



In each FMATConnect I try to highlight a particular topical theme that makes us all reflect.

Only a few days ago, we heard of the sad passing of Captain Sir Tom Moore. His achievements and wise words over the last year should not really be news to any of us, but I was particularly struck by a comment he made during a meeting with David Beckham last summer. David asked "What makes a good leader?" Captain Sir Tom replied "I think you have to rather like people

and realise there is good in everyone, and as a leader you can bring it out of them".

For me, leadership is part of all our roles within FMAT and the wise quote above should make us consider how we can improve our skills and have a more positive impact on all those we work with. Do you see the good in everyone? Do you really see past individual student challenges and visualise the person that student can become? Do you dedicate some time each day to consider how to develop those around you? Do you accept advice or training when it is offered? Do you mentor or coach others?

There are many other questions that we could all ask ourselves, but as long as we take the time to pause, reflect and act, we know that in some way, the wise words of a national hero will have genuinely impacted our lives and the lives of those around us.

MR SIMON JONES | CEO

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CONNECTING WITH BOURNVILLE

HEAD OF ACADEMY UPDATE | INSPIRING IN LOCKDOWN

Lockdown three feels very different to the first lockdown. Although we don't see our students in the classroom we meet them every day virtually via Teams, in a sort of business as new usual.

In September, Bournville made a conscious decision to focus on Deliberate Practice, Feedback and Increasing Challenge, as a way to ensure that students develop resilience in writing and cracking on independently. This produced a dramatic acceleration in student progress as they were more able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding, furthermore Mock 1 results for year 11 evidenced a dramatic improvement in progress from previous years.

The question when the third lockdown was announced became "how do we keep this momentum in lockdown?" We decided to do things a little bit differently, our lockdown learning is organised as follows:

- One teacher takes charge of delivering one live lesson per day to a whole year group;
- Lessons have a 20 – 30-minute explanation;
- Deliberate practice continues to be around half an hour per lesson;
- Teachers then focus the rest of their time providing detailed individualised feedback to motivate students to keep producing high quality work with guidance on how to move forward;
- Teachers produce narrated power points and make links to Oak resources;
- A system is in place for parents to request printed packs via the admin team and packs are regularly being sent home and returned for feedback.
- The results have been dramatic in maintaining and improving the quality of work produced by students.

As teachers we are growing in sophistication all of the time:

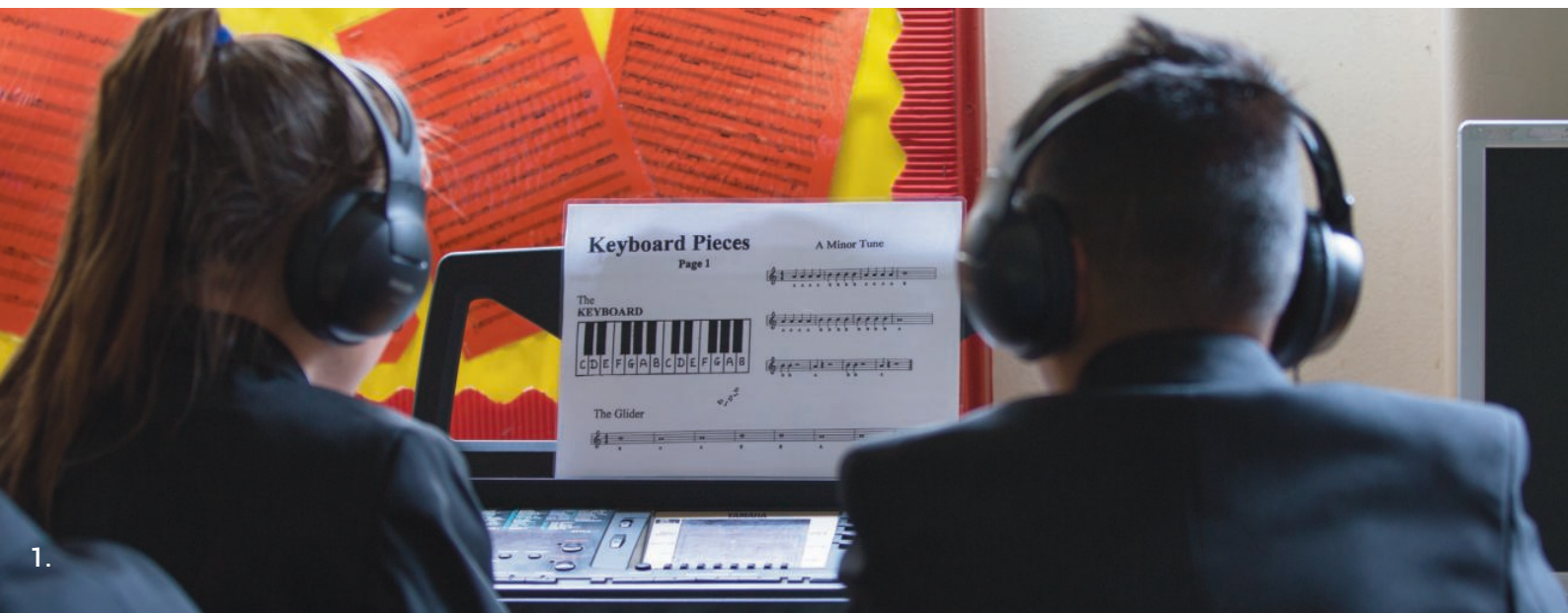
- Using graphics tablets to model solving simultaneous equations or exploding quotes;
- Developing the use of Assignments and Forms to easily collect and collate work and marks;
- Embedding videos and websites as part of the Teams lesson.

