

# SIGMA NEWS

For Students, Parents and Carers of The Sigma Trust

Greater than the sum of its parts



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE!

- St Helena Ofsted is Good
- Online safety tips for parents
- Elections held at juniors
- Our teachers up for awards
- Millions spent on building improvements
- Football match in student's memory

# Welcome...



Welcome to our latest round-up of the key events and successes within the Sigma Trust over the last six months.

The Trust has now been established for 18 months and in that time it has been able to create a really strong identity in the area. You will have seen the new

logo that has been developed and been rolled out across the Trust to help establish that identity.

Over the last few weeks, it has been a busy period of Ofsted inspections. St Helena was visited just before Christmas and had a really positive report which retains their Good across the board. The report has

now been published and really demonstrates the strengths within the school. Many congratulations to all staff for their hard work in achieving this outcome.

This issue of Sigma News highlights some fantastic achievements of our students. It demonstrates the wide range of activities taking place beyond the traditional curriculum and beyond the normal classroom lessons.

It was great to see the first Sigma 7 competition taking place in which teams of students from across all five secondary schools competed in creating world-changing ideas.

Congratulations to the winners from Harwich and Dovercourt High School and many thanks to Simon Parkinson from St Helena for creating the event. A video of Sigma 7 is available on the Sigma Trust website, [sigmatrust.org.uk](http://sigmatrust.org.uk)

**Jeff Brindle, CEO, the Sigma Trust**

## St Helena School is Good – official

Ofsted inspectors have confirmed every aspect of St Helena School remains Good.

An inspection carried out in December highlighted strengths in the effectiveness of leadership and management, quality of teaching, learning and assessment, personal development, behaviour and welfare, plus outcomes for students.

Inspectors commented on the "good quality of education" provided, that "teachers plan engaging lessons" and that students' "attitudes to learning are positive" and that they are "keen to do well".

Zoe King, executive head, said: "While I am delighted that Ofsted again judged the school to be Good, we will always remain focused on improving the quality of the education we provide for our students, so they and our school continues to go from strength to strength."

The previous inspection, in June 2014, also found the school to be Good. It joined the Sigma Trust in September 2016.

Jeff Brindle, Sigma Trust CEO, said: "This is a fantastic report which highlights the real strengths that exist at St Helena School. I congratulate the executive headteacher, her leadership team, staff, students and parents on their combined efforts to ensure St Helena remains a Good school delivering a high quality of education for the community.

"As a partnership of seven schools, Sigma will focus on the few areas for improvement that need to be addressed to further enhance these achievements."



**We are  
the Sigma  
family...**



**Thomas Lord Audley School**



# Essex Teaching Award finalists

Four teachers from Sigma Trust have been shortlisted as finalists in the Essex Teaching Awards.



**Sue Crotty**, from Clacton County High School, is in line for the lifetime achievement award. Her journey with the school began in 1970 as a first year student, before becoming a CCHS parent and joining the staff in 1993.

As well as being reprographics manager, she also manages midday assistants and supports the admin team.



**Helena Boast**, of The Thomas Lord Audley School, is shortlisted as secondary headteacher of the year. She has spent 20 years in leadership positions to improve life chances of young people in Colchester.

When she took over headship at TLA in 2013, the school was in Special Measures.

By focusing on teaching and learning, the school was recognised as the most improved in Essex in 2016 and secured the school's first Good Ofsted report the same year.



**Sarah Cross**, from Harwich and Dovercourt High School, is nominated for the secondary teacher of the year award. She joined the school as an English teacher in 2012, having trained through the NETT programme. In 2016, she coached Year 11 students to the national finals of the Rotary Youth Speaks competition and last year, she was accredited as a lead practitioner.



**Beverly Wrobel**, of St Helena School, is shortlisted for the teaching assistant of the year award.

She has been learning support assistant for students with special educational needs since 1994.

Beverly has taken a number of courses to help her students, sharing this knowledge across the rest of her team.

