employment in varying fields or will be taking gap years between their studies.



Lisa Boorman, Principal at Plympton Academy, complemented the cohort, saying, *“I am incredibly proud of our students as they collected their Post-16 results today. They have demonstrated hard work and resilience over the past two years in order to achieve these qualifications, which will open doors to bright futures.”*

*“I am particularly proud of the diverse destinations which our students are now able to pursue, inclusive of studying Law, Diagnostic Radiography, NHS apprenticeships, Engineering*

*Apprenticeships, Art Degrees and Performance pathways. At Plympton Academy Sixth Form we support our young people in discovering their future, whatever that might be.”*



We wish our Post-16 students good luck as they embark on a new chapter of transforming the life chances of themselves and others around them in their future endeavours.



Next up was GCSE Results Day on 24th August where the Trust's secondary school students across Kent, Portsmouth, Plymouth, Torbay and Essex collected their results.



A particular highlight of the day came from Holcombe Grammar School which saw some fantastic success in Chemistry, Maths, Physics, Art and Photography, with Principal Lee Preston remarking, "I am delighted for our students receiving their GCSE results today. They have worked incredibly hard over the last two years and it is fantastic to see their dedication rewarded with an excellent suite of results.

"We are excited to see what the future holds for them and look forward to welcoming many of them back to our Sixth Form in September. We would like to say a huge thank you to all our students, parents, carers, staff and local community for your support and encouragement." Indeed, we concur! A fabulous result for the students at Holcombe Grammar School, as well as our other schools and staff across the Trust who have worked tirelessly to provide the best life chances for our students.

At Colchester Royal Grammar School, over two thirds of the grades achieved were the top grades possible, at grade 9 or 8! Headmaster John Russell beamed, "The grades they have secured are testament to the young people they are becoming. Not only are they hugely talented and dedicated, but the support they have shown each other and the sense of community

*they have created has been heartening. We are delighted with the result they have achieved which, at the top end, rank as the best the school has seen."*

We, as a Trust, are beyond proud of what our schools have accomplished and are honoured to be able to share this with you.

Speaking of pride and dedication, Shannon, who collected her results at Goodwin Academy, successfully achieved an 8 in English Language and English Literature, and a Distinction\* in Media! Shannon exclaimed, "I am really happy with my grades; I wasn't expecting to do so well in English." Have more faith in yourself, Shannon; we believe in you and all of our students across the Trust. Dream big!



As Lee Preston mentioned earlier, many of our students will continue on from their GCSE studies to A-Levels within our Trust, and we look forward to welcoming them back in September. To those moving on to different avenues, we wish you good luck for the future.

So, that's a wrap for this year's Results Days! We can't wait to see what's next for our students as they continue on their journey in shaping their success – whether it be through apprenticeships, A-Levels, university or employment. We hope we have equipped them with the skills needed to transform their life chances and be their best selves!

**Congratulations and bravo!**

# Refer a Friend

Earn yourself a £100 shopping voucher!

Scan the QR code for full terms and conditions and submit your referral today.

Thinking Schools Academy Trust "Refer a Friend" Voucher- Terms and conditions apply.

# TPA Global

## Portsmouth secondary school wins global award in recognition of digital transformation



The Portsmouth Academy has once again been placed on the world stage by being recognised as the best school for digital transformation in the Global EdTech Awards.

The academy, which is committed to closing the digital skills divide in the city of Portsmouth, has been on a journey to develop digitally-led lessons through the use of one:one laptop devices.



Currently, every pupil in Year 7 and 8 (with more from September 2023) has their own laptop to use in all lessons and to support home learning as part of the scheme's mission to make learning last. The fantastic work has led to their win within the 'Best School Digital Transformation (State/Public School)' category.

James Batten, the Trust Lead for Digital Learning at The Portsmouth Academy, says the academy is brimming with pride following the achievement.

He said: "I speak on behalf of all staff at The Portsmouth Academy when I say we are incredibly proud that the school has been recognised as the Best School for Digital Transformation."

*"Change and transformation are a team effort, and the whole school community should be extremely proud of their role in achieving this award. From the governance of the Trust and Board, investment from the school, the staff's implementation of devices to facilitate and accelerate learning, and the students' enthusiasm to become future-ready learners."*

*"The digital transformation of The Portsmouth Academy is closing the digital divide we see in the city. It has enhanced teaching and accelerated progress, and as our one:one scheme grows each year, I'm looking forward to more and more students benefitting from our digital transformation and digital strategy."*

The Portsmouth Academy was shortlisted among other educational establishments from across the world, including runners-ups from Australia and Argentina. The academy holds Microsoft Showcase School status too.

What stood out within the academy's submission was its breadth, showing the stepping stones to the benefits that the school can see amongst its digital learners. From the planning and research, through to the steps taken to implement and bring staff along the journey to digital delivery of lessons.



Natalie Sheppard, Director of Education and Principal for The Portsmouth Academy, wrote the submission on behalf of the academy following her admiration for what has been achieved.

In the submission, she said: "The school's mission is to transform life chances. With the growth in schools, the addition of boys, and low academic standards that have pervaded Portsmouth schools for many years, radical change was needed to meet the needs of so many vulnerable children."



*"I therefore embarked on a quest to introduce a one:one device offering to transform engagement, learning, and achievement and make the school a desirable place for educators to work in. The school's Digital Drive Team has been critical in leading staff development. From IT tech wizards to senior leadership, to classroom educators, everyone has been able to work on the development of the digital journey, ensuring a holistic viewpoint for change. Now the school has a customised platform that allows digital change to be understood through gathering the views of all stakeholders, thus empowering the never-ending journey."*

In 2019, the academy only had two computer suites, but after discovering the wide range of methods by which students could learn through using the laptops, change came, and now the school's Year 7 and 8 pupils learn through the effective use of Microsoft educational tools, culminating in this prestigious award.



# Archaeological finds

The building of the new Maritime Academy is well underway, with grounds work being completed and the framework taking shape. It is a fantastic experience to see this new school coming together after a few unforeseen delays.

In the early days of work on the site in Frindsbury, commissioned, pre-development excavations took place, where researchers at the UCL Institute of Archaeology discovered some of the largest pre-historic stone tools in Britain.

Preserved on the hillside in the Medway Valley, the researchers discovered 800 stone artefacts thought to be over 300,000 years old, buried in sediments which filled a sinkhole and an ancient river channel, as outlined in their research, published in *Internet Archaeology*.