In addition to lessons enrichment is continuing:

- Instrumental lessons are now virtual;
- The Brilliant Club is virtual with workshops from Trinity College Cambridge;
- 200 students are involved in Aim Higher mentoring;
- A book club is promoting reading amongst staff and students;
- Anawims (Birmingham Centre for Women) mentoring is supporting vulnerable girls who are at risk;
- For STAFF ONLY the Thursday night virtual PUB QUIZ has kept the team spirit going.

Obviously, it is not the same without all of the students in the academy and it feels really weird delivering a lesson to a silent room. It certainly focuses the mind on making sure that explanations are clear and crisp as the only sound you can hear is your own voice. When we return to the classroom staff and students will be able to pick up where we left off and we will be richer for the experience because we will have developed our use of technology, which will enable us to support our students in more innovative ways. Let's hope that on the 8th of March we can open our doors to all of our students again to continue our learning journey together.

MISS M GREEN | HEAD OF ACADEMY



CONNECTING WITH ERDINGTON

HEAD OF ACADEMY UPDATE

The start of this term saw leaders adapting and re-adapting plans at the last-minute, referred to as "being agile" by the Department for Education. Despite these challenges, we have been proud of the sheer effort and dedication our staff have given to our students in making sure they have the support they need to continue their learning, from a "Safe and Well" call to every single student each week as well as a whole range of additional online wellbeing sessions.

When it comes to remote learning, the latest research shows that in addition to subject content, teaching Time Management and Self-Monitoring adds real value to remote learning. These skills are important in both brick-and-mortar and virtual classrooms, as well as post-school life. Learning from home can add complexity to existing challenges; parents and carers may work full-time or some may be doing so remotely thanks to quarantine restrictions, making it hard to spend time helping their children keep up with schoolwork. At Erdington, we are continually finding ways to engage parents in a way that ensures they are both monitoring and understanding what online work is being completed. Doing so helps students learn how to schedule and prioritise their time. It may be difficult to get parents to help, so teaching students to self-monitor their time is also a good plan of action, i.e. helping students write out to-do lists of work or activities due for the next day before they leave the virtual classroom, or asking them to estimate how much time they believe the assignment or activity will take and to schedule it for a specific time after virtual learning hours. We have found it is helpful to give them an idea of how long a task takes to complete without distractions. Students can test different methods and find what works best. Older students may even use common time-management techniques, like the "Pomodoro" technique. Google it – a fascinating and simple way to help improve productivity!

MR S MALLETT | HEAD OF ACADEMY

The Pomodoro Technique

What you need:

- pen and paper
- a timer
- motivation and discipline



Step 1: Choose a task



Make a list of all the tasks you have to do today and identify how many Pomodoros (25 mins) each task will take. Don't forget to factor in break times.

Tip: Estimate time it takes to finish tasks realistically or you will put yourself under unnecessary time pressure.

Step 2: Set timer to 25 mins



Set a timer to 25 minutes. It doesn't have to be a tomato-shaped kitchen timer, you can also use a time tracker app.

Tip: Keep distractions to a minimum so you can really focus on the task. You can close your door to signal to your colleagues that you're busy, turn off phone and email alerts etc.

Step 3: Work on task until timer rings



Work on one task only so that you can really get into the 'flow', i.e. the state of complete concentration.

Tip: If you're getting a good idea or think of another task, note it down and get back to it after your current Pomodoro ends.

Step 4: Take a short break



When your time goes off after 25 minutes, take a 5 minute break. Do this even if you're in the middle of the task. Breaks are an essential part of the Pomodoro technique. It's not just about getting things done, but also about maintaining your energy levels.

Tip: Don't stay at your desk. Use the short break to get a change of scenery.

Step 5: Take longer break after 4 'Pomodoros'



After you've completed a cycle of 4 Pomodoros, take a longer break of around 20-30 minutes. Again, take this opportunity to get away from your desk.