Jeff Brindle, Sigma Trust CEO, said: "It is fantastic to see so many colleagues being recognised for their excellent work and very pleasing that four of our schools have got through to the finals in four different categories. I wish them every success."

Winners will be announced on Thursday February 8 at Hamptons Sports & Leisure Centre, in Chelmsford.

## Essex Book Awards develop reading



Keen readers took part in activities as part of the launch of Essex Book Awards.

The students from The Thomas Lord Audley School enjoyed four reading and drama activities to develop their reading.

As part of the day, students looked at extracts from the six books published for the awards and interpreted them into drama performances.

Yasin Erkul and Joe Blair, Year 10, said: "After experiencing the day, we can confidently say the Essex Book Awards has improved participants' attitude towards reading and will definitely have a positive impact on their ability to be a team player in a group."

## Young artists develop new skills

Creative students from St Helena School visited Colchester Institute to brush up on their screen printing and relief printing skills.

Year 9 students were taught the techniques before giving it a go on their own pieces of artwork. They were challenged to produce work based on the theme of beginning and / or endings and so looked at skulls.

Serena Curtis and Molly Heath said: "We enjoyed both activities. They seemed strange ways of printing at first, but gradually they got easier.

"We learned lots of new techniques during this experience. It will definitely help us to understand the different mediums used in art."



### NEWSBITE

## Infant and junior form new partnership

A new quad of schools has been formed through the Colchester Consortium.

Both Monkwick Infant School and Nursery and Monkwick Junior School have joined the group, which also includes Kendall Primary and St John's Green Primary.

The new partnership has already seen a programme of peer reviews start at Monkwick Infant before Christmas.

Teachers within the quad are visiting each other's schools to moderate and to pick up on good practise which can then be shared.

The aim of the link-up this year is for each school to work together to improve pupil outcomes in writing.

# Keeping safe online with new gadgets

As no doubt many students received new gadgets over the Christmas period, e-safety co-ordinator Paul Child has issued some guidance for parents.

Mr Child, from The Stanway School, said: "We hear daily about fake news, cyberbullying, sexting, the dangers of contact with strangers through various social media sites, but little thought is given to contact with strangers through online gaming. Make sure your children are aware of this potential contact and that they know what to do when things go wrong."

Some guidelines when setting gaming ground rules...

- Don't deny access to games
- Use the PEGI system when selecting games
- If PEGI is not available, check YouTube for in-game play and assess the game for yourself
- Ask your teenager to write a page proving the game is suitable. Even do a joint research project
- Have at least one day off games per week
- Insist homework and household jobs are completed before gaming
- Restrict gaming to one to two hours per day during the week
- Have non-screen time at weekends
- Insist on at least one other non-screen based hobby
- Allow for some variation in the rules

## Sigma 7 – first cross-Trust competition

World-changing ideas were the focus of the first cross-Trust competition.

Sigma Trust teamed up with 7billionideas to launch entrepreneurial contest Sigma 7.



The five secondary schools within the Trust competed with their ideas which could change the world, using prototypes, posters and a pitch to win over the judges.

Two teams from each school – Thomas Lord Audley, Stanway, St Helena, Clacton County High and Harwich and Dovercourt High – battled it out at the University of Essex, setting up stalls and waiting their turn to give their presentations.

The overall winners were Harwich and Dovercourt High School girls with their anti-malaria wristband. Their prize is to

have their product featured in a book written with them as the characters to be sold on Amazon.



### NEWSBITE

#### It's panto, but not as we know it

Pupils enjoyed a traditional Christmas pantomime without leaving their school.

The nursery and reception pupils at Monkwick Infant School and Nursery were able to get in the festive spirit when a travelling theatre company came to them. Theatrebugs visited the school and performed a theatre show about Captain Christmas the Superhero and his search for Father Christmas.

Along with characters Pablo Penguin, Easter Bunny, Rudolph and the Tooth Fairy, pupils were able to help save the day. The older pupils visited the Mercury Theatre for their annual pantomime.

