



Where did this term go? Perhaps as I get older the speed of the year seems to increase, although judging from conversations with many friends and colleagues, both within and outside of the education sector, this appears to be a familiar feeling!

Whilst it is clear that Covid-19 challenges continue to face us all, the situation has also provided staff and students with a chance to reflect on whether the embedded practice

from the past is in fact still relevant for our future aspirations. It's been great to read the range of activities that are taking place within our academies and it is clear to me that there is an emphasis on retaining great practice whilst reviewing evidence to enable us to move forward.

Staff across our MAT have been continuing to develop, implement and then review blended learning; no doubt some of this practice will become intertwined with our 'normal' practice in months and years to come.

Our websites have had an initial refresh and further work will take place in this area next term.

Investment in capacity to enable all our students to achieve is vital and is at the heart of our core purpose. To achieve this, we have created a much-needed new role of 'Trust Inclusion Lead (Pastoral)', to support in the identification and implementation of best practice found both within and outside our MAT. This vital work will ensure that all our students receive the best support we can offer. At the same time, we are recruiting for a new 'Director of Education' to take the place of Mark Rhatigan, who will be retiring at Easter 2021 after a lifetime of service to the education sector. I hope you will take this opportunity to wish Mark well in his next adventure, whatever this may be.

Finally, I cannot finish without expressing my thanks and gratitude to all our staff for their dedication and hard work which has enabled our students to continue to access a high quality of education and pastoral care.

MR SIMON JONES | CEO



FEATURED INSIDE

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CONNECTING WITH BOURNVILLE

HEAD OF ACADEMY UPDATE | DO THEY KNOW IT'S CHRISTMAS?

2020 has been a funny old year in schools. Christmas seems even stranger than normal as the stages are silent. The sound of the slightly sharp soprano rehearsing for the musical is missing. The hall does not reverberate with the sound of the school thrash metal band working out if you really can undermine the foundations with just the power of sound waves. Picture the scene:

Rocking around the Christmas tree ... No wait Miss Green, rocking is only allowed in straight lines all facing the front with a healthy 2 meters between everyone.

Hark the Herald Angels SING. Perish the thought. Singing is a high-risk activity which absolutely cannot happen under any version of the Covid-19 guidance.

At Bournville, in our own inimitable way, we have come up with a plan and you are all invited. This term we have focused on deliberate practice and extended writing; at least 30 minutes every lesson with a minimum expectation of two whole pages of work. Why is practicing to this extent important for our students? They are bright, and to be able to write at a high level will require the resilience, stamina and technique that comes with consistent and precise practice. Certainly, the aforementioned soprano would benefit from a lesson on technique and then a significant amount of practice to sort the wincingly sharp outpouring.

Getting back to the plan, Bournville has connections with young adult author and musician Chris Russell. In an effort to inject some sparkle, the last day of term will marry up the themes of extended writing, aspiration

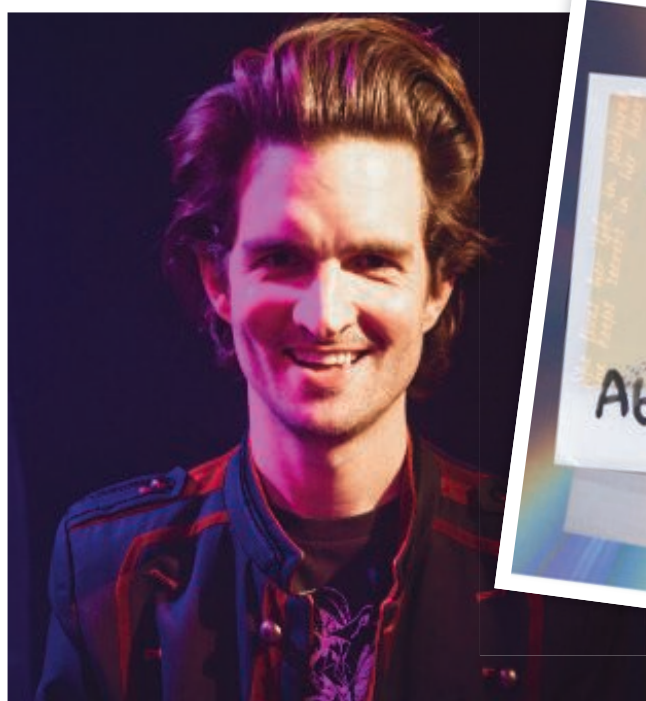
and song. Chris is a novelist and rock musician. His debut YA trilogy *SONGS ABOUT A GIRL* is published by Hodder Children's and has sold in multiple territories worldwide. Chris has toured across four continents with his band, The Lightyears, performing at Wembley Stadium and Glastonbury Festival, and he draws on these experiences in his writing. He was a WHSmith Zoella Book Club Friend in 2017, and his writing has been described as, "terrifyingly truthful" by The Guardian. Chris secured his first ever publishing deal (with digital indie Red Button) directly through Byte The Book. <http://www.chrusrussellwrites.com/books>