Tip: Take a short walk and clear your mind. Don't think of the next tasks but use this break time to recharge your energy.

CONNECTING WITH ERDINGTON

INCLUSION MANAGER | CHARITY

During the last lockdown, I decided to support a charity that gave out food to the homeless, both nationally and locally. I wanted to continue to be charitable during the next lockdown, but turned my attention to the local area, and more specifically those associated with Erdington Academy.

As well as personal donations, I reached out to local business to support with food or monetary donations. The local community were extremely generous, especially 'Ten Pin Bowling'.

The donations were used in two different ways: firstly, to top up the boxes already provided by the government to those entitled to free school meals; and secondly, to support those who were also vulnerable, but not entitled to free school meals, this could be due to a number of reasons such as: zero hours contracts, redundancy, or the reduction in wages due to being furloughed.

Donations were dropped off to the school every Monday, and with the help of our Office manager, Julie Colvin, we were able to identify families in need and organise distribution on the Tuesday. The families in receipt of the boxes were appreciative of everyone's efforts.

We are thankful that we can work together as a local community to support those who need it in such challenging times.

ZULFAKAR KHAN | INCLUSION MANAGER



CONNECTING WITH ERDINGTON

ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER | WELLBEING

Wellbeing for both staff and students at Erdington Academy has always been held in high regard, however, in light of the unprecedented situation, we knew that we had to make it a priority.

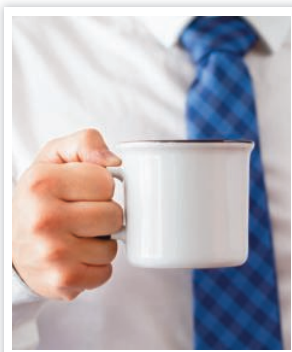
There are numerous initiatives for staff wellbeing that have taken place at Erdington so far during this Academic year, and we have many more planned!

We value our staff and want them to know this, so we regularly send out personalised thank you letters to staff for a variety of reasons; staff have been appreciative of these and have contacted us to say thank you for the gesture.

Thank you gift bag - extra staff CPD sessions were put on at the request of staff to cover Teams and remote learning, these were additional to directed time. At the end of these sessions, staff were thanked by the SLT member of staff in the session and then presented with a thank you gift bag, which contained small treats such as a hot chocolate sachet, chocolate bars and biscuits to thank them for all their hard work that half term.



CPD takeaway sessions – as part of this new initiative staff are asked to sign up for at least two wellbeing CPD sessions as part of their allocation (they can do extra should they wish to and many have signed up for more) – staff voice was used to select which to run. This year they include sessions such as: wellbeing, yoga, making your own facemasks, cooking on a budget, pension advice and many more. These are run by both Erdington and external staff. Staff voice so far has been overwhelmingly positive.



We have relaunched the **#feelgoodfriday mug** from last Academic year – the mug is filled with treats and left for a member of staff on a Friday morning. The staff member then has the option to return the mug to be reissued, or to participate and carry the initiative through to the next Friday to a staff member of their choice – no mugs have been returned and again, staff have been very appreciative of this gesture.

Golden parking – staff are nominated and are ultimately selected by Simon Mallett. Fortnightly, in staff briefing, the winner is announced for the following fortnight - they use the reserved parking spot – if not required they can ask Simon to pass on to someone of their choice. It has been that popular that staff asked if the parking spot could be won as a prize!



Most recently, we have launched the **'Achieve Lockdown Challenge'** – staff have been given 20 tasks to complete which come under the headings: Life skills, work skills, practical skills & home skills. Upon completion of each task they receive a letter – when they receive all 20 letters it will be an anagram to guide them to the prize of a £45 Just Eat voucher! The competitive streak at Erdington has already taken hold!

SIMONE MABBETT | ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER

The 12 days of Christmas – over the Christmas period, staff were treated daily to various gifts and opportunities – these ranged from things like chocolate/candy/sweets in their pigeonhole, competition opportunities, personalised thank you Christmas cards from the Head; the opportunity to support local and national charities; other treats from leadership including breakfast and free raffle with some great prizes. Staff really enjoyed this and were appreciative of the gestures.

**ERDINGTON
ACADEMY**

*Staff Christmas Tree
Competition 2020*



CONNECTING WITH FAIRFAX

HEAD OF ACADEMY UPDATE | BLENDED LEARNING AT FAIRFAX ACADEMY

It is hard to believe that a year ago we were only just beginning to hear reports of Covid-19 emerging from the other side of the world.

As we enter the second lockdown that includes school closures to all but key worker and vulnerable children, schools are in a much better position than in March 2020, when the thought of closure for 4 months due to virus seemed impossible.

As the cases of the virus escalated during December, the leadership team at Fairfax considered what we had learned from the previous lockdown and what we knew we needed to do differently.