### NEWSBITE

#### Taking the lead on leadership

Head students and student leaders at Harwich and Dovercourt High School completed a masterclass in leadership. Dame Lin Homer has run organisations with thousands of employees, including Birmingham City Council and HM Revenue and Customs.

With her roots firmly in Dovercourt, she volunteered to speak with students through the Speakers for Schools programme to pass on tips on leading teams.

During a 90-minute workshop, students were given insight into applying for college and university, pursuing public service careers, working with finance, the law and becoming an employer. Assistant head Simon Garnham said: "This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to meet someone who has worked in the highest levels of government."

## Girls win national tech competition

Creative girls from Clacton County High School were awarded for their efforts in a national competition.

Sixty Year 8 students took part in the TechGirls Challenge to open their eyes to careers within the STEM – science, technology, engineering and maths – industries.

The girls were tasked with designing a lifestyle app, with one group of students – who designed an app for a DJ to mix, produce and share their own music – selected as finalists. Molly, Ruth, Elizabeth and Jane attended the awards



ceremony at Imperial College London where they were awarded for the Most Creative Project.

The ceremony included inspirational talks from top women in business and engineering who spoke about their desire to succeed.



# Millions of pounds spent on buildings

Improvement works costing millions of pounds are being carried out on school buildings across the Sigma Trust.

A pot of £1.2m in School Condition Allocation is to be spent across the Trust, with roofing repairs at Monkwick Infant School, St Helena School and Thomas Lord Audley School and fencing at Monkwick Junior School.

On top of that, £1.1m has been spent on replacing windows

and repairing roofing at Harwich and Dovercourt High School, as well as painting the frontage of the school building.

Work has also now started at Monkwick Junior School where a two-storey extension and remodelling project will make way for a Special Educational Needs area, a studio and space for food, science and design and technology lessons. The new building is due to open in September.

## New learning spaces have been created at juniors

While building work goes on to expand Monkwick Junior School, a revamp of the existing building has improved learning spaces.

Various library areas have now been set up around the school, enabling pupils to access books or work in small groups when needed.

Rebecca McCutcheon, headteacher, said: "We wanted to improve some of the shared areas of the school and make them more dedicated, well thought out areas.

"As a result, we now have a tidy library space upstairs with a table for working at, a new mini library in Year 3 so books they need are close by and an entire room in the old library – now called the conservatory – which can now be used for intervention and group work.

"The work has really improved the look of the school."



### NEWSBITE

## Students get on their bikes

Young students got on their bikes to brush up on their road safety awareness.

Year 7 students at Clacton County High School took part in Bikeability sessions to gain their Level 3 qualification.

The session began with students checking the roadworthiness of their bikes, before they ventured onto the road with qualified Bikeability instructors.

They spent three hours learning new skills and gaining knowledge on how to safely negotiate complex junctions, including roundabouts, crossroads and those controlled by traffic lights.



## History lesson takes to the road

Year 1 pupils took to the road to delve deeper into their history topic.

The pupils from Monkwick Infant School visited Ipswich Transport Museum to compare past and present transport, as well as learning to use different adjectives to describe the vehicles.

Pupils were given a guided tour and taken on a double decker bus during the visit, where they were given old money to buy bus tickets.



Class teacher Chrissie Smith said: "The children had fun trying to work out which was the front and which was the back of a double ended tram!

"They especially enjoyed seeing the fire engines and were given helmets to wear.

"They also enjoyed playing with an electric train set."

## Getting a buzz out of reading

The whole of Year 7 at The Stanway School was given the gift of their own reading book at Christmas.

As part of the Bookbuzz reading scheme, students were given a list of 17 books from which to choose one they would like to take home and keep.

Ben Elbourne, English teacher and reading co-ordinator, said: "The idea of this project is to promote reading and to encourage a love of reading.

"The students have been incredibly excited and have been asking after their books since they chose them."