On the last day of term, Chris will be beamed into every classroom across Bournville and many other classrooms in our Trust. He will read from his book, talk about how he eventually made it to Wembley and then secured his first book deal. Then Chris will talk to students about how to write a story: narrative writing being an important part of GCSE English language. Finally, he will entertain us with a few songs making sure to include the current Bournville Anthem, "Head and Heart" (I think we are ok from a Covid-19 risk assessment point of view because the virus has yet to learn how to travel over the wireless network). After this, students will craft their own song or story some of which we will send on the Chris to judge and maybe publish on his website.

To finish the day, all of our musicians will gather in the school hall, at a safe distance, and perform. Their audience will be sat at their prescribed seats in their own classrooms and by the power of technology will be able to virtually celebrate the talent that we have here at Bournville.

For our students, meeting people who have secured great success through hard work and determination is an important step in inspiring motivating and challenging them to believe they can succeed. As educators, we have the unique privilege of shaping and inspiring the dreams of our students and the responsibility to ensure that they have the knowledge, skills, grit and confidence to make those dreams a reality.

MISS MOIRA GREEN | HEAD OF ACADEMY



HEAD OF ACADEMY UPDATE

The end of last term saw all staff engage in a lot of activities within lessons to promote and celebrate Black History Month which was a great success and was received very positively by staff and students alike. It reminded me of the amount of opportunities there are for students at Erdington Academy to reflect on the world around us and I considered whether all these activities contribute to the cultural capital we are trying to develop in our students.

In Ofsted's view, it is the extent to which schools are equipping students with the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life: this validates the work we do.

With the introduction of cultural capital to the Ofsted framework, there has been a lot of discussion over the last year about what cultural capital looks like and how it can be ‘taught’. But rather than thinking of cultural capital as a thing that must be ‘delivered’, we are finding it helpful to think in terms of the cultures, languages and traditions that children and their families bring, and how we might value and celebrate this.

As a result, at Erdington Academy, we are giving further strategic thought to how we can improve the experiences that students have from the moment they join us, until they leave to start the next step of their journey. As a first step, we are formalising and strategically collating cultural activities across the academic year in the form of a 'Cultural calendar'. Whilst not a new idea, this is helping senior leaders to give thought to how all of our students are exposed to a large variety of subject areas and arts and character-building qualities that will lead to creating well-rounded, global citizens. We would be very interested in knowing how other leaders are approaching this concept, and as ever, you are very welcome to see what is happening at Erdington Academy.

This year we dovetailed Black History Month and Futures week together, this enabled students to see individuals like them in roles that they may not have considered, Enriching Lives and Transforming Futures.

MR S MALLETT | HEAD OF ACADEMY



CONNECTING WITH ERDINGTON ACADEMY

HAPPINESS CHALLENGE

We all know how difficult the transition is for students moving from their Primary School, up to Secondary school and this year has been more challenging than most! The Youth Sport Trust thought so as well. So, the Erdington Academy PE Dept, along with the School Games organiser from Kingsbury School Sport Partnership felt something extra special was needed this term.