The overwhelming principle we all agreed was that our students needed to maintain their sense of routine and educational purpose. A number of our students did not cope well with the lack of structure during the last lockdown, and have struggled to make the transition back into formal education.

This fundamentally informed our decision to deliver our full curriculum including PSHE on Teams, with a three-tiered approach to blend the learning as and when required.

All staff deliver a 25-minute input on Teams and set work for the remainder of the lesson.

The remainder of the lesson time allows staff to set meetings and collate registers without detrimentally impacting workload.

The blending of our curriculum occurs naturally through the setting of deliberate practice tasks, to be completed 'offline', through the use of narrated PowerPoints used by isolating colleagues, and from the use of traditional 'cover work' when staff are absent from work.

The use of House challenges and PE tasks increases the variety of work available for students.

Initial feedback from parents about our remote offer has been positive, and attendance is promising. Our next steps will be to recognise those students continuing to display our ARKS values (ambition, respect, kindness, safety) at this time and I am very much looking forward to sending lots of letters of praise!

#wearefairfax #makingfairfaxproud

MRS D BUNN | HEAD OF ACADEMY



CONNECTING WITH FAIRFAX

HEAD OF STRATFORD HOUSE | VIRTUAL EISTEDDFOD

2020 was a year of many firsts, for many people: using Zoom for family quizzes, wearing face masks without irony (or a medical qualification!), and having a favourite hand sanitiser fragrance being just a few of them. However, for the Fairfax community, the thought of having Eisteddfod cancelled was one step too far. So, the Virtual Eisteddfod was born.

To be honest, as a Head of House, I felt a certain amount of apprehension about how we could give this fine tradition the justice it deserves. If you have ever been to the final night on a "normal" Eisteddfod, you will know just how amazing the atmosphere is to finally bring to a close the culmination of nearly 8 weeks of rehearsing. Could the staff and students pull it off 'virtually'?

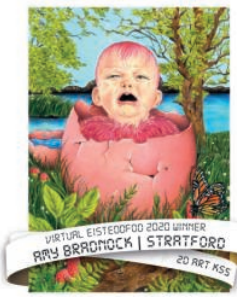
Well in true Fairfax style, and with the old adage of "The Show Must Go On" stuck firmly in the back of their minds, everyone pulled together to put on an amazing one-off show. Students across all four Houses danced

in their gardens, sung in their bedrooms and channelled their inner Gordon Ramsey's in their kitchens (minus the shouting, thankfully), to ensure the Eisteddfod gave us some fun and escape from the terrible year COVID dealt us.

And to top it all off, Stratford only went and broke their losing streak – 24 years after we last won it. As the Head of Stratford, I couldn't be more proud of my House. After coming tantalising close to winning the "Best of British" Eisteddfod in 2019, I am so happy for my students to be able to finally bring the cup back and get our name engraved of it once again.

This may be a year of firsts; however, if Stratford have anything to do with it, 2020 won't become the year of lasts.

MR M PORTER | HEAD OF STRATFORD HOUSE



CONNECTING WITH SMITH'S WOOD

HEAD OF ACADEMY UPDATE | "BETTER TOGETHER; NO ONE LEFT BEHIND"

Community is very important to us at Smith's Wood. We are working hard to make sure that no-one within our Academy community is left behind, whether this be academically or pastorally. We value every member of our community as an individual, we work together collaboratively and positively and we know that we are better together. We are stronger when we come together and work together towards common goals. At Smith's Wood these common goals include providing first class pastoral support to our students; some of our more recent work is shared with you in this article.



LUTHER KING HOUSE – DEVELOPING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Jordana Wilson, Teacher of Drama and House Participation Leader for Luther King House has worked hard to develop a sense of community at Smith's Wood through charity work. Alongside other colleagues, she has ensured that this

work has led to a great sense of community which is cherished and appreciated by staff and students. As a result of this, we always look forward to charity events as it gives us the opportunity to come together and help others. This academic year, despite the Covid-19 Pandemic, Smith's Wood Academy have continued their efforts to raise money for a number of charities and causes, in order to support our local community as well as the wider population. These events have included:

- **Macmillan Coffee Morning** – in September, staff members participated in a Macmillan Coffee Morning, sharing coffee and cake in a socially distanced way. It looked very different this year, but was still an event enjoyed by all.
- **Green or Yellow T-shirt Day for 'M.I.N.D'** – with mental health being such a huge concern for many within our community, it seemed more important than ever for students and staff to raise money for this great charity, which supports those who are struggling with a variety of mental health conditions. Staff and students came into the Academy wearing yellow or green T-shirts to show support and raise money for this charity.



• **Save the Children: Christmas Jumper Day** –

Christmas 2020 was very different and difficult for many families across the world. Save the Children consistently helps to make education, clothes, sanitary items and clean water accessible for all young people. We are very happy to have supported Save the Children to raise funds to help those that need it most.