Amongst the unearthed artefacts were two extremely large flint knives described as “giant handaxes”. Handaxes are stone artefacts which have been chipped, or “knapped” on both sides to produce a symmetrical shape with a long cutting edge. Researchers believe this type of tool was usually held in the hand and may have been used for butchering animals and cutting meat. The two largest handaxes found at the Maritime site have a distinctive shape with a long and finely worked pointed tip, and a much thicker base.

Senior archaeologist Letty Ingrey (UCL Institute of Archaeology), said: *“We describe these tools as ‘giants’ when they are over 22cm long and we have two in this size range. The biggest, a colossal 29.5cm in length, is one of the longest ever found in Britain. ‘Giant handaxes’ like this are usually found in the Thames and Medway regions and date from over 300,000 years ago.*

*“These handaxes are so big it’s difficult to imagine how they could have been easily held and used. Perhaps they fulfilled a less practical or more symbolic function than other tools, a clear demonstration of strength and skill. While right now, we aren’t sure why such large tools were being made, or which species of early human were making them, this site offers a chance to answer these exciting questions.”*

The site is thought to date to a period in the early prehistory of Britain when Neanderthal people and their cultures were beginning to emerge and may even have shared the landscape with other early human species. The Medway Valley at this time would have been a wild landscape of wooded hills and river valleys, inhabited by red deer and horses, as well as less familiar mammals such as the now-extinct cave lion and straight-tusked elephant.

While archaeological finds of this age, including another spectacular ‘giant’ handaxe, have been found in the Medway Valley before, this is the first time they have been found as part of a large-scale excavation, offering the opportunity to glean more insights into the lives of their makers.



Dr Matt Pope (UCL Institute of Archaeology), said: *“The excavations at the Maritime Academy have given us an incredibly valuable opportunity to study how an entire Ice Age landscape developed over a quarter of a million years ago. A programme of scientific analysis, involving specialists from UCL and other UK institutions, will now help us to understand why the site was important to ancient people and how the stone artefacts, including the ‘giant handaxes’ helped them adapt to the challenges of Ice Age environments.”*

During the excavations, the team found a second significant find on the site – a Roman cemetery, dating at least a quarter of a million years later than the Ice Age period.

The team found the remains of 25 individuals, 13 of which were cremated. Nine of the buried individuals were found with goods or personal items including bracelets, and four were interred in wooden coffins. Collections of pottery and animal bones found nearby likely relate to feasting rituals at the time of burial. Though Roman buildings and structures have been extensively excavated, cemeteries have historically been less of a focus for archaeologists and the discovery of this site offers potentially new insights into the burial customs and traditions of both the Romans who lived at the villa, and those in the nearby town of Rochester.

Jody Murphy, Director of Education for Maritime Academy said: *“We, at Maritime Academy and the Thinking Schools Academy Trust, feel very lucky to be a part of this phenomenal discovery. We take great pride in our connection to our local community and region, with much of our school identity linked to the history of Medway. We look forward to taking advantage of this unique opportunity to teach our young people about these finds, creating a lasting legacy for those who came before us.”*





# Ralph motorbike



## Teenage motorbike racer from Brixham is set for big things as he hits top speeds of 120mph.

A teenage motorbike racer from Brixham College is set for big things within the sport following years of relentless determination and tenacity on the track.

What began as a hobby for 14-year-old Ralph Croft has contributed to his aspiration to become a professional motorbike racer with a dream to ride circuits across the country.

Experiencing quadbike and motorbike rides with his Dad led to his exploration of solo riding, which started off on a 50cc bike with speeds of up to 30mph, and now the young sportsman rides a Kawasaki Ninja 300, the largest engine acceptable within his class, with top speeds of 120mph logged at various tracks.

*"I love the thrill of riding at the speeds I do now. Motorbike racing is a much more unique sport compared to anything else, so I have found that when I shared my story about motorbike racing, I stood out",* Ralph said.

He continued: *"It's very nerve-wracking for my Mum to see me on the track, but she's one of my best supporters. My whole family and friends*

*have been hugely supportive. When they're happy, I'm happy."*

Ralph has competed in several motorcycle racing tournaments that have presented opportunities across the country, including at Cadwell Park Circuit in Lincolnshire, which many racing professionals experience early in their sporting careers.

But when things don't necessarily go as expected, Ralph's attitude towards overcoming obstacles is admirable. He said: *"Sometimes when I'm not achieving what I anticipate, I go and sit in the caravan and talk my frustrations through with my Dad. He used to race and has experienced all the tracks I ride, so he knows it's a hard thing to do, and once you have that barrier of things getting really difficult, you just have to sit down, relax, and overcome it."*

In order for Ralph to achieve his aspirations, he has needed support from Brixham College to approve his absence and to help him catch up on missed days at school away from the usual school hours.



Ralph says he has achieved some encouraging support from the college, saying: *"The second Mr. [John] Townsend found out about the motorbike racing, he emailed every teacher in the school, and now everyone is aware of what I do."*

*Having everyone cheer me on and say well done is a really lovely experience. I didn't tell anyone at first about my racing, but now that many people know about it, the support is stronger than ever before."*

Mark Eager, Principal at Brixham College, praised Ralph for his achievements, saying he is an inspiration to the whole school community. He said: *"Ralph's story is absolutely incredible. At Brixham College, we often talk about the talent our children have, but when you actually meet them to talk about their passion for the sport and balance that with, quite frankly, how dangerous it could be, you are blown away by it all."*

*"Ralph is demonstrating to us the amazing things our young people can do. This story will positively impact the lives of so many within our college. Brixham is a coastal town with a very close-knit community, and part of our job is to be able to ensure that young people can go on and grow and develop in a wider community across the country or even across the world, and I think being able to see people have that potential to achieve things and make a difference and just actually take people aback by what a young person can achieve is just fantastic."*

Steve Croft, Ralph's Dad, said the cost of the sport has increased over the years as his son's successes have increased, but the family is thankful to the community for their support.

He said: *"As Ralph grows, the bikes become a lot bigger and much more expensive, so the cost there really does ramp up. But we are very lucky here in Brixham to have some great support from local companies that have reached out and supported us in some way."*

*"Regardless of what people have been able to give to support Ralph as an inspiring local lad, it really does help. I'm so proud of how far he has come. I remember him first starting out with great big boots and a helmet, which made him look like a spaceman. But it's a passion of his, so we will continue to support him with what's next."*

Anyone interested in following Ralph's journey can do so by following his Facebook group **"Ralph Croft racing#49"**.