We set the Year 7 girls' a 'HAPPINESS Challenge,' which included four lessons to help them bond as a team. They had to form friendship groups that they wouldn't normally work with and were set tasks to make them smile and feel included. At the same point Leadership skills were at the centre of every activity. By the end of their lessons they had decided on a group name together, created their own shield, a team 'Cry' which was performed and improved upon at the start of each lesson, they entered into; mathematical Gymnastics,

Orienteering and Archery challenges. Skills and attributes that were required of them were Captains, spokeswomen, scorers, game designers and at each point they had to reflect back on what was working and change things that were not. They had to design their own Archery game and then teach other groups how to play their game. Clear communication was needed as the Team Captain had to make sure every single member of their team was included and had a voice.

Big thanks to the PE Department for their support. We hope that because of this challenge it created a few smiles along the way as they formed more friendships and know now, that they can be supported by their classmates

HEATHER CRUMP | SCHOOL GAMES ORGANISER



HEAD OF ACADEMY UPDATE | INTRODUCING FAIRFAX ARKS

The word gratitude comes from the Latin word *gratus*, which means “thankful, pleasing.” Therefore, in its most simple form, to be grateful is to have appreciation and express thankfulness.

In recent years, research has been conducted into the benefits of gratitude for the individual being thankful.

Research has shown that being grateful has the following mental health benefits:

- Expressing gratitude can improve your mood.
- People who regularly express gratitude for the positive things in their life are shown to be happier overall, leading to lower rates of stress and depression.
- Showing gratitude can make you more optimistic about all aspects of your life.

Before half term, Fairfax held our first gratitude week. Students received a session on the research behind the benefits of gratitude, staff received tips on how to practice gratitude and quotes around thanks were shared daily.

As part of this week, every child had the opportunity to write a card to an adult in the establishment to tell their chosen adult what they were thankful for. Staff were delighted with the messages and students enjoyed the opportunity to thank their teachers and support staff. My personal favourites were cards where students expressed the gratitude to 'The man that wipes the door handles to keep us safe' and the card that said 'Thank you for introducing ARKS. It has changed my life'.

I am personally very grateful and privileged to be Head of Academy at Fairfax, working with such an excellent student body and leading such a committed and dedicated staff.

MRS D BUNN | HEAD OF ACADEMY



SOCIAL MEDIA

In order to improve our communication links and promote our Academies and the Trust as a whole, we would like to encourage all of our employees, Directors, Associates and parents to follow our social media sites. Links to social media can be found on our websites.



www.fmat.co.uk/

www.fairfax.bham.sch.uk

www.bournvilleschool.org/

www.bournvilleprimaryprovision.org/

www.erdingtonacademy.bham.sch.uk

www.smithswood.co.uk

CONNECTING WITH FAIRFAX

BLACK HISTORY MONTH COMPETITION

Our annual celebration of Black History Month at Fairfax Academy continues to thrive year after year as our students ambitiously take part in the activities. In line with our equalities group, students at Fairfax understand the importance of celebrating our diversity. Black History Month at our school has showcased an array of activities spanning from our musicians learning West African instrumentals to charity fundraising for the Stephen Lawrence charity. This year was no different.

Our students were given the opportunity to take part in the 100 Great Black Britons competition. This saw students choosing a Black Briton to celebrate. The entries were a collection of presentations, photography, posters, poetry, dance, interviews, essays and podcasts. An impressive number of students took part in this opportunity with some students completing more than one entry!

It is clear to see from the entries and conversations with some of our students that this competition has really offered a time of celebratory discourse around diversity. It has encouraged them to be creative and well researched. Alongside this, it has also given students the chance to promote awareness around important world events and the need for inclusion in our community. From the entries, it is very clear to see that our students understand how imperative it is to take pride in your heritage and to positively talk about our different cultures.

All of our entries were very carefully created and our students were rewarded in line with our ARKS system. With entries spanning across three centuries, it is clear that they understand how Britain has been diverse for a very long time. At Fairfax we believe that all hard work should be rewarded and our students were very pleased to receive merits for their contribution. After a very hard decision, we chose our winners whose entries covered a variety of topics.