# TV celebrity judges photo competition

Budding photographers had their work judged by children's TV celebrity Naomi Wilkinson.

The presenter of Channel 5's Milkshake and BBC's Naomi's Nightmares of Nature visited Harwich and Dovercourt High School to judge the Amazing Angles photo competition.

The presenter gave a talk about her career in television, telling students how she started out as a Butlins Red Coat before getting her break.



She said: "I had a wonderful day. There were so many excellent entries which fulfilled the Amazing Angles criteria and it was a real treat to be asked to hand out the prizes to the very deserving winners.

"I'm delighted this school is encouraging students to be creative, imaginative and tap into their artistic skills with this competition."

The competition, open to HDHS students and staff and local primary pupils, challenged entrants to take photos from an unusual angle or perspective.

## Aliens find lessons out of this world

A lesson on planets and the solar system saw pupils take a leap into space.

Thanks to a visit by Creative Space, Year 5 pupils at Monkwick Junior School were able to take a step inside a dome where space was brought to life.

Pupils watched a film called Aliens and listened to a talk on out of space inside the dome.

Mark Visagie, assistant headteacher and Year 5 teacher, said: "Some segments were incredibly realistic.

"Pupils made space badges which included their mission for the day, as well as making clay aliens.

"This was a worthwhile activity which immersed pupils in their learning."



## WWI brought to life with trip to Belgium

History students from St Helena School took a trip to the trenches of Belgium to understand more about WWI.

Serena Curtis and Emma Mitchell, Year 10, said: "We also visited many memorials during our trip. There are 50,000 German graves at Langermarde and 12,000 British graves at Tyne Cot. There is also a memorial containing 10,000 graves, which is the biggest on the Somme.

"One of the best memorials we visited was the Thiepval monument. It was built by the British and is the biggest war memorial in the world. It holds 400 graves of unknown men. In the evening, there was a ceremony at the Menin Gate. The walls were covered with the names of those who fought in WWI.

"The trip was a great way to understand more about what happened during WWI."



Students also walked to Sunken Lane, where the famous photo of the First Lancashire Fusiliers was taken before they went over the top during the battle of the Somme.

### NEWSBITE

#### Making m-athletes out of pupils

A new system is helping to exercise the mathematical brain at home.

Monkwick Infant School has introduced Mathletics, an IT based support system for school based and home learning.

Pupils will now be able to access a full set of curriculum activities from outside of the classroom, in line with the primary maths curriculum.

Parents and pupils attended separate assemblies to learn more about Mathletics and to set up their individual login and password.

### NEWSBITE

#### Charitable community keeps on giving

Despite having raised more than £25,000 for charity, the community of The Stanway School keeps on giving.

As well as raising money for house charities, students and their families collected packages at Christmas for Colchester Foodbank.

They donated a total of 158.8kgs for children and families facing food and financial crisis.

Scott Holder, co-headteacher, said: "We were overwhelmed with the generosity of our school community. This year, we collected double the amount of food compared to last year, which we hope went a small way to help families and individuals to celebrate Christmas."



# Pupils go to the polls

Democracy Week saw pupils at Monkwick Junior School put themselves forward as school council candidates.

Assemblies were held to explain democracy to pupils, before pupils designed their own manifestos and a polling station was set up in school.

Two pupils from each class – six from

Year 3, six from Year 4, four from Year 5 and four from Year 6 – were selected as school councillors and awarded their badges.

Mark Visagie, assistant headteacher, said: "This is about enabling pupils to have a say in what happens in their school."



## Making the community smile

A new group aiming to make the community smile has completed another project.

Students in Year 7, 8 and 9 at Harwich and Dovercourt High School formed the Windsor Community Smile team with the mission of helping those in the community.

Three students from the team spent a morning planting bulbs in Cliff Park and in flower beds they restored along the promenade.

Paul Day, head of Windsor Community, said: "Students were a credit to themselves, to Windsor and to the school showing just how much the students of the area value their surroundings."