# The launch of Thinking Food<sup>Jr</sup>

Last September, we celebrated the launch of Thinking Food – our very own in-house catering provision – at Brixham College. A year on, we are delighted to have successfully launched Thinking Food Jr, our primary provision, at Furzeham Primary and Nursery School!

Over the summer, Furzeham’s dining hall was transformed and became home to Thinking Food Jr. The hall’s new look has been greatly enjoyed by Furzeham’s pupils, who have loved looking at the colourful new signage and discussing their favourite Little Eaters.

Our talented designers have worked hard to build the Thinking Food Jr brand, creating six wonderful ‘Little Eaters’ characters designed to bring our pupils’ dining experience to life! Gala Apple, Peas in a Pod, Calcium Cal, Penne Pasta, Chip the Cookie and Sizzle the Sausage all represent different food groups and teach our children the importance of a balanced diet and healthy lifestyle.



**Thinking Variety**

We have a full range of hot and cold options on offer every day, encouraging students to explore a variety of cuisines and flavours.

**Thinking Healthy**

Our meals are nutritious and delicious! Low in salt and sugar but high in flavour, our menu ensures students have a selection of healthy meals to choose from.

**Thinking Green**

All produce, including meat, is sourced locally and sustainably where possible, and prepared in-house. We also have a range of vegetarian options on offer.

**Thinking about Thinking**

Good food feeds the brain! Our menus are designed to fuel our students’ thinking and help them learn and perform their best.

Thinking Food believes in providing our young people with healthy, affordable and sustainable meals which support them to be their best, and menus which take their favourites into account! Students at Furzeham were involved in the planning process and shared with us their favourite foods and feedback on our ‘Little Eaters’ characters. When describing his favourite Little Eater, one Year 5 pupil said, “My favourite is Calcium Cal, because he doesn’t realise how strong he is, and I think I’m like that too.” It’s been fantastic to see our children connecting with the characters already.

Lee Miller, Deputy CEO of Thinking Schools Academy Trust, said: “It has been a very exciting start to the year as we launch Thinking Food Jr, and great to see the launch of our in-house catering offer at Furzeham Primary and Nursery School only a year after its first launch at Brixham College.”



“Our staff and external suppliers have worked incredibly hard to build a catering provision which is informed by pupils, holds healthy choices and sustainability at its heart, and provides our children with nutritious meals which leave them nourished and ready to be their best. I am proud of this next step in our Thinking Food venture and look forward to even more success and development for Thinking Food.”

Paul Adams, Headteacher of Furzeham Primary and Nursery School, said:

“I speak on behalf of our staff and children when I say we are thrilled to have been the first primary school to launch Thinking Food Jr. Our new catering provision has brought lunchtimes to life for our pupils, and it has been wonderful to see them enjoying their new meals and our dining hall’s fresh new look. I am excited to see how Thinking Food Jr continues to develop in years to come, and proud to be part of its journey.”



# 20 DAILY HABITS

## TAKE CARE OF YOUR

# MENTAL HEALTH



### BREATHE

Practice some deep thought



### RELAX

Take some time out of your day to relax



### CHALLENGE

Challenge your negative thoughts



### SLEEP

Get into a good sleep pattern



### STRENGTHS

Write down a list of your strengths every day



### TIME

Make time for yourself each day



### HELP

Don't be afraid to ask for help



### EXERCISE

Exercise is a great tool to reduce anxiety and stress



### DIARY

Engage regularly in a thought diary or journal



### MUSIC

Listen to music that inspires or relaxes you



### GOALS

Set some realistic and achievable goals



### FRIENDS / FAMILY

Talk to your friends and family about how you're feeling



### FOOD AND DRINK

Drink sensibly and eat a balanced diet



### FEELINGS

Let people know how you feel



### READ

Find an engaging book that you will enjoy reading



### TECH

Take time to disconnect from technology for a while



### WALK

Go for a relaxing walk by yourself or with friends



### TO DO LIST

Start a To Do list to manage your day / week



### KINDNESS

Do something nice for someone



### MINDFUL

Engage in some mindfulness activities

## FESTIVAL of METACOGNITION

**Staff attend festival focused on innovative ideas to support pupils to think about their thinking.**

Educationalists from across the UK who are passionate about developing metacognitive and self-regulating learners came together for an event in Birmingham earlier this week.

Staff from the Thinking Schools Academy Trust (TSAT) joined hundreds of others for the Festival of Metacognition which provides insights from cutting-edge researchers and thought leaders, classroom strategies from expert practitioners, and opportunities to network with like-minded people across the Thinking School Network.

Metacognition is the process of encouraging individuals to think about their own thinking and learning.

Laura Gladstone, the Lead for Teaching, Thinking and Learning at TSAT, said: "It was lovely to have members of the TSAT Teaching and Learning Team come together to attend the festival to hear some of the latest ideas around metacognition and self-regulated learning.

"Sessions included Neil Mercer from Cambridge University talking about oracy and metacognition, as well as Iroise Dumontheil from Birkbeck discussing current research into self-regulation and harnessing control."

As well as keynote speakers, there were various practical workshops throughout the day with a metacognitive focus presented by experts in their fields.

"The highlights of the event were the engaging and inspirational sessions delivered by our very own Rachel Grey and Ella Martin, which were well-informed, passionate, practical, and very well-received. The day gave us all new ideas to bring back to our brilliant schools."

Ella Martin, the Lead for Teaching, Thinking and Learning for Strood, said: "I led a discussion focused on 'Metacognitive Learners – A Reflective Culture' which was all about the science of memory, highlighting the importance of including children in the discussion around memories, creating a culture of reflection within the classroom and shared practical strategies and suggestions for how to help children with their meta-cognitive thinking. It was a hugely successful session with plenty of discussions around this topic afterwards."

There was a bustle of activity at the event as primary and secondary schools of all types, including some accredited Thinking Schools, shared experiences and techniques for enabling their pupils to be metacognitive learners.

Other members of staff from TSAT in attendance were Polly Turner from Plympton Academy, Claire Thompson from Furzeham Primary School and Nursery, Sophie Venables of Thinking Horizons, and Lisa Redfern from Brixham College. Thank you and well done to all involved.



