



As always this edition of FMAT Connect is packed full of updates of stories from each academy and our central team.

There are three particular areas which I would like to highlight as they all exemplify some of the wider but very important aspects of education.

Careers education in all its forms is an essential and very important part of the knowledge we need to impart to our young people. There are many reports and stories within the media concerning developing industries, staff shortages, labour force reviews, job satisfaction and retention and even long term wellbeing. It's clear we need to do all we can as educators to prepare students for their working careers and it has been great to read about the work of the SDG's, Career Mark Achievement and careers focus events that have taken place this term.

Obtaining key skills is definitely vital to assuring students can take part productively in society in the future. I'm pleased to read about the many activities that are designed to ensure students levels of literacy and numeracy are improved so they can engage effectively in all other areas of education. I also want to note that I have discussed many other initiatives and investments of time and energy that our academies have delivered this year. and I look forward to reading about the success and achievements later this year.

Finally, I would like to end by discussing the work on charity in all its form which is exemplified within this edition. Charity is an important concept for everyone and it is vital that our young people understand the life long value of engaging with charity work. Recent events in Europe have demonstrated some of the worse aspects that humanity can bring to the world. However it also demonstrates the power of humanity and charity in others and these are virtues and acts that we want our students to remember.

MR SIMON JONES | CEO

FEATURED INSIDE

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CONNECTING WITH BOURNVILLE

PRINCIPAL | MEET A HERO

When is a dog not a dog...

rather a proxy for changing behaviours in the staff, student and parent community? Whilst we are thankful for a post-pandemic return to normality in many areas of our lives, we must acknowledge that the pandemic has disproportionately impacted disadvantaged communities, has raised levels of crime around domestic violence and impacted negatively on mental health. Reduced attainment levels, child protection issues, attendance to school and poor general wellbeing are all symptoms of this. Current news reports cite mental health as the biggest issue. The situation is much more nuanced and complex than this and whilst the national tutoring program is a great opportunity for closing attainment gaps, it is not going to solve the wider problems.

However, with the help of a series of bespoke interventions that on an individual student level diagnose the problem, effective solutions are being implemented to help tackle the issues being faced.



Bournville are also developing trauma informed practices to assist those in need; again, another component being used to work towards finding the best possible solutions. We have also carried out research into the use of animals in school and concluded that a dog mentor may be another effective strand to support our school community.

So, meet Hero our Bournville School Dog Mentor.

Note the use of the name Dog Mentor and not Therapy Dog. A Dog Mentor is so much more. Hero is now trained to bronze level. Silver and Gold are coursework where he needs to demonstrate the competencies prescribed in the program. He needs to learn 500 words and be able to read these off cards and then complete the actions required. I am not joking!!

The first task then is to prepare the school. Think about a noisy classroom where students may have dropped things on the floor. This is not a safe environment to bring a dog into not least because the energy is wrong. Imagine then when students understand that a Hero friendly classroom must be clean, calm and Hero breathing is required (this is too difficult to explain in writing just go with me on this). Any classroom that is not Hero safe will not be visited by Hero. On the training day we trained 4 classes and introduced Hero to these. The atmosphere was incredible, the sense of calm and focus achieved by the students was amazing. Every classroom at Bournville will have more than one student with complex needs and vulnerabilities and yet all the students managed to make behavioural choices because they wanted Hero to be able to visit their classrooms. They made a choice. Hero as a proxy changed their behaviour and they could feel the change in atmosphere around them when they were calm and centred. Students won't always make that choice, but they will do more often, the more Hero is in school, and they can be reminded that they were able to make positive choices and change their behaviour.

It doesn't stop there; Hero can also help in situations where separation anxiety in the home results in a child not coming into school. In the training session we learned how to say Goodbye to Hero in a way that does not cause him anxiety. This technique is then outlined to parents as something that they need to practice with their child so that the child can access the Dog Mentor. Remarkably behaviours in the home have been changed. Now obviously this takes a bit of time and won't solve all issues overnight, it is however another strategy we can deploy.

CONNECTING WITH BOURNVILLE

PRINCIPAL | MEET A HERO

So... these 500 words that Hero is learning to read. They are on flash cards with diagraphs underneath so that students can revise their phonics whilst issuing commands to Hero. The same process then follows, the flash cards are sent home and the parent is asked to practice with their child, providing a great opportunity for parents to help support their child's learning.

The next steps before we introduce Hero to the whole school community:

- Staff training – the Hero breathing will be fun
- Staff log in for Hero to be created so that we know when he is onsite in case of a fire!
- Letters and information sent to all parents
- Student training and monitoring of Hero safety in classrooms

Once this is in place Hero will be in school two days per week to begin with moving up to three days in September. Obviously, before any of the rest of the FMAT community meet Hero, we will need to ensure that Hero training is in place.

This article provides only a snapshot of the power of a Dog Mentor in school. The training session included so much more about how we learn and neural linguistic programming. It is one of the most powerful pieces of training I have ever been involved in, with the power to transform the school for everyone. My final thoughts to leave you with are, maybe all of our schools need a Hero and perhaps the need at Bournville is such that we need more than one Hero!