The project comes after the team, who are also supporting Essex Air Ambulance, filled shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child for families in Africa.

## Practising for the big job interview

Real-life employers put Year 11 students through their paces in mock job interviews.

The students from The Thomas Lord Audley School sat interviews with The Rotary Club of Colchester Forum, Greater Anglia, Aon Benfield and Ellisons Solicitors.

Students were able to demonstrate their confidence and ability to cope under pressure ahead of their upcoming 16+ option interviews.

Head girl Emma Banks said: "I would like to congratulate my peers on their performance. No matter how many interviews somebody sits, it is always nerve-wracking, but all students handled the pressure amazingly."



## STEM racing car lecture

Physics lecturer Dr Baker gave the racing car team at Clacton County High School an insight into the transfer of energy.

The F24 racing team are looking at how they can reduce the amount of energy lost during a race.

Retired lecturer Dr Baker advised students on possible ways they could improve the car's performance; discussing how the performance of the motor and battery alters at various temperatures and how the team can use that to their advantage.

They examined the effects of wind resistance on the car at different speeds to develop the best racing strategies for different road and weather conditions.

The lecture inspired the team to build their own wind tunnel to practice driving using different settings.

# Football match in student's memory

A memorial football match took place at The Stanway School in Alexander Launder's memory.

The school competed against Thomas Lord Audley, Gilberd, Colchester High and William de Ferrers Schools, with Thomas Lord Audley beating Stanway's B team 3-1 in the final.

Ex-student and Colchester United footballer Sammie Szmodics presented the prizes, including the 2017 Alex Launder Memorial Tournament trophy.

The winners have also been invited to Florence Park, Colchester United's training ground, to receive a free



one-hour training session with the first team coach.

An All-Stars match was also held to remember Alexander on the tenth anniversary of his death, with past and present school staff in the Stanway All-Stars taking on friends of both Alexander and his brother Harry in the Launder All-

Stars. The final score was 3-1 to the Launder All-Stars.

Scott Holder, co-headteacher, said: "Thank you to everyone who supported both events and helped to ensure it was a wonderful two days to remember Alexander."

## Rugby team are coastal champs



The Year 8 rugby team from Harwich and Dovercourt High School are the North East Essex Coastal Schools champions. The team were crowned champions after beating Tendring Technology College in a highly competitive final.

## Netball champions five years running

Netball teams from Clacton County High School (CCHS) have been leading the way this season.

Schools from across the district gathered at the school for the Coastal Sports Partnership netball finals. Year 7, 8 and 11 teams from CCHS made it to the finals, with Year 11 beating Colne Community School 15-10 to retain the title they have held since they were in Year 7. Year 7 and 8 were crowned runners-up.



The sport's success has resulted in three Year 11 students passing their final exams and practical assessments as part of the Netball England Officials qualification. Chloe Chadwick, Taylor Albert and Millie Easton are now qualified to umpire netball matches up to adult Division 4 standard; they join Jade Leonard and Emily Lonsdale who passed their exams earlier this year.

## Professional basketball game extends learning



Keen PE students watched a National League Cup basketball game featuring Essex Leopards. The group of 40 Year 9 to 11 students from St Helena School watched the game against Nottingham Hoods at Brentwood Leisure Centre.

PE teacher Adriano Staiano said: "This fantastic opportunity enabled students to gain a further understanding of game rules and witness first hand a high standard of play to extend their subject knowledge of basketball.

"There was also an opportunity for students to be coached by the Essex Leopards players before the game. Students fully engaged in the coaching session and have taken their improved knowledge and skills into their GCSE PE practical lessons."

## Students excel at cross country

The district cross country tournament saw sporty students from The Thomas Lord Audley School excel.

A total of 32 students from the school took part in the event, with entrants from each of the year groups. The Year 7 girls came third overall. All four athletes placed in the top ten earned a place in the Essex X-Country Championships.