# Seize the Day

**Ambitious students with big plans to have a career in the spotlight have recently raised the profile of theatre as part of a national campaign.**

There were 18 cast members and 4 backstage crew engaged with 'Seize The Day' earlier this year, focused on raising the profile of drama in schools and theatre, and the benefits it has on young people.

Their performance of *Strangers Like Me* by Ed Harris touched on the unexpected death of Elbow's (the principal character) best friend and being unsure of how to grieve.

The show takes the audience through Elbow's realisation that they weren't as close as everyone made them out to be, with Elbow wanting to be left alone.

Josh, in Year 12, said the show was a wonderful opportunity to bring actors from across Years 10 and older together to raise awareness about the importance of drama.

He said: *"The whole experience was great; it was good to bring everyone together and create a strong family. I think when people are in different year groups, you don't pay too much attention to each other, but when you come together, it's good to create new bonds."*

*"At Plympton, we had a friend called Charlie who passed away after an accident, so it was good to channel that and how we felt into our performance and, most importantly, to pay tribute to Charlie and show that we love and miss him."*



Eloise in Year 12, said: *"At Plympton Academy, we often perform a lot of musicals, but Strangers Like Me is straight acting with no dance. We don't often do shows with straight acting, so it was good to explore different mindsets as a cast. We did have a lot of movement sequences, so it was good to go through that side of theatre."*

*Despite the production being an opportunity to perform at the Theatre Royal in Plymouth, there were also opportunities for a backstage crew.*

Ellie from Year 13 says she loved helping co-direct the show and working on the lighting and backstage organisation too.

She said: *"This experience was really different from what I have done before, but I loved every moment. Being able to work behind-the-scenes showed me another side of theatre and has made me want to go further into the industry."*

*"Some challenges I faced were trying to understand what was going on backstage while also helping the cast with their props, paperwork, details, lighting, sounds, projection, and more. There's so much more to a show than what you see on stage."*

Plympton Academy was one of 75 schools across the country that signed up as part of 'Seize The Day' with support from their local councillor, Terri Beer.



# Artsmark

**Students across our Kent schools were thrilled to receive varying levels of Artsmark Awards towards the end of the 22/23 academic year, with both All Faiths Children's Academy and Cedar Children's Academy taking their first steps on their Artsmark journeys, gaining their Silver Artsmark Awards.**

In order to achieve their Artsmark Silver Award, All Faiths had to develop and embed arts and culture into their broad and ambitious curriculum. The school achieved this by creating and committing to an overall plan that was delivered across the whole school. This was recognised in their feedback from the assessors, which stated *"The Arts feature in school planning and have continued to be supported by SLT and planned via the (wonderfully named) Thinking Artistically team. There are progression and skills linked curriculums for music and art, including the use of Charanga. Drama is also supported by a staff member with specialist training."*



The Artsmark assessor continued to commend the school for *"enabling pupils to access a consistent and relevant range of experiences in school and outside the classroom. [...] Your weekly music appreciation sounds lovely, and the school choir performing with BSL and dance at the O2 is great. Staff consider equity, diversity, and inclusion in many aspects of the curriculum, such as your performance of the Tempest with inward and outward signing, and your inclusion of LGBTQ+ and Black History Month topics."*



Cedar started to run a wider range of extracurricular activities, including author visits, internal workshops, and theatre trips, in connection with their partnership with the Royal Opera House. Staff and students have become part of the Medway Creative Schools Network and participated in several local events, including Medway Night Lights. These actions were recognised in their feedback from the assessors, which stated, *"[The school] started using a Cultural Passport to measure activity and ensure that all children and young people can develop and display their art skills within and beyond the core timetable. [...] [The school] have started to work with arts organisations, including work with the Royal Opera House. A third of Year 6 attended the Nutcracker and teachers accessed dance CPD from them."*



The Artsmark assessor continued to commend the school, saying, *"Leadership is supportive of the Arts, including allocating time during in-house CPD for arts, ring-fencing time for art leads to plan, joining Medway Creative Schools' network, and adding Artsmark to the School Improvement Plan. Staff confidence has increased as a result of training."*

Charline Clark, staff lead on this campaign, reflected on the experience, saying, *"We have thoroughly enjoyed putting the focus back on creativity at Cedar. Being an advocate for prioritising the arts and other areas that are set apart from the core subjects where students can excel is amazing!"*

Leading the way, The Victory Academy were ecstatic to receive the prestigious Artsmark Platinum Award for the second time.

As part of their arts journey, the school also offers the national Arts Award, which saw a significant number of Year 8 students receive their Bronze qualification earlier this year. During their assessment, the Artsmark assessor commended the school for *"extending [their] creative qualifications offer (including offering the Arts Award) and increasing student engagement in Arts subjects. The Artsmark framework shapes the school's transition and Summer School programme, ensuring a smooth start to children's secondary education."*



# Our Trust finishes the school year on a high, celebrating our #WeAreOne events.

Schools continued to participate in #WeAreOne events through to the end of the school year, engaging in anxiety reducing activities for Mental Health Awareness Week and celebrating our artistic talents with TSArTs Week. These events are a brilliant example of unity within the Trust, as they encourage thousands of us across four regions of the country to come together for a greater cause.

Mental Health Awareness Week took place in May 2023 and covered the theme of anxiety. Throughout the week, staff across our Trust were sent access to a range of webinar sessions with trained Contemporary Psychotherapist, NLP Practitioner and Wellbeing Consultant, Nina Bedwell who shared a variety of techniques to help manage and overcome feelings of anxiety. The schools and offices across our Trust enjoyed deliciously healthy fruit boxes and taking part in "Wear it Green Day", seeing thousands of people wearing something green in support of Mental Health, with the money raised being donated to the Mental Health Foundation.



TSArTs Week came shortly afterwards, with our school communities celebrating all things artistic. Each school displayed a stunning piece of art in our Trust's Virtual Art Gallery, which you can see by scanning the QR code.



Following the success of last year's event, we saw the return of our "Trust's Got Talent" competition, where each school and central service team submitted a staff and student talent entry. Our staff competition was judged by a hand-selected panel comprising of students from every school within our Trust and ultimately saw Plympton Academy take the crown for their charismatic lip-synched performance.

The student category was divided into two, with winners selected for both primary and secondary. This year, we were thrilled to welcome Eurovision star and Bucks Fizz member, Cheryl Baker, to judge the competition! Cheryl reviewed each entry and fed back her thoughts before announcing that Furzeham Primary and Nursery School and Plympton Academy will be taking home the trophies this year.



