



# SIGMA NEWS

For Students, Parents and Carers of The Sigma Trust

Greater than the sum of its parts



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE!

- New CEO appointed for the Trust
- Our schools adapt in lockdown
- School is Good, Ofsted confirms
- Donation of devices helps disadvantaged
- Staff rally to provide PPE to NHS
- New school team are football champs

# Welcome...

Welcome to what, for me, will be the last edition of Sigma News that I will introduce. It is also a very unique edition. Usually, it is full of celebration of what has been achieved in the 12 schools across the Trust over the past six months. Not surprisingly, this edition is dominated by how we have all been coping with the Covid-19 pandemic.

The last four months has been a challenging time for all. As parents, you have had to cope with supporting your children with their home learning since schools were forced to close for all but a few pupils. I can only imagine how difficult that has been for many of you. So much of the work would have required working online with limited access, in some cases.

Some schools have been able to lend out IT equipment to support this and some primary pupils benefitted from the Amazon Fire tablets that were donated to Sigma from Teach First. The long promised additional laptops from the government did not arrive until the end of June, but hopefully that would have provided additional support.

Hopefully, some of you might have enjoyed teaching your children and might have been inspired to look for a career in teaching; if so, see the information at



the back of the magazine.

From early June, schools were able to welcome back wider groups of pupils, but these had to be limited to those year groups identified by the government. Despite what is often stated in the press, schools have been open throughout the pandemic ensuring that children of key workers were still able to come to school.

Those staff who were not in school continued to ensure good quality work was provided for those at home. Thank you for the positive comments which schools have received, particularly in regard to the live lessons which have been delivered.

Finally, I must end by thanking you for all of your support since your school joined The Sigma Trust. I believe over the past four years we have created a unique partnership built on collaboration between schools, not on unnecessary competition, with the key aim of no child left behind.

I know that Sigma will continue to go from strength to strength under Lyn Wright's leadership and I wish her every success.

All the best for the future and I hope you are able to enjoy a relaxing summer holiday.

**Jeff Brindle, CEO, The Sigma Trust**

## WE ARE THE SIGMA FAMILY...



# CEO retires after 40 years in education

In the midst of a national school lockdown is not how anyone anticipates retiring from a lifelong career in education.

But, for Jeff Brindle, that has been the reality of his final weeks as CEO of The Sigma Trust after 40 years in teaching.

Mr Brindle, who will continue to work for the Trust two days per week, set up the Trust after stepping down as full-time headteacher at Clacton County High School in 2015.

The Trust now looks after 12 primary and secondary schools in north Essex, making it the largest multi-academy trust working solely within the county.

He said: "What I am most proud of is that I can genuinely say that every school is stronger now than when they joined Sigma.

Huge credit goes to all staff within those schools, of course. But, the fact we have been able to work together and provide additional capacity and support has been particularly evident to me in what we have seen during this crisis.

"It has been my job to establish the Trust and grow it for the last five years, making it the strongest it can be. Whatever happens, the Trust has always been about turning education into something that's not about a single school, but about the whole community."



## THE SIGMA TRUST JOURNEY...

SEPTEMBER 2016	The Sigma Trust formed by Clacton County High School, St Helena School, The Stanway School, Thomas Lord Audley School, Monkwick Infant School and Nursery, Monkwick Junior School
JUNE 2017	Harwich and Dovercourt High School joined the Trust
APRIL 2018	The Sigma Trust announced as the preferred sponsor for a brand-new school to be built on the Alderman Blaxill School site
JANUARY 2019	Colne Community School and College and Philip Morant School and College rebrokered and joined the Trust
SEPTEMBER 2019	The newly-built Paxman Academy opened on the Alderman Blaxill School site
OCTOBER 2019	Alton Park Junior School and Holland Park Primary School rebrokered and joined the Trust

## Former head of education for Essex to take over the reins



Director of standards Lyn Wright is being promoted into the role of CEO from September.

Mrs Wright joined The Sigma Trust in February 2019 as director of standards, having worked in secondary schools and pupil referral units for 22 years and, more recently, Local Authority.

She will continue to work closely with retiring CEO Jeff Brindle after September, when Mr Brindle takes on a part-time role within the organisation.

Mrs Wright, who previously held the role of head of education and early years for Essex Local Authority, said: "We feel it is a really sensible approach for Jeff to stay on within the Trust as there is an awful lot of anxiety and an awareness there is a lot of change happening due to the Coronavirus that will last for quite some time. This way, we can keep some stability among the

schools and lead the staff through these changing times."

"There will be a lot more short-term focus while we are in this situation with the virus before we can move to the longer-term developments. But, there are things that are business as usual. There are still good things which had been planned that have continued, which provide us with positive priorities. That is nice as it is not just all about Coronavirus."