MRS MOIRA GREEN | PRINCIPAL



CONNECTING WITH BOURNVILLE

DEVELOPING READING AND LITERACY AT BOURNVILLE

At Bournville, we are doing lots of work on improving literacy and vocabulary, this is from Year 1, all the way through to Year 11. This is because we know students who have a more advanced and wide vocabulary achieve better in school. As Alex Quigley, author of 'Closing the Vocabulary Gap' reminds us, 'broad and deep vocabulary is integral to every facet of learning.'

We are using several strategies to develop reading here at Bournville.

'LIT IN COLOUR'

I also proud that I was able to secure a huge range of texts by a diverse range of BAME authors, from Penguin publishers as part of their 'Lit in Colour' initiative. These strategies will allow students greater access to a range of texts and improve their chances of success across the curriculum.



REOPENING OF THE LIBRARY

We are delighted to have been able to reopen the Secondary library with students being able to access it at breaks and in some lessons.



DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRIMARY LIBRARY

We have been able to develop resources in both our libraries through some funding from the National Literacy Trust, but this has had most impact in our primary library where we were able to make a significant difference to the quality and quantity of books available to our children. We managed to get an additional 400 books!

READING MENTORS

Another strategy we are doing to improve reading and fluency is having some secondary students reading with our primary students in the morning. This not only improves the fluency of our younger children, but is excellent for the older students' confidence and their sense of community.

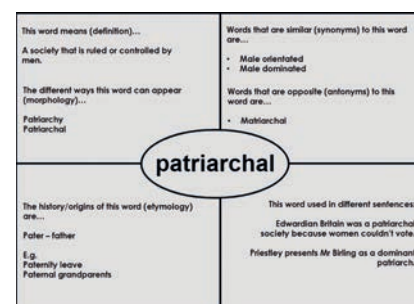
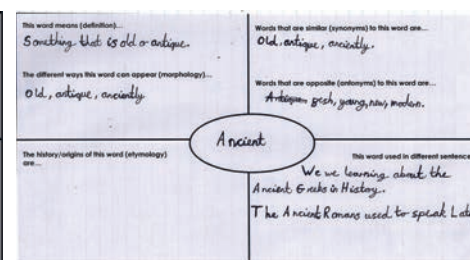
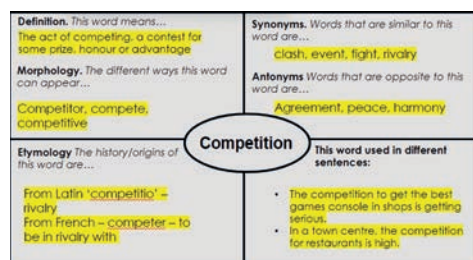
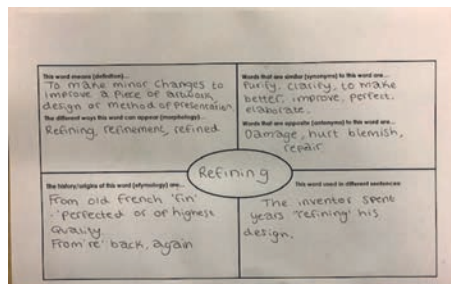
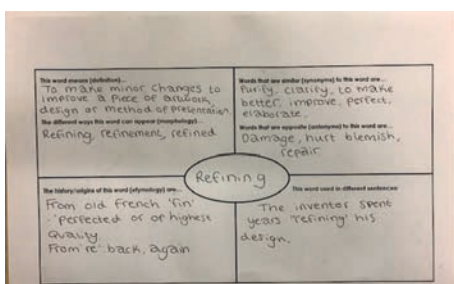


CONNECTING WITH BOURNVILLE

DEVELOPING READING AND LITERACY AT BOURNVILLE

FRAYER MODEL

Another tool we are using to develop vocabulary is the 'Frayer model'. As mentioned in the last edition of FMAT Connect, Debbie and I, have been working to implement this model across the school, and there has been lots of staff training and discussions on how to have the most impact with this. The Frayer model is a tool where we work with students to really think about the meaning and use of words. They are using this model in all year groups and lessons to develop their confidence and add to their word hoard.



VIPERS

Another whole school strategy that we have introduced is through Jo Dovey in English. We are using VIPERS as a way to support students deeper understanding and comprehension of texts. Students have a regular 'Guided Reading' lesson in KS2 and 3 where they read a novel regularly and really learn the skills needed to scrutinise and understand texts in greater depth.



Deliberate Practice The Hate You Give: Chapter 5	
Vocabulary	What is 'gated neighbourhood'? P72 What is an atrium? P74
Inference	Why do you think Starr calls herself Williamson Starr at school? (P73) What clues are there that Starr's friends are more wealthy than she is?
Prediction	Predict what you think will happen next between Starr and her school friends? P76/7.
Explanation / Evaluation	Find evidence that suggests why Starr might fall out with her friends.
Retrieval	What was Khalil's family like? What are the names of his family members?

CONNECTING WITH ERDINGTON

PRINCIPAL UPDATE

This is the time of the year I personally dislike the most. It seems everyone you meet, the first thing people say is, "Isn't the year going fast, I can't believe it is April already." It is a stark reminder how quickly time and life can pass. This is a message we give to students all the time, make the most of the time, take the opportunities that are available in the academy. This also becomes apparent when we are faced with the reality of our own mortality.