One of the entries was a podcast which celebrated Mary Seacole's dedication and efforts in The Crimean War where she supported soldiers fighting in many battles including The Battle of Balaclava. In the podcast, Mary Seacole was described by one of our students as a "pioneer" who was well researched in treating cholera. Mary's hard work and perseverance helped patients in Panama where she practised medicine successfully.

Another entry celebrated Malorie Blackman and her dedication to science fiction literature. The poster looked at how her literature infuses the need for understanding social and political issues in our society. A poem was written by one of our students about Colin Jackson's commitment to sport and how he uses his retirement to still promote his passion. A resonating line from the poem was, "though the challenge is hard, he would never come last".

We as teachers are really proud of the commitment that our students have shown in this competition and continue to display in conversations that we have around equality. More than ever, we truly are a community that boasts inclusivity and diversity. #wearefairfax

MISS J GARDNER – DEPUTY HEAD OF 6TH FORM AND CO-LEAD OF EQUALITIES GROUP



COMPETITION WINNERS: Henna Ahmed and Riley Coton Hill

SPONSORED BY



CONNECTING WITH SMITH'S WOOD

HEAD OF ACADEMY UPDATE

Over the course of the autumn term, colleagues at Smith's Wood have been working on developing a PATH strategy, focused on bringing about organisational change. This has been facilitated by Solihull Community Educational Psychology team.

What is PATH?

PATH is a research based creative planning tool and is led by a trained facilitator who uses process and graphic facilitation to create a shared vision of a positive future for individuals, teams and whole organisations.

PATH is a positive process which always looks forward, draws on people's ability to visualise positive futures and to plan backwards from a future vision or dream. It allows focused listening, creative thinking, goal setting and alliance building. It is a very results-oriented process and excellent for team building.

How is it used?

In September a group of staff, representative of the staff body at Smith's Wood, came together for an initial PATH planning meeting. Ground rules were agreed and the planning began! As a group, we began by considering what it was that we wanted to achieve for the school, its' community, our children, for ourselves and for each other. We were encouraged by the Educational Psychologist to consider this from a 'no limits' perspective; we thought freely and without constraint about the ideal future.

On the basis of the ideal future, specific goals that are both positive and possible are identified. The group then imagined possible and positive achievements / goals that could be worked towards over the coming months and indeed years. The group then identified people that they can enrol to help achieve the goals and what they need to do to stay 'strong' and motivated. We identified ways to build strength to accomplish the goals and then considered the steps needed to achieve the goals.

I have included our PATH for you to view – thank you Keeley Clarke for turning our handdrawn PATH into a beautiful image!

What does this mean for Smith's Wood?

The team at Smith's Wood have chosen to focus on improving the well-being of staff as a key priority of the PATH. Important at anytime, but brought into

much sharper focus with the significant and relentless challenges that have been placed upon the educational sector as a result of Covid-19. A key part of our work has been the introduction of 'Connection Circles' of which we have held two since September. Connection Circles provide an opportunity for staff to come together and share their thoughts and concerns and also to celebrate individual and organisational achievements. Each Connection Circle is led by a Facilitator, is solution focused and allows colleagues to work collaboratively to bring about positive change. These have been well received by staff and will continue as part of our routine practice moving forward.

As part of our PATH, we have been showing our gratitude to each other for the work we do and the support we provide to one another. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the entire Smith's Wood team for how they have pulled together this term. They have been incredible; they are good people and they know that we are better together.

I would also like to thank Jackie Mace and Simon Lynch for being our PATH leaders. They keep us on the straight and narrow and make sure that we don't get lost!