- **Christmas Hampers** – each Mentor group planned, decorated and donated to create Christmas Hampers for our local family Food Bank. A 100 hampers were created! These hampers have made a huge difference to a number of families who have been affected financially by the pandemic.

In 2021, we are hoping to go ahead with our annual Charity week competition in the Spring/Summer, where Mentor groups compete to raise money for a charity of their choice.



PARKS HOUSE – SUPPORTING OUR YOUNG CARERS

Emma Bartlett, Head of Key Stage 3 Maths and House Participation Leader for Parks House supports our Young Carers. The work that we do in our Academy to support our Young Carers has gone from strength to strength over

the last 18 months. Miss Bartlett has worked closely with the Young Carers Trust to develop a strategy to ensure that students are getting the best support possible in the Academy. In-school provision is reviewed in collaboration with the Young Carers Trust every 6 months; this multi-agency approach is valued by the Academy and student Voice features heavily in the process; we are proud to say that it has been overwhelmingly positive. Our Young Carers value, very much, the support provided by Miss Bartlett.



The support that Miss Bartlett has provided includes;

- One to one mentoring and support meetings with all Young Carers. This has been vital, particularly during Covid to understand how their caring role may have changed and how our support needs to be adjusted to cater for this.
- A Microsoft Teams drop-in slot is available for all Young Carers; a designated email address has also been shared with our Young Carers for ease of communication on this matter.
- All Young Carers and parents are emailed monthly with a newsletter which includes key information from the Academy and emotional well-being links that may be useful to them. The Young Carers Trust includes events that are available for our students to get involved in.
- Information sharing with staff to both raise awareness of our Young Carers and the challenges they face and how they can be supported in the Academy.
- Supporting students to access virtual social events.
- Raising awareness of the work undertaken with Academy Associates, to support Young Carers

Miss Bartlett will soon be applying for the Bronze Award from the Young Carers Trust to recognise the work that the Academy is doing.



HAWKING HOUSE – SAYING ‘NO’ TO BULLYING

Miss Gibson is the House Participation Leader for Hawking House. She is also a Science Teacher. Through her house participation work she is focused on ensuring that our anti-bullying policy

is understood by all and that it is effective.

In the Autumn term Miss Gibson, ensured that all students received mentor activities that focused on various topics related to anti-bullying as well as anti-Bullying assemblies. Due to all students receiving mentor actives around ‘British Values’ and ‘What’s New’ topics, we have ensured that anti-bullying has been discussed through different angles and not just informing students of what bullying is and how to report/manage it.

The Anti-bullying Ambassadors continue to meet via Teams to consider any referrals made to them and to ensure that support and intervention is in place, where necessary.

During the second national lockdown, due to the majority of students being at home and using electronic devices to access their lessons, all students and parents have been

sent guidance around online safety and cyber bullying. Students receive reminders at the start of Mentor Time and each lesson of who they can talk to in and out of the Academy if they have any concerns, whether this be a safeguarding, well-being or mental health concern.

A student Survey was carried out during the second half of the autumn term. It was really pleasing to see the very positive feedback from young people about this aspect of our work.



PANKHURST HOUSE – ENSURING INCLUSIVITY FOR OUR LGBTQ+ STUDENTS

Despite the challenges of Covid, House Participation Leaders have still been able to offer one to one support for students across the Academy. What is great about the house system at Smith’s Wood is that there is variety of provision and it is accessible to all. Offering LGBTQ+ support is relatively progressive and not so readily available in all schools, which is something to celebrate. Miss Howe, Teacher of English, is proud to lead this aspect of our work.

Just in the first term alone, we have had students seek guidance on sexuality; how to approach ‘coming out’ to friends and dealing with reactions from peers. Miss Howe has supported students that have struggled with their gender identity, students that consider themselves to be transgender and students who identify as gender fluid. There are students that have sought advice in planning and providing LGBTQ+ awareness lessons that they wanted to share with their peers during a PHSE lesson. Student voice tells us that our young people have benefited by having a system in place that supports them and offers a safe space to talk.

Moving forward, we hope to re-establish a weekly group meeting for the LGBTQ+ students of Smith’s Wood and anyone else that wishes to participate. Our Key Stage 4 peer mentoring programme will also be launched.

As Head of Academy at Smith’s Wood I am incredibly proud of how our House Participation Leaders work hard, every day, to ensure that our Academy is an inclusive one and a happy place in which to learn and work.

MRS K CRAIG | HEAD OF ACADEMY



CONNECTING WITH SMITH'S WOOD

SENDCO | YEAR 8 NUMBER NINJAS

In the Autumn term, Year 8 students worked hard to improve their numeracy skills with the help of Teaching Assistants. They became real number ninjas!