It is with the heaviest of hearts that I share the devastating news that Leanne Spooner; former student, colleague and friend passed away on 8th March. Leanne was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumour in January 2022.

As a community we have been deeply saddened by this news and have come together to support each other; as an academy we are putting in a range of events from a charity staff netball match to a memorial service all to commemorate the life and impact Leanne had on many lives in her time at Erdington Academy.

MR SIMON MALLET | PRINCIPAL

What follows is a recognition from Lisa Millward who knew Leanne as a Student and Colleague.

Leanne was a student at Kingsbury School from 1996 until 2001. She was the most amazing student and I had the pleasure to teach her PE. Her enthusiasm, positivity, talent, empathy towards others, coupled with that beautiful smile that lit up the whole room will have a place in my heart forever. Leanne was also a formidable netball player, representing the school team throughout her five years at the school. She was also a founder member of Stockland Belles Netball Club which started in 2012, playing WA alongside many of her former school friends and teammates.

Not only was Leanne an exemplary student, but she was also an outstanding teacher. Coming back to work at her school from April 2015 until August 2019 as a Lead Practitioner in the Maths Faculty, before leaving to take up a maths position in Oman.

I am in awe of how incredible Leanne was. She has been a huge force in mine, and so many other peoples' lives – she humbly gave to so many people. The messages of support, the outpouring of shared grief and shock are the testament to who she was, and the reach she had to so many people.

Rest in peace Leanne Spooner you truly beautiful soul, my condolences, love and prayers to all your family and friends, you will be greatly missed.

Leanne was a wonderful mother to her 6-year-old daughter Mya, who is as fearless, fun loving and kind as Leanne was. If you would like to donate to a trust fund for Mya in memory of Leanne please go directly to her 'Go Fund Me' page. £16,448 of the £20,000 target has already been raised.

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/wb93z-helpLea-PDE/share>

"Those we love don't go away they walk beside us everyday unseen, unheard, but always near, so loved, so missed, so dear...."



CONNECTING WITH ERDINGTON

NATIONAL QUALITY IN CAREERS GOLD AWARD

Erdington Academy first achieved the National Quality in Careers Award in 2018. We are delighted to have achieved the Gold Award, using the Career Mark approach provided by Complete Careers, following our recent revalidation assessment.

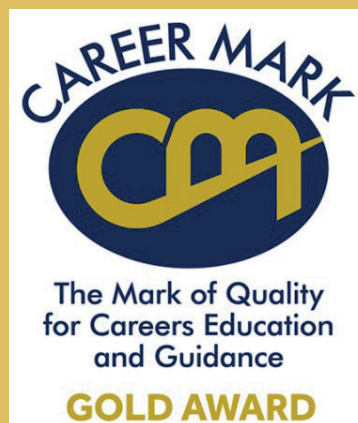
This award looks at the whole student careers experience including, individual advice and guidance, the curriculum and the wider enrichment opportunities available.

As part of the assessment day, the assessor spoke with staff and students in Year 8,9,10 and 11 about their careers experience and went through in detail all the evidence we had submitted.

"Erdington Academy meets all the requirements of the 22 assessment indicators, providing a comprehensive description and appropriate supporting evidence. The school has been very clear in describing how it has amended its arrangements to accommodate the various constraints, resulting from the pandemic, whilst minimising disruption to pupil learning and still offering the full entitlement offer"

"The students who met with the assessor were positive about their futures and had high aspirations. They feel well supported in the career decision making process. They have full and impartially presented access to all post 16 and post 18 options and feel encouraged to pursue their plans and ambitions. The academy uses the word 'audacious' in its aim for student aspirations and this was reflected in many of the choices described by the students."