The bar has been set, and we cannot wait to see what amazing talents our Trust will display during TSArTs Week 2024.

What's next?

A new school year means a new selection of WeAreOne events, and we're going bigger and better than ever. In 2023-2024, we will see the return of Black History Month in October, where we will be Saluting our Sisters, LGBTQ+ History Month and our True Colours event in February, World Book Day in March, and of course our vibrant TSArTs Week to finish the year in June.

We are also introducing two new events, supporting our Trust as they come together to mark Remembrance Day 2023 in November, and to join the movement for World Earth Day 2024 in April.

We can't wait to show you everything we get involved in. Be sure to follow along on our website and Trust social media.



The three schools that form Meon Way Federation will continue to be known by their original names but will share the same visual identity, leadership team, vision and values.

Hundreds of people from across the city, including city councillors and the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth, came together to mark the moment at Moorings Way on 6th July.



## Meon Way Launch

City schools embark on exciting new chapter with new name and shared vision.

Cheers of joy could be heard echoing through the streets of Portsmouth as three schools came together to officially launch under one name and shared vision.

Meon Infant School and Meon Junior School on Shelford Road, as well as Moorings Way Infant School on Moorings Way, have now joined forces to become Meon Way Federation.

All three schools will remain proud members of the Thinking Schools Academy Trust, but they will work collaboratively on their curriculum and share resources to enable children to be their best selves.



Sara Paine, Executive Headteacher for Meon Way Federation, said, *"It has been fantastic to see three schools come together as one community for this amazing Meon Way Federation launch. We will work together towards one mission to help children in being their best selves, while also sharing resources and best practice to positively impact the lives of our children. I'm so proud of what we have achieved within the last year as three schools, so this moment is all about officially marking our federation as we move forwards stronger."*

Sara will work with her Heads of Schools - one for Meon Infant School and Moorings Way Infant School, and another for Meon Junior School - to form one leadership team.



The school motto 'Be Your Best Self' ensures that every child is recognised for their uniqueness. From effectively supporting children with special education needs, to consistently delivering an enriching curriculum, the school is focused on positively impacting every child's future.

Natalie Sheppard, Director of Education for Portsmouth, praised the school for their successful federation launch, saying, *"Congratulations and well done to everyone at Meon Way Federation for a hugely successful event. It's amazing to see families and the wider community here embark on an exciting new chapter for these schools, but to also celebrate the amazing work to transform the life chances of every child that walks through the school gates."*

Cllr Steve Pitt, the Leader of Portsmouth City Council, said, *"You can really feel the enthusiasm here today, it's an amazing turnout for the school community. The last time I was here we were tree planting, today it's the fete, these are really active schools that are really embedded within their communities, and the field gun event we've just watched was really fantastic, so it's great to be here celebrating their future."*



# Robotics WIN

A team of students from Rochester Grammar School have been left feeling overjoyed following their recent win in a national robotics competition. Students from the school recently won the Regional Heats of the EEP Robotics Challenge at Greenwich University.

Competing against 340 schools nationwide, the team became one of 34 regional winners to go on to the challenge final, "The Big Bang Event", in Birmingham on 21st June 2023.

Throughout the final, the students competed in four categories; Robot programming, Speed and Control, Robot Presentation, and a Teamworking Presentation. The school are thrilled to have come first place in the team work presentation.

Event organiser, Sarah Pinkey was very taken the team of students, so much so that she encouraged STEM professionals from the stalls at "The Big Bang Event" to come and speak at length with them. Rochester Grammar School are proud to be one of three all-girls schools to participate in the final and the only one to win an event. To celebrate the school's successes



and praise the team's incredible demeanour throughout the competition, the school were featured on the official Women In Engineering and Women In Robotics Instagram pages and were highlighted by name in the event's official Twitter feed, Raising Robots.

To complete a brilliant day, Sarah asked the girls to stay behind at the end to take additional photos for the official event and they were the last school to leave.

Mr Vidler who led the team said, "The students carried themselves in an amazing way and represented the school and their projects wonderfully. This is an outstanding achievement and I could not be prouder of them!"

Well done to all of the students involved in this fantastic accolade.

# Energy Saving

Across our schools and offices, we are taking energy consumption seriously, with the Trust already investing over £100k in capital funding to upgrade to LED lighting. However, we don't plan to stop there! The Trust is preparing to spend another £100k over the next 6 months. Our Thinking Facilities team have been carrying out decarbonisation audits across schools within the Trust to help focus funds on improving heating controls and systems where viable.

Our young people are also taking charge of their future planet, forming Earth Alliance groups to instil change and collectively working towards Green Flag certification.

## What can I do to help reduce my carbon footprint at work?

**Heating** - Heating is the most expensive energy cost in the workplace, accounting for up to 40% of total energy consumption in a non-domestic building. The longer you leave your heating on and the higher you set the thermostat, the higher your bills will be. Turning up the temperature on your thermostat does not help to warm the room up faster. 19 degrees is the perfect temperature for most offices.

**Lighting** - The longer the lights are turned on, the more energy is consumed. Meeting rooms, storage areas and corridors are frequently over lit. When you leave a room, make sure to turn off the lights. Natural lighting is considerably underappreciated; keep windows clear of clutter and let the sunlight illuminate your classrooms and offices.

**Equipment** - Office and work equipment can use a large amount of energy. When not in use, equipment should be turned off. Leaving equipment on standby wastes energy.



**DID YOU KNOW? . . .**  
Turning off classroom lights for 2 hours a day would save £162 a year!  
£162 x 100 classrooms = £16,200  
That could buy about 40 laptops!





Friends that encourage  
a **balanced** diet,  
to help keep you  
**healthy** and  
**strong!**



**little  
eaters**  
Have arrived!



Launching at Furzeham Primary and Nursery School!

Thinking  
Food<sup>Jr</sup>

## Professional GB Athletes visit Penbridge Junior School

**Children enjoy unforgettable sports  
lesson delivered by Team GB athletes.**

Children at Penbridge Junior School in Portsmouth had an action-packed sports focused day never to forget as two professional GB athletes led special workshops.

Sprinters, Rehmial Miller and Aidan Syers, who both represent the nation in major tournaments for Team GB across the globe, spent the day at the Penbridge Junior School, New Road. The day was focused on the importance of enjoying fitness.