Many children find numbers and Maths hard, and for some this affects their learning in other subjects too. When students returned to school in September the Maths department measured the number skills of all Year 8 students. A small group of 18 children were identified as needing help and support. Mr Lynch (SENDCo) worked with a Maths teacher and a specialist advisor from the Solihull Inclusion Support Service to create a programme that was fun, easy to use, and made a real difference to the children's skills. The Teaching Assistants were trained in using the programme in a virtual meeting.

Each week, every Teaching Assistant worked with three students twice a week for half an hour each time. In the sessions, students answered quick fire addition and multiplication questions, stopping when needed for the Teaching Assistants to encourage the children to explain their answers. These quizzes were followed by a series of number games using playing cards, dice, or other simple tools. The children really enjoyed the sessions, and became quite competitive with each other to see who could score the most correct answers in the shortest time.

At the end of the term, students sat a test very similar to that which they did in September. Sixteen of the eighteen students improved their scores, and many of them achieved

scores much higher than those achieved the first time around. This shows us that well planned, targeted intervention can really support students to develop their skills and enhance learning in the classroom.

Now we find ourselves in a second (or is it a third?) national lockdown and many young people are learning remotely, families are playing an increasingly important part in their children's education. Simple card games, such as twenty-one, or blackjack can really help a child to make addition and subtraction automatic, so that over time they do not have to think about or work out these type of sums. Also, involving children in shopping lists, calculating ingredients when cooking, or taking measurements in DIY tasks can all help to show maths has practical application that makes a difference in the real world.

Teaching Assistants continue to support students during remote learning, by making regular contact and now by attending lessons in Microsoft Teams. We hope it is not too long before planned interventions such as the numeracy ninjas can restart, so that we can provide the additional help that some students need.

MR S LYNCH

ASSOCIATE ASSISTANT HEAD OF ACADEMY – SENDCO.

HOW IS MATHS USED IN COOKING?

Converting
temperature

Altering
recipes

Changing
quantities

Weight
and
cooking
time

Measuring
ingredients

CONNECTING WITH THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

MARK RHATIGAN | DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

REMOTE LEARNING: HOW ARE WE DOING?

The short answer is 'very well!'

Clearly, we will never be complacent, but the hard work and innovation from all academies means that the vast majority of students are engaging and progressing in their learning. Those students who are not remain a concern for us all as they do for all schools nationally; what is reassuring is that there are actions in place for all such students, including access to laptops (735 distributed across the Trust!) specialist support and resources and, in some cases, re-classification as 'vulnerable' students to enable access to face-to-face teaching.

You may be aware the Government has mandated that schools have a duty to provide remote education for state-funded, school-age children and that Ofsted inspections will consider the quality of schools' remote education in accordance with the expectations set out in this guidance.

All academies have a 'Remote Learning offer', which is available on their websites and is accompanied by other helpful materials to students and parents. We are conscious that many staff in the Trust are parents of school age children themselves and are juggling those responsibilities – credit to all who are doing so!

The following guidance was released recently from Ofsted, explaining how we need to think about the remote curriculum; from Ofsted's Daniel Mujs (2021),

“everything we know about what a quality curriculum looks like still applies. The remote education curriculum needs to be aligned to the classroom curriculum as much as possible. And, just like the classroom curriculum, it needs to be carefully sequenced and ensure that pupils obtain the building blocks they need to move on to the next step. Curricular goals should be made as explicit remotely as they would be in the classroom.”

What is positive about the remote learning on offer in the Trust is that it reflects the above, that it is not a 'bolt-on'; the intent of the curriculum remains the same, the implementation clearly does vary but the sequencing and challenge ensure that students can enjoy the 'remote' experience and make progress -and that's what we want to see.

Thank you to all staff, teaching and support, who are working together to support the students at this time.

MARK RHATIGAN | DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

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 THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

MARK RHATIGAN | DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

UPDATE FROM CHARLOTTE CROSS | TRUST CPD LEAD

I was recently appointed to the new role of Trust lead for CPD for a day a week, (alongside my core role as AHT at Bournville). This is a really exciting opportunity and one that I was keen to get going with.

I quickly got my wish and had approximately two weeks to finalise the planning of a remote Trust training day in January! Despite this been further complicated by minor distractions such as talk of closures, staff illness, mass testing etc – we went ahead and, with the support of lots of colleagues in all the schools, got this off the ground and were able to offer a really well received day and a real range of training. We had workshops on feedback, challenge, using Teams for Remote Learning, staff wellbeing to name but a few.

We also tried to make sure we offered choice, as I am a firm believer in staff development being the responsibility of the individual as well as the employer. The Trust believes that a healthy, positive and skilled workforce

gives all children the best chance of achieving their potential. The Trust values underpin the approach to CPD; all staff will have the opportunities to strive for high quality and 'be the best they can be'.