LISA MILLWARD | LEAD PRACTITIONER | SUBJECT LEADER OF GIRLS PE | CAREERS LEAD



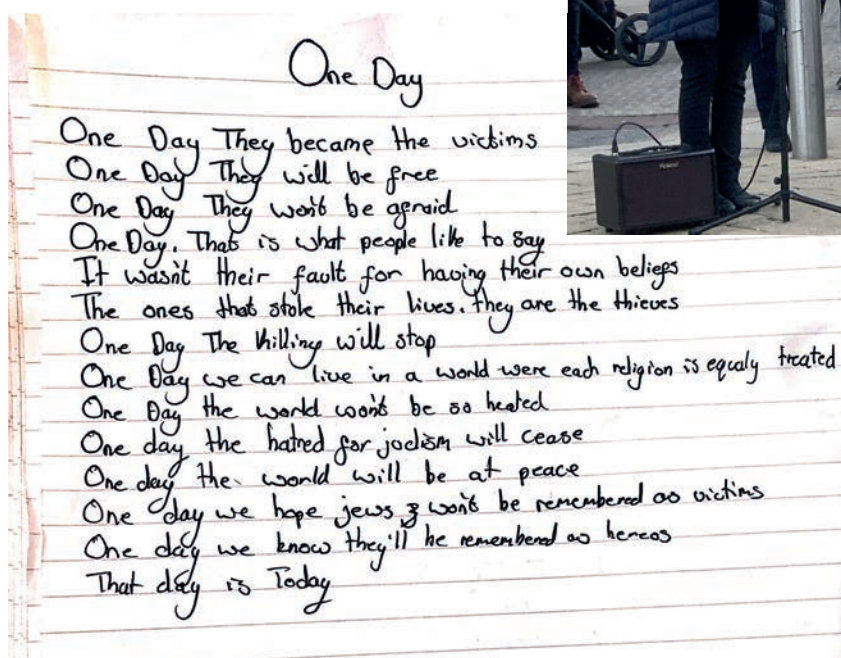
HOLOCAUST DAY

Mrs Hasan, Miss Johnson and Amelie Dixon De-Courcy (Year 8) were delighted to partake in the Erdington Holocaust Memorial Day Service on Thursday 27th January 2022. We were invited by Rev Gerard Goshawk from Six Ways Erdington Baptist Church to attend the event at Erdington Library. It was heart-warming to see people from a diverse range of backgrounds extend their commitment to ensuring that Erdington is a safe space where all are welcome. The poems, speeches and the two-minute silence allowed us to reflect on the importance of remembering the holocaust. In addition, people from all ages and walks of life expressed their commitment to ensuring that this can never again take place.

To mark this special event, Amelie, alongside her form (8MXH), wrote a poem based on the theme of One Day. The inspirational poem was received with much admiration from local residents and those who organised the event.

MRS HASAN

TEACHER OF ENGLISH AND HOUSE PARTICIPATION LEAD



CONNECTING WITH FAIRFAX

PRINCIPAL UPDATE | RESPECT MATTERS

The pandemic school closures have impacted our young people in lots of ways and here at Fairfax, we have been working to make sure all of the losses our students endured are recovered, not just those of an academic nature.

This year we have continued to develop our focus weeks and have now added mini campaigns titled 'Respect Matters' and 'Safety First'.

Each of our four mini campaigns include an assembly, social media coverage, parental communication and a daily task for students to complete.

During Safety First Week we promoted the use of our SHARP System and focussed on safe use of technology along with safe behaviour in school and in the community.

During our most recent 'Respect Matters' campaign, students have received anti bullying assemblies and have also completed activities on what our ARKS habit of respect includes, why mutual respect is important and how self-respect is a priority.

Our staff have been using ARKS recognition boards within their classrooms to reward students demonstrating the habit of respect.

MRS DEBORAH BUNN | PRINCIPAL



CONNECTING WITH FAIRFAX

CHARITABLE FAIRFAX

As the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine develops, Fairfax staff and student groups have been proud to establish both a goods collection and a JustGiving link to support those affected. Charitable giving is an important part of being 'Fairfaxian'. We run regular non-uniform events, seasonal foodbank collections and, alongside other charitable events, hold an annual charity week each March. During our charity week, each of the Houses select their chosen charities and run a series of events and activities to see who can raise the most funds to support their chosen causes. This year each House worked hard and below is a short summary from our Heads of House:

COVENTRY HOUSE – CONNIE BLAKE

Coventry House voted to raise money for Macmillan Cancer Trust because we want to support others that suffer with Cancer and help make a change for the better. Our students were sponsored for numerous activities that they independently organised and took responsibility for. These activities included events such as a bake sale, holding a sponsored silence for a whole day, running laps around a field and our Head Boy bravely having his legs waxed. All of which were a great success and made us very proud. Charitable work is important to our House as it raises awareness and enables our young people to develop their sense of community, pride, and purpose.



KENILWORTH HOUSE – KELLY HUNTER-STOTT

For Charity Week, this year, Kenilworth voted to raise money and awareness for Teenage Cancer Trust. Kenilworth decided to raise awareness by taking part in individual events for the first time; and it was lovely to see so many of the students get involved to support this important Charity. We had a range of events taking place, such as a Sponsored Silence for a day, a Sponsored Walk around the field afterschool and a Virtual Quiz for friends and family, to name a few. I am always proud of Kenilworth students, but especially when it comes to events such as Charity Week; the students embody our ARKS values as they develop their personal values and generosity.



CONNECTING WITH FAIRFAX

CHARITABLE FAIRFAX

STRATFORD HOUSE – MARTIN PORTER

This year Stratford House chose to organise a food bank collection for the Sutton Coldfield Town Hall Food Bank Appeal, who act as a donation point and subsequently distribute to other food banks in the area. We are fully aware of the stresses placed on households during the pandemic and wanted to help those who may need to use a food bank until they got back on their feet.

Stratford also held their perennial favourite Krispy Kreme stall and tuck shop on the day. All profits made on the day were donated to YoungMinds. This charity was suggested by our House Captains as we recognise the huge mental health stresses that young people have gone through due to the Covid pandemic. YoungMinds work closely with children and young adults to help them improve their mental well-being.

Charitable work is important to Stratford House because it brings the House and the school together. We can see that a small action by one person quickly becomes magnified and can make a huge difference to a lot of people.



WARWICK HOUSE – TOM CARTY

Having been Assistant Head of Warwick I am now proud to say I am Head of Warwick House. Students in Warwick have never disappointed me in their efforts to support charitable causes. Warwick have run the great 'Warwick Fete', where students have run stalls ranging from games to challenges to lucky dips. This year we had an unintentional change of pace, due to my need to self-isolate. However, this did not dampen the Warwick students' mood, with a number of students taking it upon themselves to contribute to charities, raise awareness as well as donating to a food bank. This filled me with pride on my return as students proved they were proactive and showcased generosity and kindnesses with their actions.