Ashley Arnell, who leads physical education at Penbridge, said, "The visit that supported sports week at both the infant and junior schools, has been a fantastic week celebrating all things sports. So, it was lovely to host the athletes to it all off. The children have been engaged in a range of activities with their teachers to try and reach the target of 60 minutes of activity a day. As part of that, we wanted to arrange something fun for the children to give them an experience they will never forget, so we wrote to Team GB to see what they could offer."

Rehmial Miller has competed at elite events worldwide. He is a World Youth Championships Bronze medalist for Team GB in Cali, Columbia and a Junior Commonwealth Games Silver medalist, among many other accolades.

Aiden Syers has recorded some of the fastest times in UK history and is recognised as Britain's fastest schoolboy, winning the English Schools Championship three times. He has also competed for Team GB's under-19 and under-20 teams before moving on to compete for Team England in the European circuit.

Ashley said, "It was amazing to see our children having so much fun with the athletes; we could hear them from upstairs."

"They were all very excited to meet two professional athletes. It meant a lot for me to have given the children the opportunity to do this. I remember having athletes in when I came to this school as a child, it is an experience that they will remember for a long time. For them to hear about the professionals' experiences first-hand will encourage more children to be involved in sport and hopefully become more active as a result of their visit."

Anna Webb, Executive Headteacher at both Penbridge Schools, said, "Sports activities across both schools have been well received. Ashley and the team have done a brilliant job at making this visit possible today, so thanks to them for that. There has also been a wide range of other activities to promote sports across the infant and junior schools, which staff have worked tirelessly to deliver. I'm so proud to see our children have really enjoyed themselves while engaged with all types of sports. It is really important that children never give up and work as hard as possible to reach their goals. Determination and perseverance are the things that make professional athletes successful. At Penbridge, we teach children that anything is possible if you work hard for it, so determination will really support you in being your best selves."



# RIGHTS RESPECTING

**Kent Grammar Schools rejoice as they become the first schools in the Trust to achieve Silver UNICEF Rights Respecting School Award.**



could not have been earned without the support of our staff, students and families. We strive to create an inclusive and supporting learning environment for our students, and to see this recognised with this award is amazing. Thank you to everyone who has joined us on this journey.”



Students and staff at Rochester Grammar School are ecstatic to become the first school within the Thinking Schools Academy Trust to receive the prestigious Silver UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA), closely followed by local Holcombe Grammar School.

This award is a continuation of the schools’ RRSA journeys which they started last year, gaining Bronze status in 2021, as part of their mission to support pupils’ development, knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of children’s rights, both in school and around the world.

“Silver: Rights Aware” is the second stage of the RRSA and recognises schools that have shown great progress towards embedding young people’s rights in school practices and ethos.

As part of the Rochester Grammar School’s work in achieving the award, Project Lead, Stacey Sommerville, worked with the Student Voice Committee to design events and increase both the school’s charity work and volunteering opportunities along with training staff and students in recognising their rights and ensuring these were prominently displayed across the school. Regular student feedback was crucial in ensuring that aspects of the school’s policies and opportunities were updated to meet student needs and ensure they are fully educated in all the rights that they have.

Clare Brinklow, Principal at Rochester Grammar School, said: “We are so honoured to be the first school within our Trust to have received the Silver award for our work as a Rights Respecting School. This is a brilliant achievement which

Joanna Wadey, Assistant Head at Rochester Grammar School, said: “This is in recognition not only of all the fantastic work that our students do, such as volunteering to support others, raising money for charity, celebrating key events such as Pride, Black History Month, and Mental Health Awareness Week, amongst others, but also the knowledge they have gained about their rights. It is acknowledgement of the fact that Rochester Grammar School puts children’s rights at the heart of our school and are passionate about building a school of mutual respect, inspiration and diversity.

“Thank you to all the students, parents and staff who have supported us in our journey to Silver, we look forward to working with you all as we progress onto Gold.”



Holcombe Grammar School celebrated receiving the Silver Award saying, “Our students are proud to be Holcombe students, and this was made clear when several described their community as a place where everyone feels welcome and are able to express themselves through many clubs and community events such as Black History Month, LGBTQIA+Month, Mental Health Week and charity events. Our young people are beginning to see themselves as Rights Respecting Citizens and advocates for fairness and children’s rights.

“This award is a community effort, but we pride ourselves on being ambassadors in the Thinking Schools Academy Trust; this was recognised by the assessor who acknowledged that we have



lent our expertise to other schools within the Trust who are now on their journey towards Gold, having too recently achieved Silver.”

Both schools now move forward, working towards the Gold Award. This will include ensuring The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) underpins the schools’ values and decision making. Each school will learn about the CRC and respecting the rights of others. The schools will also work to empower all students to become active learners and active local and global citizens.



**Chatham**



**Plympton**



**Rochester**



**Brixham**



# Goodwin Summer Art Show

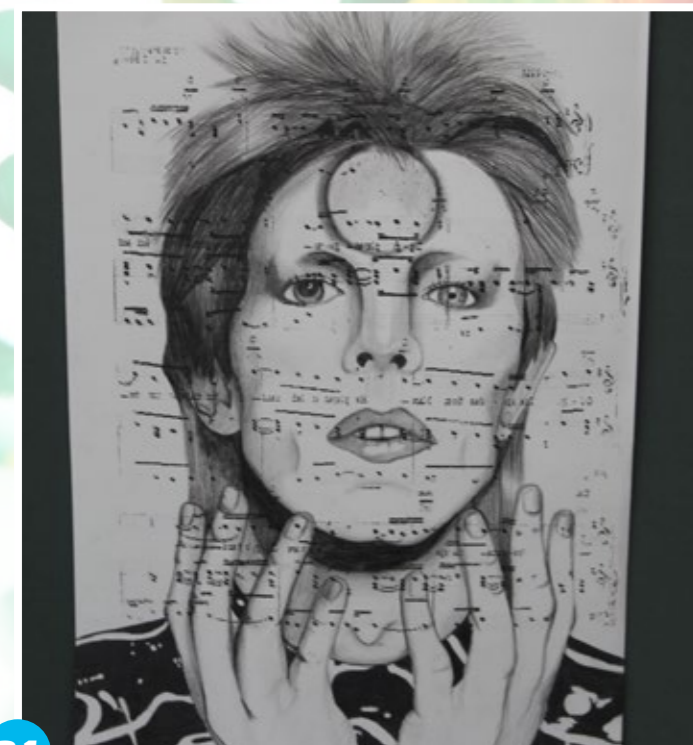
**Goodwin Academy wowed their local community, family and friends with the level of talent displayed at their annual Summer Art Show in July 2023.**

Work created by students in Years 11-13 was displayed throughout the school, with families invited along to enjoy their outstanding talents. Following on from their recent partnership, Dover, Deal and Sandwich Arts Society were also in attendance to peruse the pieces on show. Currently, Deal Train Station hosts Goodwin Academy's "Exhibition Corner", displaying beautiful artwork created by students for the local community to enjoy. The Arts Society took their time studying each exhibit at the Summer Show before selecting award winners for three different categories.