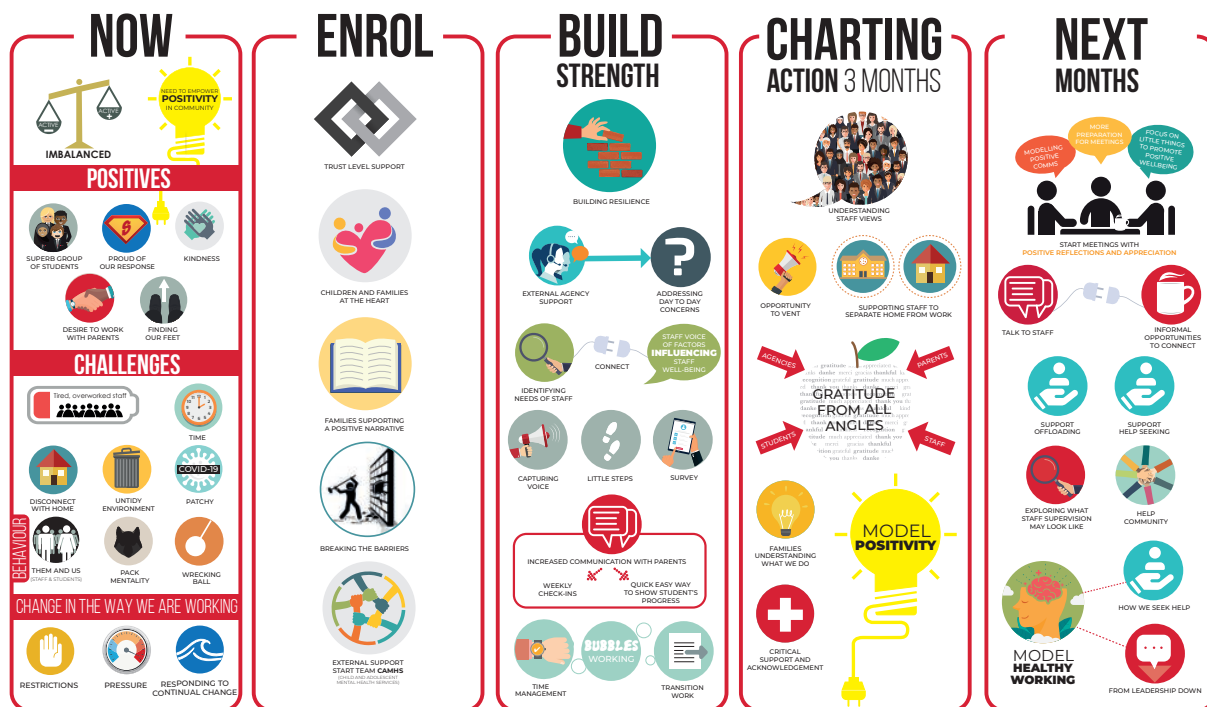
KATY CRAIG | HEAD OF ACADEMY



CONNECTING WITH SMITH'S WOOD

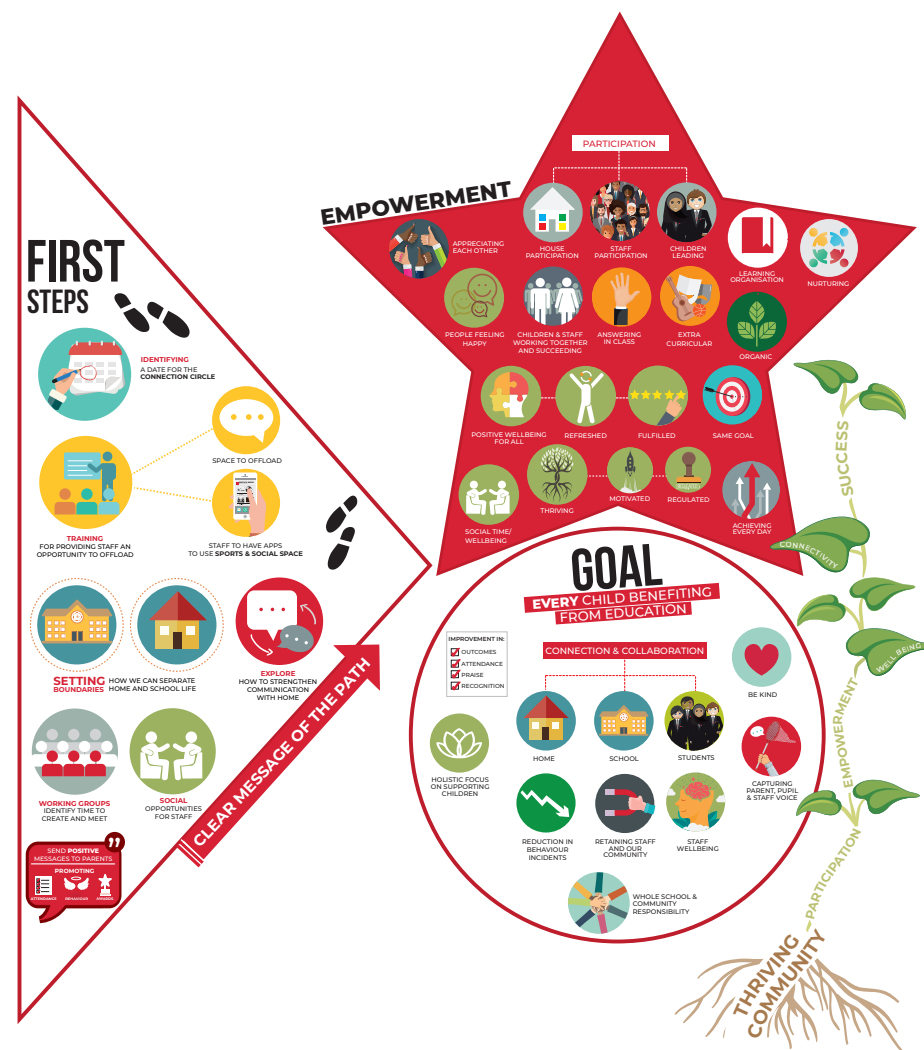
HEAD OF ACADEMY UPDATE

BETTERTOGETHER



FINAL **THOUGHTS** **REFLECTIVE.** **TOGETHERNESS.** **CONNECTIVE.** **THOUGHTFUL.**

GROUND RULES **CAPTURE EVERYONE'S VOICE** **FOCUS AND BE PRESENT** **CONFIDENTIALITY**



CONNECTING WITH SMITH'S WOOD

CONNECT, RESPECT, EXCEL.

This term we have tried to continue our strong start to last year with regards to the house competitions. We had so many successful events in the last academic year that we did not want the current climate to affect our participation. We have worked hard to build the house system and it is really important that we continue in this vein - particularly in terms of introducing it to our new year 7 students. This year we really wanted to involve staff in the competitions; staff and student well-being is a high priority and building the connection between staff and students is vital.

The first house competitions that were held this year were the house rounders and softball. Over 400 students (a phenomenal number!) participated from the various year groups in these events. The atmosphere during the competitions was electric! – well done to all of those involved.

On Thursday 26th November we held a staff house badminton competition. This was a fantastic evening with a great atmosphere and all those involved contributed to the overall leader board.



Students: winner

Ayman Salim Y7
Hawking House
(3 points)

2nd Place

Sienna Y10
Hawking House
(2 points)

3rd Place

Faith Y10
Hawking House
(2 points)

Taste points... (each individual receiving an additional house point)

Following this event, we ran 'The Great Smith's Wood Bake Off', we were determined not to be 'beaten' by Covid and found a safe alternative to our usual 'Ready, Steady, Cook' event. Staff and students were asked to bake cakes or cupcakes at home and bring them in on the 30th November – they had to follow the theme of 'community'. This could have been the house colours, NHS or emergency services.

We had some incredible entries as shown by the photos on display. It was great to see a range of year groups getting involved, in addition to a number of staff.

On Friday 18th December, all students and staff will attend Live Teams Year Celebration Assemblies. These assemblies take part at the end of each half-term to recognise and celebrate those students who have gone the extra mile with regards to their effort, resilience, attendance, house participation and progress in certain subjects. During this assembly there will be a number of students being awarded house colours – well done to all of those students who have been nominated for any of the above awards, we are really proud of you all.