MRS DEBORAH BUNN | PRINCIPAL



CONNECTING WITH SMITH'S WOOD

FUTURES WEEK

March saw the welcome return of our careers 'Futures' Week at Smith's Wood Academy. Along with so many other things we took for granted in schools, the Covid pandemic had prevented visitors and guest speakers from speaking to children, ironically at the time they needed it most. We therefore decided to go all out this year and thanks to the supreme efforts of Amanda O'Donnell, we had a superb week.

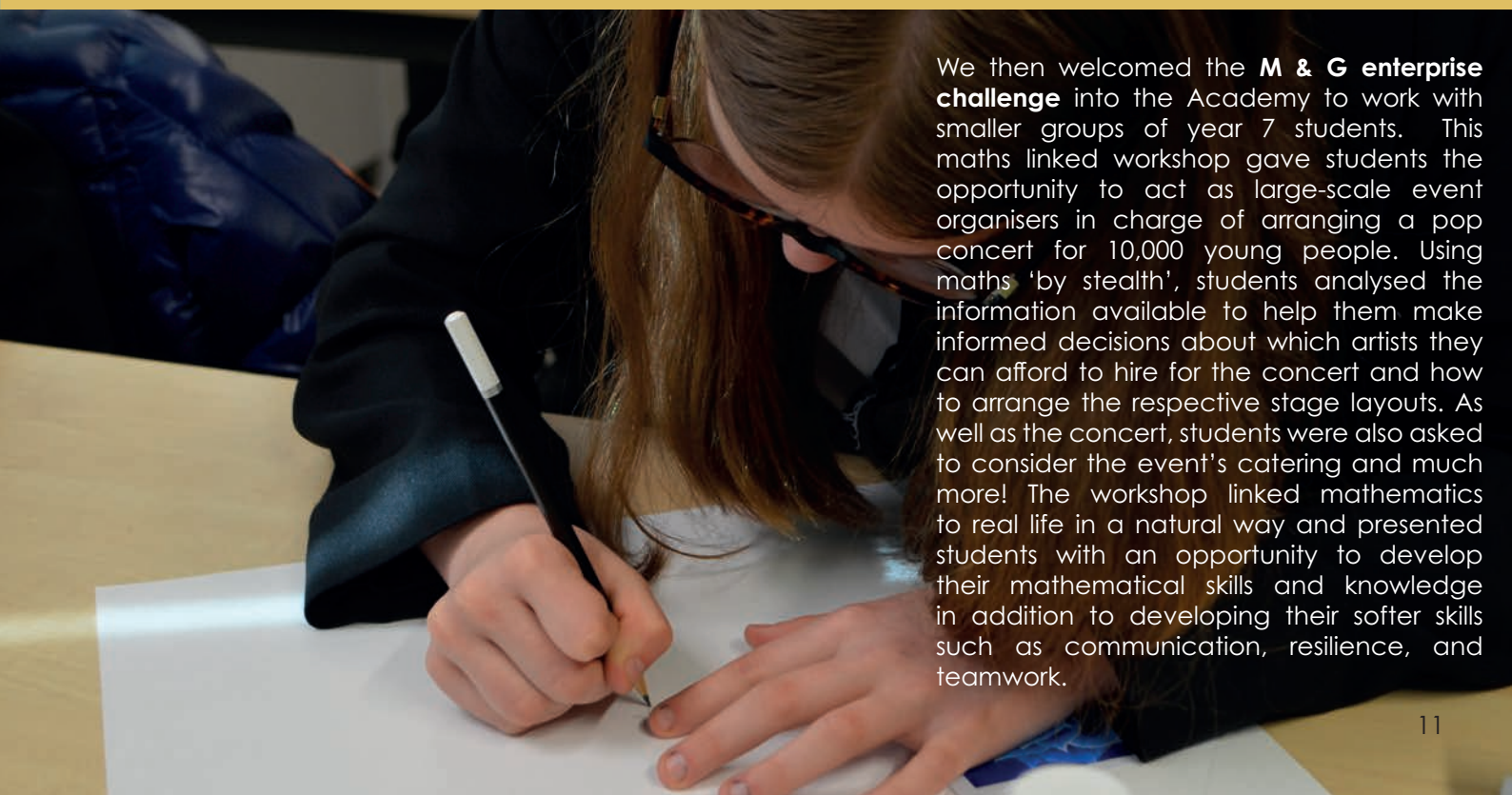
The week started off with a visit from Dreadlock Alien, aka Richard Grant, a performance poet who, in recent years has increasingly acted as compere at arts events, such as the recent Shambala Festival. Richard worked with our year 9s to show them how English can lead to a variety of careers and how many different communication techniques can be used to make a point.

“

'Mass engagement is what I specialise in, working with a whole year group for a whole day and changing perceptions. The first and last questions I ask are 'Who thinks poetry is boring?' All hands are up at the start of the session and none are up at the end!'