James Harrison, Head of Art and Design at the school, commented on the success of the event, saying, "We were proud to host this year's Summer Show, displaying the hard work of our Year 11-13 students. Held on the same day as our Year 11 Celebration Day, students in the department finished their GCSE year enjoying celebrating everyone's work and touring the department with parents and staff."

"Dover, Deal, and Sandwich Arts Society, who host our Exhibition Corner at Deal Train Station, also attended and selected award winners for three different categories. Names to be revealed at a later date!

"We congratulate all of our students who have graduated from the department this year and wish them the best of luck for the next chapter in their lives. Thank you to all parents, staff and students for attending and for their support in making such a wonderful show happen."



# New Horizons Children's Academy welcomes local author



In Term 6, children from New Horizons Children's Academy in Chatham welcomed local author and illustrator, Georgina Golding, to their school.

The nursery children all gathered around and turned on their listening ears as Georgina very kindly read her book "Wander in the Wild Wood" over two sessions.

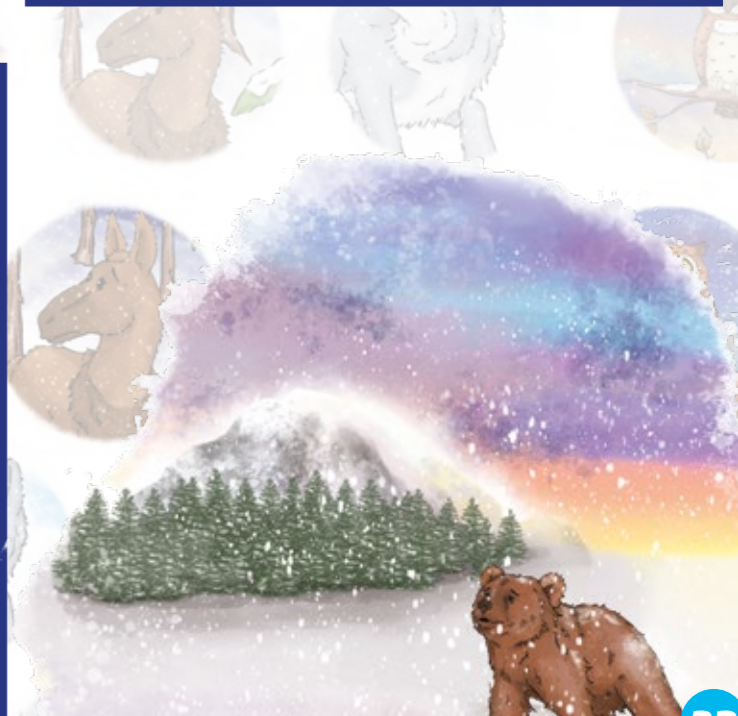
Joined by her trusty companion, Storm the Wolf, she embarked on a tale about meeting new friends, embracing each other's differences and overcoming our fears.

The story teaches children to stay safe, to stay close to their grown-ups, to not wander off, to not be scared of people who are different from us ourselves and to always be kind.



The children loved the experience, occasionally joining in with mighty howls throughout the reading. Thank you to Georgina for visiting the school and the children look forward to welcoming you back again soon.

As well as being an established author and illustrator, Georgina is our Trust's very talented designer, supporting our schools in their creations.



# Meon Way Federation Attendance

A campaign to encourage children and families to understand the importance of having good attendance at school has been a huge success across three schools.

Moorings Way Infant School, Meon Infant School, and Meon Junior School came together for a joint poster competition to find the best designs which will be scanned, printed and displayed across the schools.

There were four winners in total, Lenny in Year 2 at Moorings Way Infant School, Olive in Year 2 at Meon Infant School, Harry in Year 3 at Meon Junior Lower School and Isaac in Year 6 at Meon Junior Upper School.

Charlotte Osborne, the Attendance Welfare Lead at all three schools, says the competition has been a huge success.

She said: "I'm so pleased about how the children have engaged with this project. Having worked in attendance within a senior school in the Trust, I had seen cases all too often where a child has had poor attendance throughout their school life.

*"These children frequently struggle with their learning which in turn causes them to become withdrawn. Many display avoidance behaviours in school, truanting lessons when they do turn up, because they do not understand the work they are being taught, often because they missed the foundation work needed for that topic or subject.*

*"Here at the M3 schools, we want to work with both our pupils and their parents to do our best to prevent this from happening so regularly. We want to instill a positive attitude to school attendance as early as possible to ensure that all of our pupils go on to thrive throughout their school and future careers."*

Earlier in the year, 12 'Attendance Councillors' were recruited to be a voice of all-things attendance related on behalf of every pupil. The competition was their idea and they supported with the judging too.

Miss Osborne continued: "In every other aspect of life, if someone achieved 90% of their goal, they would be celebrating a huge achievement and receive praise. However, when it comes to school attendance, a percentage of only 90% can leave a child falling behind their peers in their education. 90% is the equivalent of almost 4 weeks of school missed in an academic year and more children than ever across the country are finishing school years with 90% or less attendance.

*"From experience, this frequently leads to anxiety, behavioural issues, and a pattern of school avoidance, because the child goes on to find future work too difficult.*

*"As of March 31st 2023, according to figures from the Department for Education, 22.6% of pupils across the country fell into this category which is known as 'persistent absenteeism'. Some of these are due to genuine illness and could not be avoided.*

*"However, a huge number of these will be because students have been taken on holiday, have had days off for mild illness like a cold when in reality, they would have been fine in school, and in some cases, because school is just not seen as important by a family. Good*

*attendance not only gives a child a better education, but also encourages positive traits for the child's future with timeliness and work ethic.*

*"Children get to spend time with their friends, which in turn improves their social skills. It also provides a routine and safe space for children who really need this."*

The winners received a goodie bag consisting of a stationary set (thanks to Morrisons Anchorage Park); colouring pencils, pencil case and colouring book (thanks to Tesco Extra Fratton Way); and a soft toy, sweets and book voucher (provided by the schools).