LOUISE ELLIS-MARTIN | ASSOCIATE ASSISTANT HEAD OF ACADEMY (CREATIVE AND PERFORMING ARTS)

CONNECTING WITH THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

MARK RHATIGAN | DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

EVIDENCE AND RESEARCH DRIVE IMPROVEMENTS

Our School Improvement Strategy embraces the following principles:

- Partnership is at the core of all that we do as a MAT and we insist on inclusive collaboration to identify, based upon evidence and best practice in all areas
- The best ideas that originated in one academy can quickly become the Trust approach
- Our evidence-based approach to school improvement ensures the right strategies are employed at the right time, for every setting.

As we approach the end of the first term with the newly established Trust improvement and best practice groups, the impact of evidence-based practice has been clear to see:

The Trust Network Groups (TNG) have considered how other successful schools and departments are responding to the challenges subjects currently face, including providing (and assessing the impact of) remote/blended learning and ensuring curriculum changes are based on evidence.

Strategic Development Groups (SDG) have just met for the second time this term and it is clear that the latest research (even if conflicting) has shaped their

discussion and recommendations. The Curriculum and Assessment Group, for example, have looked closely at Assessment strategies that make a real difference to students' understanding and progress but do not add an extra burden to staff.

The Education Leadership Group (ELG) of the Trust not only benefits from the research of the other groups that are shared at ELG, but also have a main agenda item that focuses on recent educational research: curriculum, assessment, safeguarding and SEND needs are recent examples

The School Improvement Team (SIT) consists of the Trust Improvement Partners, who spend one or two days a week working alongside subject staff in our academies. At our recent meeting, all shared a recent piece of research that has influenced their thinking and practice. I have shared two of the case studies below

ADELE ASHTON: MATHS

"Retrieval Practice" – Kate Jones

"As teachers we all recognise the importance of supporting students to remember facts and processes in order to be able to recall and retain knowledge. The Trust maths teams has been amending and developing the curriculum in order to help students to do just that, to adapt resources and activities in order for students to remember and recall previous knowledge more easily. This book identifies strategies and discusses the research on metacognition to support retrieval practice.

Also, Peterson and Peterson (1959) investigated the duration of short-term memory and concluded that virtually all information stored in the short-term memory only lasted up to 30 seconds! If information is repeated beyond short term memory only then will it transfer to our long-term memory. Strategies are discussed and examples given which can easily be adapted for any subject; these are discussed further in the book to help with retrieval practice and revision. As the trust maths team continue to work together to develop our curriculum, this book has made me consider and reflect how we can incorporate different ideas to support and develop students to remember more.



CONNECTING WITH THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

MARK RHATIGAN | DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

BECKY LAWLEY: HISTORY

Focus: Offering feedback to remote learners

- Utilising self assessment for staff safety and feedback on extended writing
- Using staff marking as effectively as possible

Remote learning can cause a problem as we don't unpick and rebuild students' learning as we do continuously in lessons; we do have some solutions:

For shorter tasks-

- SMHW offers a quiz function that self-marks
- Microsoft Forms can be used to conduct quizzes to gauge pupil understanding

BUT- this still requires analysis and reteaching to be effective and relevant

If providing detailed feedback remotely relies on students engaging and submitting their work, are we excluding our disadvantaged students who don't have the same facilities, or parental support, to be able to submit this to us? Therefore, if we don't have an effective strategy to maximise student engagement, we may widen the gap between our disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupil.

I have researched NFER and Teacher Toolkit (peer assessment model below) that have a range of helpful resources and suggestions, including the model below:

1. Have a clear assessment criteria
2. Develop the assessment criteria with students
3. Use anonymous examples of work
4. Vary the work they assess
5. Model responses
6. Allow time to respond
7. Provide feedback on their peer/self-assessments

Suggestion: Review the peer and self-assessment in your classroom today and get it working more efficiently and intelligently. You'll soon see the impact on student progress and marking workload.