We then welcomed the **M & G enterprise challenge** into the Academy to work with smaller groups of year 7 students. This maths linked workshop gave students the opportunity to act as large-scale event organisers in charge of arranging a pop concert for 10,000 young people. Using maths 'by stealth', students analysed the information available to help them make informed decisions about which artists they can afford to hire for the concert and how to arrange the respective stage layouts. As well as the concert, students were also asked to consider the event's catering and much more! The workshop linked mathematics to real life in a natural way and presented students with an opportunity to develop their mathematical skills and knowledge in addition to developing their softer skills such as communication, resilience, and teamwork.



CONNECTING WITH SMITH'S WOOD

LOUDMOUTH WORKSHOPS



Not all activities took place in the Academy and a large group of year 9 students were fortunate to visit the office of PWC (Price Waterhouse Coopers) in Birmingham. Whilst there the students heard from recent school leavers who have secured careers with PWC and also what skills they needed to develop to be successful at interview. The students were able to witness first hand how a modern business environment operates and how communication is key to everything that happens.



Year 10 and 11 students were fortunate to be joined by representatives from Dell Technologies through the week via a very sophisticated on-line platform. The students were able to gain an insight into the world of work in the technology sector and to take part in a question and answer session to find out what qualifications and soft skills they need to secure careers in the sector.



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Futures week culminated with our Careers Fayre attended by representatives of local businesses, apprenticeship providers, colleges, 6th Forms, the armed forces and many other public sector employers. The event was open to all students and their parents and was very well attended and appreciated by all.



CONNECTING WITH SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

CAREER MARK AWARD

Over the last academic year, the phrase 'recovery curriculum' has become commonplace. Whilst all of us in the Trust have been thinking hard, and working hard, to close gaps in learning, the Curriculum Strategic Development Group (SDG) has also been considering how we can improve the wider aspects of the curriculum – the skills and knowledge we want all students to gain through their education in our Trust.

The two main areas of focus have been careers and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE). With the jobs market ravaged and the future for employment uncertain thanks to the pandemic, young people more than ever need help with making the right career decisions. The SDG has been hard at work ensuring we meet, and exceed, the thresholds for strong careers provision, called the Gatsby benchmarks. We are pleased to report that all academies in the Trust will secure the Career Mark award as a measure of how effective Careers is across all academies. The Career Mark award has already been secured at EA in November, Fairfax and Smiths Wood have begun

their Career Mark applications, with Bournville not far behind! We anticipate the award to be in place at all academies by December 2022.

Our RSE provision continues to go from strength to strength as a big part of the SDG's work has been to share the best practice recognised by our recent Ofsted inspection and ensure our policies and practice are commonplace and simple.

We will, of course, continue to explore ways to support all the young people we serve – an interesting (although not too recent) article and podcast on the recovery curriculum is below – well worth a read or listen as we think about our next steps for September 2022!

<https://www.evidenceforlearning.net/recoverycurriculum/#mentalhealth>

MR ANDREW WRIGHT | SDG - CURRICULUM



CONNECTING WITH SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

MATHS

There is no question that the pandemic has had an impact on education. It has been suggested by the EEF that “the attainment gap will widen most in mathematics and for younger children”, with the BBC reporting that numeracy levels in primary schools have fallen from “79.1% in 2018/19 to 66.9% last year”. This will continue to impact our students whether in primary, when they join us in September or those that are currently in secondary school education.

Not only has the pandemic impacted our young people, the Bank of England's chief economist argues that numeracy skills and “maths is more essential than ever”. The potential hit to household finances could lead to a numeracy crisis. Numeracy skills are not held in as high esteem as literacy skills amongst the public. It is well-evidenced that numeracy and financial literacy are intimately interlinked. Without confidence in numbers, it is very difficult for people to navigate their finances, whether it is drawing up a weekly balance sheet of incomings and outgoings, or understanding the annual percentage rate (APR) on their loans. Therefore, it is even more imperative that we ensure we are providing our students the opportunity to not only develop their literacy skills, but their numeracy skills too.

I want to thank the maths teams across the Trust for their tireless efforts and continued attempts this year to close these huge gaps in student knowledge and skills and ensuring they are preparing our students to succeed in their future education and employment when they leave school.

MISS SHARA KAY-DAVIES | LEAD PRACTITIONER MATHS



CONNECTING WITH SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

UPDATE FROM THE BEHAVIOUR AND ATTENDANCE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT GROUP

The Behaviour and Attendance Strategic Development Group is one of a number of groups set up this year aimed at increasing cross-Trust discussion and collaboration. Like the other Strategic Development Groups we have three key areas of focus, but due to the wide scope of our work we have taken a research and development approach and will be working on three smaller research and development projects as outlined below:

1. A cross Trust review of the effective use of internal exclusion and how this can be used to reduce suspensions in schools

All pupils in a school benefit when behaviour is good. High standards of behaviour are important in helping children to feel safe and learn well, and while we recognise the need to focus on promoting positive behaviour, helping to build self-discipline and encouraging respect for others, schools also need sanctions to deter pupils from misbehaving.