Colleagues, in all our schools, really engaged with this and provided me with lots of really useful feedback going forward, my favourite of which was that quality training offers, 'Improved outcomes. Happy staff equals happy students.'

I am currently meeting with external providers, CPD leads in all the schools and looking at the work of other trusts and planning for next year. I hope we can continue to move forward to offer even greater range of development opportunities for colleagues whatever their role, aspirations and age and stage of careers.

If you have any suggestions or thoughts regarding staff training and development do not hesitate to get in touch.

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

REBECCA LAWLEY | SUBJECT LEADER FOR HISTORY AND THE HISTORY TRUST IMPROVEMENT PARTNER

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



A busy half term is lying ahead of us. The team is working on implementing larger pieces of work, e.g. standardising SCRs across the Trust and electronic filing of key documents for all staff, whilst rising to the continued additional challenges faced due to the CV-19 pandemic. Recruitment is currently high on our agenda with some exciting senior roles advertised for Bournville and Smith's Wood, as well as a Trust-wide opportunity. Also, we were recently successful in recruiting a new Director of Education and look forward to Martyn Jobling joining the Trust on 19th April 2021.

As always, if you have any queries or concerns regarding the HR service, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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 Alison Jones and Gemma Mitchell, both HR Advisors.

I wish you all a successful spring term and a restful February half term.

Stay safe and well.

DANIELLE BILLINGTON | DIRECTOR OF HR

MEET THE TEAM



ALISON JONES
HR ADVISOR

I joined Fairfax Multi Academy Trust in June 2020, as a HR Advisor. Like many of us in these unusual times we are faced with, I worked remotely from day one and my first meeting with my colleagues was via Microsoft Teams; however, I quickly settled in with the support of my new colleagues.

My previous HR experience was within the automotive industry and as an Employment Law Consultant. I was excited to join the Trust to embark on a new venture where I could share my previous experience and knowledge, whilst gaining and expanding on my knowledge within a new sector; as they say "every day is school day, there is always something to learn".

In September 2020, I finally met my colleagues in person in the HR office at Smith's Wood Academy. This helped me to really embed into the HR team. As a team we are helping each other, learning together and developing our combined skills to offer the Trust professional HR Advice and support, as well as embedding the new ways of working.



GEMMA MITCHELL
HR ADVISOR

I joined FMAT's HR team in September 2020, as a HR Advisor. Although I am new to the education sector, my background has always been in HR (almost 20 years!). Joining a new sector, a newly formed team and during a pandemic has certainly been challenging.

My previous role was EMEA HR Advisor based at GP Strategies, before that I worked at Interserve Construction. I have also spent time in the Logistics industry gaining valuable knowledge and ways of working both from a team and key stakeholder perspective, ensuring that HR processes are adhered to in order to achieve the best results.

My role as HR Advisor at FMAT is to support the Trust with HR-related matters and to provide a comprehensive, forward-thinking service from a HR advisory capacity, whilst being the first point of contact for all HR related matters. 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.

CONNECTING WITH THE CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

JOHN FITZGERALD | COO



FINANCE

ANNUAL EXTERNAL AUDIT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The annual external audit was completed by Crowe (Trust external auditors) in the autumn term 2020. I am pleased to report the financial statements was presented and approved by the Board of Directors at the December 2020 meeting. The financial statements have been submitted to the ESFA and Companies House well in advance of the deadlines. The Financial Statements have been uploaded to the FMAT website in January 2021.

Covid-19 catch-up premium

The government has announced £1 billion of funding to support children and young people to catch up. This includes a one-off universal £650 million catch-up premium for the 2020 to 2021 academic year to ensure that academies have the support they need to help all students make up for lost teaching time.

Academies allocations will be calculated on a per student basis, providing a total of £80 for each student in year's reception through to 11.

Academies should use this funding for specific activities to support their students to catch up for lost teaching over the previous months, due to Coronavirus lockdown and restrictions.

Covid-19 catch-up premium statements are available on academy websites.

JOHN FITZGERALD | COO



ESTATES

FAIRFAX SWIMMING POOL CHANGE OF USE

The excellent Diamond Suite refurbishment project has been completed in the autumn term that converted the condemned swimming pool into the new multi-functional space.

The Diamond Suite is to commemorate the academy's 60th anniversary. We were successful in securing £60k from Sutton Coldfield Charitable Trust and £25k from Birmingham City Council to support the project which cost almost £200k to complete in total.

The pictures below show the works completed and fantastic space created for the academy.



PUBLIC SECTOR DECARBONISATION SCHEME APPLICATION

On the 30 September 2020, the Department for Business Innovation and Skills launched a £1billion pound fund to help the public sector decarbonise its estates.