Projects Mrs Wright and Mr Brindle continue to work on include building and expansion work at their schools and the launch of the Sigma Sixth provision for sixth formers in north Essex.

Mrs Wright is also looking to grow the primary arm of the Trust and develop the organisation in terms of recruitment, retention and career pathways for all staff.

She said: "Sigma is a young Trust that has come a long way in a short amount of time. Now, it is about building on that and taking the Trust into the next phase. I see myself as the next guardian."

## Secondary school remains Good, Ofsted confirms

The Thomas Lord Audley School has been confirmed as a Good school by Ofsted.

Inspectors issued the school with its first report under the new framework in February, after first issuing the same grading in 2016.

The report stated: "This is a supportive school and parents and carers value the work of the school. They speak positively about leaders and of teachers who 'go the extra mile'."

The school is the first within The Sigma Trust to achieve

Good under the new Ofsted framework, in place since September 2019.

Headteacher Helena Boast said: "We have worked hard as a team to ensure our curriculum is ambitious and that students are developed as rounded individuals, as well as achieving excellent exam results.

"Staff are dedicated to supporting our students in achieving their best and the school community was pleased to have this recognised in the inspection."

# Live lessons re-energise students

Teachers have launched live lessons for their students working from home. Clacton County High School is now providing live and pre-recorded lessons to enable students to work directly with their teachers.

Head of school Chris Taylor said:

"Since the start of the live lessons, it has been fantastic and gratifying to hear all of the positive comments that we have been receiving from students and parents on how the live and recorded lessons have rejuvenated students' home study.

"Students have engaged so enthusiastically with these remote lessons. It is obvious that they are happy to hear their teachers' voices again and have teacher-led lessons back, albeit with a major difference!

"Parents and students have been full of praise for staff and how the live lessons have re-energised the children."

# Largescale mural to brighten up school

A lockdown activity challenged students to get creative to help to transform an area of their school

Art and photography students at The Colne Community School and College

were tasked with designing a mural for the school.

The chosen design will be turned into a largescale artwork to be displayed on a wall in the school, giving the artist an

opportunity to leave a legacy behind.

Head of school Steven Crane said: "Students were given creative freedom with the designs, so long as it was themed around The Colne."

# School celebrates its first year

The summer marks the end of the first year of Paxman Academy.

The brand-new school, which opened in September 2019 to its first cohort of Year 7 students, is celebrating becoming a part of the community.

In the first year, the school has –

- hosted the STEM Big Bang event attended by Year 6 pupils
- welcomed Tottenham Hotspur captain and England international player Ledley King who discussed the importance of making good decisions, resilience, working hard and peer pressure

- seen more than 40 students take part in Colchester's Junior Park Run

- hosted a grand opening event, attended by local dignitaries and community members
- put on a Christmas concert and hosted a festive lunch
- donated 130kg of food to Colchester Foodbank
- given students an opportunity to indulge in science, technology, engineering and maths with a STEM enrichment day to celebrate British values and our engineering heritage

Headteacher Carol Anne Moffat



said: "We have achieved so much already and I am immensely proud of our students and staff. Even now, during lockdown, our students continue to amaze and delight me with their continued commitment to work hard and embrace our core ASPIRE values – Aspiration, Success, Perseverance, Integrity, Respect and Empathy.

"We are proud of what we have achieved in the space of a year and look forward to continued success as we welcome new students and staff in September."

# Helping to protect people from Coronavirus

Brothers Rylie and Sam came up with a product to help protect people from contracting Coronavirus.

The Year 7 and 10 students from The Stanway School created the Covid Key, which can be used to open doors, press chip and pin pads and flush public toilets without having to touch them by hand.

The pair put together a business plan to keep

track of orders, donating £1 from each £3 sale to the Tom Bowdidge Youth Cancer Foundation in memory of their late cousin.

Rylie, in charge of production, has been getting up early each day to start the 3D printer which makes the keys.

To order a Covid Key, message the foundation on Facebook via the Tom Bowdidge Youth Cancer Foundation or text 07771 646654.



Photo supplied by Daily Gazette.



# Sigma Sixth prepares to open its doors

The first cohort of students are being welcomed to the new Sigma Sixth Colchester Campus this September.

Building on the foundations of the former Philip Morant Sixth Form

College, the aim is to create a vibrant and progressive sixth form centre. The newly refurbished post-16 provision includes new chairs, new computers and a spacious environment.

Sigma Sixth also includes a new sports college, using the facilities at The Northern Gateway.

Scott Holder, executive headteacher, said: "Our sixth form provision has a proven track record of high achievement and our staff, including a full-time careers advisor, work hard to ensure our young people are ready to move onto the next stage of their education, training or work.

"All students will have the opportunity to carry out a work experience placement at the end of their first year."