CONNECTING WITH THE DIRECTOR OF HR

DANIELLE BILLINGTON | DIRECTOR OF HR



Another busy term and a challenging calendar year are coming to an end.

From an HR perspective a lot has been achieved in the calendar year. The key milestones were the creation of a centralised HR Department, the implementation of the HR self-service portal and the new payroll bureau service. Whilst the new HR service and the new ways of working still need to embed, I am proud of the achievements of the team, in particular because of the additional challenges faced due to CV-19.

Unfortunately, we have to say good-bye to two long-standing HR colleagues, who are leaving the Trust at the end of December, Menaz Akhtar, Payroll & Systems Manager, and Shakeela Ali, HR Assistant. I would like to thank them for their support and commitment over the years and wish them well for the future.

We also welcome a new member to the HR team: Shauni Lee, Payroll & Systems Manager.

Each member of the HR Department will introduce themselves to you in the FMAT Connect publications for this academic year; this half term, it will be Dawn Hadley-Smith and Vaneeta Tandy.

I wish you all and your loved ones an enjoyable and relaxing holiday.

Stay safe & well

DANIELLE BILLINGTON | DIRECTOR OF HR



MEET THE TEAM



**DAWN HADLEY SMITH,
HR ASSISTANT**

I joined Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust as HR Assistant in April 2020. Starting a new job, meeting my colleagues via Microsoft Teams and working remotely was

certainly an unusual way to start. However, with the help and support of all my colleagues I very quickly settled into my new role.

I am new to the Education sector, having worked in the automotive industry previously, where I gained experience working in a variety of HR areas. My role as HR Assistant at FMAT is to support our Trust with HR-related matters and provide a comprehensive HR administrative service. Since starting, I have particularly enjoyed building on my knowledge of Safeguarding and the Single Central Record (SCR).

It is great to now be working together in person in our HR offices at Smith's Wood Academy after returning in September. I am looking forward to utilising my skills and previous experience to continue to develop my knowledge of HR in the Education sector and to provide a supportive and competent HR service to the Trust.



**VANEETA TANDY, RECRUITMENT,
APPRENTICESHIP & TRAINING
ADVISOR**

I joined FMAT's HR team in September, as Recruitment, Apprenticeship & Training Advisor. Although I am new to the education sector, my background has always been in Recruitment and HR (almost 20 years!).

My previous role as Recruitment Advisor was based at West Midlands Railway, and the NHS before that. Both roles have provided me with valuable skills and experience within HR and Recruitment. What attracted me to this role is that this post is new to the trust, which will allow me to be innovative and play a fundamental role in shaping the way recruitment, apprenticeships and training is delivered for the benefit for all our students.

I hope to be able to meet many of you soon for feedback and suggestions. I am very passionate about recruitment and look forward to introducing some exciting new ways of working, to enable us to attract, recruit and retain the very best talent for our Multi-Academy Trust.



CONNECTING WITH STAFF REWARDS

PERKBOX - THE STAFF REWARDS PROGRAMME

Across the Trust we use Perkbox for our staff rewards platform.

All employees can sign up to Perkbox to receive a range of discounts on goods and services, along with a free monthly coffee from Café Nero, a free monthly movie from Rakuten and enter special competitions to win vouchers.

The perks can be accessed through Perkbox's website, or accessed via the Perkbox app available for smartphones.

I want to sign up to Perkbox!

If you are an employee of the Trust but do not have a Perkbox account, click on the link below and complete the form and we will do the rest!

[Click here to sign to sign up to Perkbox](#)

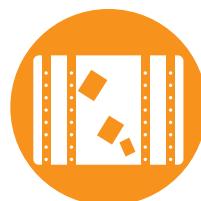
If you no longer wish to have a Perkbox account, please complete the form in the above link.



WINNER of £100 Amazon Voucher!

From Friday 27th November to Friday 4th December, the Trust ran a competition to win £100 worth of Amazon Vouchers.

We are pleased to announce that the lucky winner of the competition is **Katherine Wood from Fairfax!**



EXCELLENCE.

DEDICATION.

AMBITION.

INTEGRITY.

TRADITION.