The scheme has two streams of funding:

- The Low Carbon Skills Fund [a £32million fund] to help the public bodies develop their decarbonisation strategies.
- The Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme [£1billion fund] to pay for the deliver capital works.

The application we submitted will be for £3.1m to:

- Install 550kWp of photovoltaic panels across the Trust estates
- Re-lamp Bournville, Erdington and Fairfax sites with LED lights
- Install air source heat pumps in a number of our buildings where boiler plant equipment needs to be replaced
- Replace all hand dryers for more energy efficient ones
- Improve the Building Management Systems across the Trust to reduce hours of energy consumption.

The next step will be for Salix to confirm if the bid is success which should happen by the end of January 2021. From that point, we will have to complete the works by the 30 September 2021.

ESFA CONDITIONAL IMPROVEMENT FUND PROJECTS – SUCCESSFUL BIDS 2020

The Trust worked with Barker Associates to submit bids for 2020 CIF programme. The Trust were successful with CIF bids for the following projects:

- Erdington Boiler Replacement £503,217
- Fairfax Water Safety Legionella Works £104,815

Delayed outcomes from the ESFA on successful project bids, have had an impact on the proposed delivery dates for both projects. Trusts were due to be informed April 2020 this was delayed to July 2020.

Both projects have progressed well. Legionella works at Fairfax is now completed and the boiler replacement works at Erdington to be completed before the end of January 2021.

Both projects have been delivered with the support of colleagues at each academy with no adverse effect on the delivery of education for our students and within the funding allocation.



GRAPHIC DESIGN

KEELEY CLARKE | GRAPHIC DESIGNER

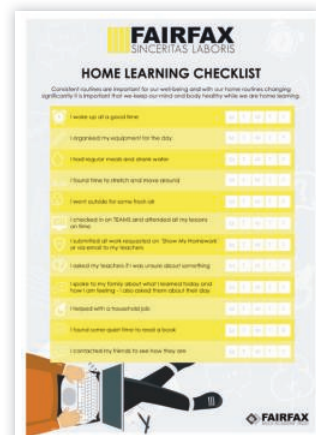
Graphic Design continues to assist the academies with many requests including:

- Home School Hero certificates and Home Learning Checklist which can be ticked electronically as well as printed.
- Erdington's Reward Achievement Ladder accompanied with invitation templates for the student reward scheme
- New display artwork for various boards at Smith's Wood, including Careers in English and Geography.

Work is continuing on an improved system for graphic design work requests where there will be a designated approver at each academy. There will also be an on-line catalogue where staff can view existing work from a centralised area. More details to follow.

Classroom displays have been reviewed at three of our sites with the remaining site to be completed by half term. This is part of an on-going improvement project of which there will be more news in the next FMAT Connect.

To assist in keeping displays up to date, I'm pleased to say that Smith's Wood have recently taken delivery of a new large format printer, enabling on-site printing of large displays in line with our other academies.



CONNECTING WITH THE CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

JOHN FITZGERALD | COO

OTHER NEWS

LAPTOPS AND TABLETS FOR CHILDREN WHO CANNOT ATTEND SCHOOL DUE TO CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

The Department for Education (DfE) is providing laptops and tablets to academies to help children and families access remote education during coronavirus (COVID-19).

The Trust has delivered 735 devices to students during the pandemic. Devices help children and young people to access remote education. They also help to provide access to social care and other services to support safety and wellbeing.

NATIONAL FREE SCHOOL MEALS VOUCHER SCHEME

Academies have sent free school meal vouchers to eligible students from 25 January as the Government's national scheme relaunches, adding to the support available for disadvantaged families.

Academies are using the Edenred online system to order vouchers, the system allows academies to place orders for supermarket gift cards on behalf of parents and carers whose children are eligible for free school meals.

The vouchers are worth £15 a week per child and families can receive codes by email to redeem themselves, or as a gift card provided by post, collection, or delivery to families without internet access.

Funded by

Department
for Education

Select 

Free school meal VOUCHERS

UPDATE FROM BEN WOOD, COO ASPENS (CATERING PROVIDER)

Prior to this year, we managed our business in a prudent and cautious way, enabling us to have sufficient resources to survive now. We have struggled financially along with UK business in general but are solvent and very much looking forward to a return to normal – thanks in large part to the support of FMAT, the Government and the hard work of every member of our workforce in our schools, head office and regionally.

Many of our competitors have laid off substantial numbers of their workforce, as they respond to the loss of revenue caused by the pandemic. We are thankful not to have done this, but nor are we immune from the major financial impact of the virtual closure of our business over 6 months, along with the many restrictions under which we now operate.

Our biggest strength lies in our relationships and our ability to support our clients alongside our biggest asset, our people, as it has always been.

EXCELLENCE.

DEDICATION.

AMBITION.

INTEGRITY.

TRADITION.