One such deterrent, as advised by the Department for Education, is the use of internal exclusion or suspension. A child who gets into serious trouble at school can be suspended for a fixed period of time. Schools can suspend a child if:

- they have seriously broken school rules
- allowing them to stay in school would seriously harm their education or welfare, or the education or welfare of other pupils

However, as a Strategic Development Group we have posed the question: is the use of suspensions an effective deterrent? This has led to the significant piece of work we are carrying out to establish alternative strategies to supporting children who are not meeting the agreed and acceptable standard of conduct within school.

As group we are combining research of national practices, with a group review of each of our schools' internal exclusion processes to determine the most effective uses of internal exclusion to improve student behaviour and re-engage them with school. This project will culminate in all schools across the Trust making better use of shared strategies, with reduced use of suspensions.

2. A cross Trust project to investigate the best attendance strategies to engage families and encourage students to attend school consistently.

In the last edition of FMAT Connect you will have read the Trust Pastoral Lead's article about attendance. It outlined that it was announced last month that 'The DfE is consulting on more prescriptive absence rules, ordering schools to be 'proactive' and councils to use their 'full range of legal powers''. Education secretary, Nadhim Zahawi, said the proposals will "end the postcode lottery of how attendance is managed in different schools and parts of the country, and make sure every child and family gets the best possible support to attend school as regularly as possible".

As a Trust we are not going to wait for the new 'absence rules' that might come, we are going to take proactive action now! This is the basis of the Behaviour and Attendance Strategic Development Group's second project.

This project is currently in the research phase which includes investigating national data and trends, combined with an evaluation of Trust wide strategies and their effectiveness. This will lead to the identification of the most effective attendance strategies which will be trialled in the summer term – particularly in the run up to school holidays. We hope, not only to see increased attendance and engagement with school, but also to create a positive buzz around all schools in the run-up to the holidays.



CONNECTING WITH SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

UPDATE FROM THE BEHAVIOUR AND ATTENDANCE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT GROUP

3. Across Trust project, in collaboration with the charity Evelyn's Gift, to support families with food and furniture in the current climate of rising costs

The number of children in poverty is set to reach five million this year. This means young people around you are going to school hungry, feeling self-conscious by wearing an old uniform, or missing out on activities with friends. These young people have to work extra hard to stay happy, motivated and focused on the future.

In short, child poverty means parents can't afford the basics of food, clothing and shelter.

There are millions of children living in poverty who have at least one employed parent. Low paid jobs and zero-hour contracts mean many working families live hand to mouth. The Covid-19 crisis - loss of jobs, closure of schools, bigger bills - will have pushed even more over the edge.

But being from a poor background shouldn't hold a child back. As a Trust we work so all families can afford to keep their children healthy, happy and hopeful, even when money is tight. This is the foundation of the work that the Strategic development Group for Behaviour and Attendance are doing in collaboration with the amazing charity, Evelyn's Gift.

The charity Evelyn's Gift was formed in 2014 to do something positive in memory Evelyn Mary Smith, who passed away suddenly in September 2013, aged just seven.

The aims of the charity are two-fold: to provide little acts of kindness to people in need and to train as many people as possible in CPR and life-support skills.

The idea behind the 'little acts of kindness' is to do thoughtful and kind things that can make a big difference to people's lives but often lack funding. The charity support families in poverty by providing essential items such as school shoes and uniform. They also provide essential toiletries and underwear for rough sleepers and vulnerably housed people.

Evelyn's Gift has already provided the Trust's schools with toiletries for our young people and they provide a great deal of support for our food banks. We aim to build on this relationship with a family cooking project whereby families in need, and specifically where this is a barrier to school attendance, will be given the ingredients required to batch-cook family meals which can then be taken home, having been cooked in school with the support of our teams. We are even hoping to provide some families with the freezers and microwaves needed at home to support this.

As a Strategic Development Group we are excited by all three of these research development projects and look forward to evaluating the impact in the summer!

MRS KAREN CORNELL | TRUST PASTORAL LEAD



CONNECTING WITH SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AT FMAT

The FMAT Trust Professional Learning Strategic Development Group (SDG) have been working across our academies to develop our proposed career stage professional learning offer for introduction in 2022/2023.

The draft was presented to the School Improvement Group and the SDG greatly appreciated their feedback.

The career stage plan will include a range of programmes for those undertaking roles within FMAT and those that have career aspirations of progressing within our team. We are looking forward to sharing the overview with you in coming weeks. We are also looking forward to sharing the Trust's apprenticeship offer in the which will include a broad range of options for support staff to upskill and add to their qualifications.

The SDG were pleased to read and discuss the Education Endowments research on what makes effective teacher CPD, and were happy to note that much of the practice and the named 'mechanisms' are in place in our coaching and developmental drop-ins across our FMAT Academies.

As we move forwards, the professional learning leads will be receiving training on using the National College to support bespoke training in each academy; please look out for our emails from both National College and your professional learning lead to make sure you are utilising this resource to upskill yourself and get the most out of professional learning at FMAT!