# Welcome to Colchester Royal Grammar School



Thank you for the welcome! We are delighted to be part of Thinking Schools Academy Trust. The Spring and Summer terms at Colchester Royal Grammar School (CRGS) were very busy with a wide range of events and extra-curricular activities as well as exams! Highlights include:

## Year 9 student success at Design Ventura 2023



Richard Heald Photography



Richard Heald Photography

The team writes: "This was a momentous experience which started in September with our usual technology lesson, in which us four; Vihaan, Lucas, Anuran and Henry, were grouped together. We created our product concept, The O-Box, a compact desk organiser that incorporated a tambour feature. We presented our product to the class, and then the school, and our design was then chosen as one of the top ten in the country, out of the 15000 students across the UK taking part. We went to

pitch The O-Box to leading design specialists at Deutsche Bank and we attended the awards ceremony at the Design Museum, London. We really enjoyed looking around the museum, and meeting students from other schools as well as multiple designers in many fields and industries, ranging from graphic design to manufacturing innovative hair dryer designs.

"Tensions were high as the awards ceremony started, but we weren't called forward for commendations or as outstanding finalists, so we were possibly in line for the top spot. Then they called out third place - and it was us! We were overjoyed, and happy as all our hard work had paid off."

Mrs Robinson, Head of Design & Technology, comments, "To see our students' work on display in the world-renowned Design Museum that houses so many iconic pieces is incredible. Making the podium in this hugely popular national competition is testament to their iterative design skills and dedication."

## The Royal Grammar Schools' Cricket Festival 2023 returned to CRGS this summer

This year it was the turn of CRGS' to welcome fellow Royal Grammar Schools to Colchester for the annual Royal Grammar Schools' Cricket Festival.

Six teams from six different schools came together for a week-long inter-school celebration of cricket, playing five, fifty over games in a week! As well as playing on our field, matches were played on some of the most picturesque local cricket club grounds in North Essex. Brilliantly organised by Mr Hardy in conjunction with Wayne Hill, our Director of Sport, and with the support of our grounds staff, the Old Colcestrian Society, match day sponsors and programme advertisers, it was a Royal Grammar Schools' Cricket Festival to remember.

## Silver at the National Cipher Challenge and Awards Ceremony at Bletchley Park

This year Jack's team, CRyptographicS, joined approximately 5000 teams from schools across the UK to enter the annual National Cipher Challenge, run by The University of Southampton's Department of Mathematical Sciences. From October until Christmas, they faced weekly challenges, that became increasingly bewildering and by the final week, defied all but their best attempts to crack them. Jack comments, "I am very proud of our huge achievement. Our team did exceptionally well, made it in to the last 20 teams taking part and were awarded a silver medal."

Jack explains, "The whole team was invited to Bletchley Park for the prize giving ceremony. After an introductory briefing we were given a tour of the site, told about its history and all the great work that had been achieved there. Hut 4, the location where the decrypted German Naval messages were translated and analysed by the Admiralty Intelligence section, was now a very pleasant café where we had lunch!"

"We returned to the house for the cipher challenge exclusive events. These included two fascinating lectures, the first by Kit Yates, a Senior Lecturer in Mathematical Biology at the University of Bath. He spoke about Turing's other legacies, from the concept of artificial intelligence to LGBTQ+ rights, but focussing on his own area of expertise: Mathematical Biology. The second talk was from a current employee of GCHQ, known only as 'Mike', who explained what it's like to work in the field of cryptanalysis and dispelled some myths about the organisation."

"It was then time for the prize ceremony itself and we were presented with a medal and a certificate, but the real prize had been the opportunity to visit Bletchley and listen to the exclusive talks from interesting speakers."



CRGS 1st Cricket Team photo for the RGS Cricket Festival 2023



The CRGS team at the National Cipher Challenge Awards

## CRGS Music Tour to The Rhineland

CRGS' Music department took 80 musicians and eight staff on a hugely successful Music Tour to Cologne and the beautiful surrounding area of the Rhineland. CRGS hosted three concerts during the tour, two of which were outdoors in Königswinter and Koblenz. These were well attended by the locals who enjoyed singing along to our ABBA medley! Cologne cathedral was just incredible, and our choir sang as part of their midday prayer service which was broadcast via their YouTube page. Many students braved climbing 533 steps up the tower to see the spectacular views. We have received fantastic student and parent feedback following this tour and we look forward to planning the next one!



Let's talk about

# Men's Health

Speaking about our troubles can be difficult for anybody. Men don't always feel comfortable to open up about life's challenges and their mental health.

If you know someone who may be going through a tough time, try reaching out with **ALEC**.

**A** Start by **asking** how he's feeling. It's worth mentioning any changes you've picked up on. Maybe he's spending more time at the bar, has gone quiet in the group chat, or isn't turning up to social events. Whatever it is, he's just not himself.  
Use a prompt like, "You haven't seemed yourself lately - are you feeling OK?"

**L** Give him your full attention. Let him know you're hearing what he's saying and you're not judging. You don't have to diagnose problems or offer solutions, but asking questions lets him know you're **listening**.  
Ask a question like, "That can't be easy - how long have you felt this way?"

**E** Help him focus on simple things that might improve how he feels. Is he getting enough sleep? Is he exercising and eating well? Maybe there's something that's helped him in the past - it's worth asking.  
Suggest that he **share how he's feeling with others he trusts**. This will make things easier for both of you. And if he's felt low for more than two weeks, **encourage** him to chat to his doctor.

**C** Suggest you catch up soon - **check in** in person if you can. If you can't manage a meet-up, make time for a call, or drop him a message. This helps to show that you care; plus, you'll get a feel for whether he's feeling any better.



The Thinking Schools Academy Trust  
Park Crescent, Chatham, Kent, ME4 6NR

[www.tsatrust.org.uk](http://www.tsatrust.org.uk)  
Registered company number: 07359755

T: +44 (0) 333 360 2000  
E: [info@tsatrust.org.uk](mailto:info@tsatrust.org.uk)