MRS DEBORAH BUNN | PRINCIPAL | FAIRFAX ACADEMY



CONNECTING WITH SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

SUPPORTING WITH LANGUAGE BARRIERS

The Covid 19 pandemic has affected education. Alongside the exciting pastoral work being carried out by Leaders on the SDG for behaviour and attendance we have also had a focus this half term on supporting families with language barriers which often make it hard for them to engage with our schools effectively. For 15% of the children in our Trust English is a second language. For 600 of our students their first language is one of the following:

Panjabi	Urdu
Romanian	Arabic
Bengali	Polish
Somali	Italian
French	Persian/Farsi
Spanish	Pashto/Pakhto
Kurdish	

Nearly 7,000 languages are spoken in the world today. It's the norm for several different linguistic groups to live in the same country. However, a country's linguistic diversity is rarely reflected in its school system. Approximately 221 million school-aged children are estimated to be speakers of local languages – languages that are used in communities and families, but are not recognised in schools or official settings.

Children learn to copy and often memorise the words and numbers, but don't understand them and can't apply them usefully. In these situations, many children drop out of school altogether, while others fail their examinations and spend years repeating.

Our schools know that Children cannot learn if they do not understand the language of their teacher

or their textbooks, which is why they are proficient in making sure that they put in place a range of support to help children with language barriers to engage with learning.

However, what many schools across the country forget is that it is very difficult for families to engage with and support the school and their child's education if they are unable to understand the school systems and communications due to language barriers. I recently attended an Academy Associate Behaviour Review Panel where the chair of the panel was able to speak fluent Urdu to the mother attending. This was such a moving and powerful event to witness as, having previously not understood what the issues were with her child (as he was her main translator) she was finally able to fully offer her support to the school and engage with the staff. She was empowered! The staff, in turn, were able to show their appreciation to her.

With families that do not speak English as a first language, the first step to overcome communication barriers is to address language issues. Schools should provide interpreters and translators as needed for parent/caregiver-teacher meetings instead of using students to translate for their families.

Bilingual staff can also act as intermediaries between families and teachers. Research shows that having an interpreter serving as a bridge between teachers and parents can be determinant in the success of parent-teacher communication.

With this in mind, in the coming weeks, our schools will be investigating and implementing strategies to provide as many supportive measures as we can, including interpreters at meetings and formal hearings, so that our families are able to feel supported and heard.

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 BUSINESS SUPPORT

GRAPHIC DESIGN

WEBSITE LANDING PAGE VIDEOS

The Executive Team asked me to research options for landing page videos on our Academy websites. After receiving quotes from three companies, I presented the findings at the ETM and a decision was made for Reach Solutions to provide the video service. We currently work with Reach for our digital marketing campaigns and these new videos can be utilised in social media as well as the websites. I have also worked with their videographer, Simon Teasdale in last year's video for Smith's Wood Open Evening.

Our first day of filming was at Fairfax on 28th March and we had a very successful day. Luckily the sun made an appearance after a very misty start to the day enabling the drone to be put to good use. Planning is key, and this was done really well by the Fairfax staff enabling us to get lots of varied footage which will be edited down into a 60-90 second video for the website and a 30 second version for social media.

I'm looking forward to receiving the first draft of the video and using the same planning format across our other academies.

KEELEY CLARKE | GRAPHIC DESIGNER



FINANCE



I am delighted to say that I have recently been appointed as the new Procurement Officer for our Trust moving from my role as Finance Assistant.

I have worked for the Trust now for two years, within that time I have seen many positive changes. At the start of my employment (June 2020) the COVID pandemic was rife and as well as learning a new place of work I was working from home as we all were.

Soon into my post I was maintaining the purchase orders for all five entities which is quite a challenge, my objective is to ensure all schools have their goods in a timely fashion.

Then came the implementation of Zahara (Sept 21) which I supported Gemma Wyle with the set up. This was a huge change and moved us to a solution that captured orders in a process that was more effective for the whole Trust and importantly made our order process paperless.

Now as the Procurement Officer I am facing new exciting challenges, ensuring contractual information is correct and up to date and ensuring best value for money for the Trust. I am really passionate about Procurement and I am eager to get going with my new role to further enhance what we currently do. Always in the forefront of my mind is compliance and value for money, my role will be to ensure we obtain the best value of goods and resources in order to maximise what we offer to our students in the most effective way.

I look forward to speaking to you all and meeting you in the not so distant future.

Kind Regards

DEBBIE MOORE | PROCUREMENT OFFICER

CONNECTING WITH STAFF REWARDS

PERKBOX - THE STAFF REWARDS PROGRAMME

As an employee of Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust, we offer you a staff rewards system called Perkbox.

Perkbox features discounts on goods and services, monthly free prize draws, wellbeing services, and either a free cup of coffee from Cafe Nero, or a free sausage roll from Greggs each month!

Perkbox is an on line platform, accessible [here](#), but you can download the app if you have a smart phone. If you do not have an account yet, just click the below.

Perkbox offers instant savings, such as 10% off Apple products, 6% off Argos, 8% off ASOS, and that's just the A's.

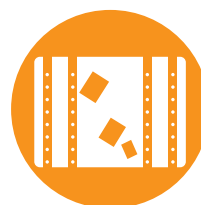
You can buy digital vouchers to spend in supermarkets, such as Asda, Tesco, Marks & Spencer, and the digital vouchers are great for big ticket purchases, such as 7.5% off PC World.

Finally, you can link your credit/debit card to get instant savings in some restaurants, which may be useful once they open back up.



I want to sign up to Perkbox!

Just click [here](#) to complete a form, to request an account



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INTEGRITY.
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