- It is not too late to apply to Sigma Sixth. Contact admissions manager Clare Bramwell on [admissions@philipmorant.essex.sch.uk](mailto:admissions@philipmorant.essex.sch.uk) or **01206 545222**.

# Thriving during lockdown learning

School may not be open for everyone and lessons may not look the same, but what has stayed the same is the determination of students to work hard and be the best they can be.

In celebration of what students from The Stanway School have been achieving at home during lockdown, the school collected examples of Lockdown Learning to share around the school community.

Headteacher Jonathan Bland said: "We asked students to email in work they have been proud of and things they have

learnt which have been completely outside of the curriculum.

"We've had some wonderful responses, all on top of the great work they've continued to submit to their teachers through this lockdown period. We are extremely proud of them and their achievements."

During lockdown, students have written lockdown poems, written shape poems, designed cakes, gone on science bug hunts, helped in the community and learnt to use Photoshop to create their own magazines.



## History brings community together

Street parties and singalongs helped to bring families together during lockdown.

During the Coronavirus crisis, pupils at Alton Park Junior School have been taking part in competitions.

To mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day, children were challenged to organise their own party, including making food and decorations and learning the words to We'll Meet Again.

Emma Preston, Year 5 lead, said: "It is

vitaly important to immerse children in events from the past and I felt this was a great opportunity to do so.

"It was lovely to see so many families getting together, making things together and having a nice celebration in beautiful weather, which was lovely to see in this unusual time.

"It brought families together, gave children something to look forward to and hopefully gave them a link with history."

## Reading a popular pastime in lockdown

A reading school has seen an uptake in the pastime among its students during lockdown.

Harwich and Dovercourt High School is a Reading School, starting every lesson with a reading session and including a reading element in homework.

During lockdown, the expectation for students to read for 20 minutes each day has continued – with a survey showing 82 per cent of students are achieving the goal.

Half of all students have said they are reading more during lockdown than normal.

Assistant head Ray Gallagher, head of the English and communication faculty, said: "A

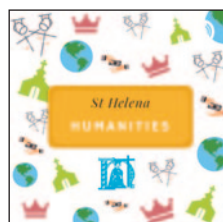
really pleasing takeaway from our survey was that 55 per cent of students highlighted reading as something that has supported them with their anxiety and has helped them to take their mind off concerns and worries."

Authors who have visited the school sent video messages to students to urge them to continue reading for pleasure.

A lockdown reading montage has given students and staff an opportunity to show photos of themselves reading at home and a fortnightly Reading School newsletter gives book recommendations.



## Keeping in contact via podcast



Schools may have been closed to the majority, but one team found a modern way to keep connected with students.

The humanities faculty at St Helena School used their humanities podcast as a way of staying in

touch with the community. One episode, written and produced by Year 9 and 10 students, focused on Black Lives Matter, discussing the history of the racial divide in America and civil rights and shared books, documentaries and films their peers could watch on the issue.

Lizzie Annandale, head of humanities, said: "The podcast was recorded remotely and so we are really proud of what the students produced."

## Technology and music block refurbishment

Creative students will return to school to find enhanced technology and music facilities. The Philip Morant School and College is undergoing a technology and music department refurbishment ahead of September.

In technology, workshops are being reconfigured, providing enlarged workspaces to deliver the new curriculum. Food workshops will include more sinks and cookers, new units and an improved layout.

Dawn Cooke, subject leader technology, said: "We are very excited about these upgrades, which reflect the curriculum change from the traditional woodwork and metal work to that of a subject based on the design process and manufacture of products in all materials."

Multifunctional classrooms in the refurbished music block will enable students to access music technology in every lessons

All classrooms and performance spaces will be linked to maximise the use of all practise rooms, creating a hub.

Gillian Bartle, subject leader music, said: "These improvements will enrich students' learning and provide an opportunity for enthusiastic musicians to thrive and develop their skills."

# Paperboy brightens lives of customers

A thoughtful paperboy cheered up his customers by including pictures inside their morning deliveries. Lewis Gibbins,

Year 10 at The Cone Community School and College, included pictures of rainbows and butterflies to cheer up

his older customers during lockdown. He said: "There is too much doom and gloom and I wanted to cheer them up."

## School rallies to support families at home

From digital devices to food parcels, schools have had to deliver in new ways during the shutdown.

Staff at Monkwick Infant School and Nursery have kept in close contact with families to ensure they have all they need to support children at home.

Headteacher Claire Holmes said: "We have always been at the centre of our community, prided ourselves on our relationships with parents and carers and our 'open door' approach. As we went into lockdown, I knew my team would be ready and dedicated to caring for them in a new role.

"We reached out to our vulnerable families. We spoke to the children and listened to parents. We delivered food parcels. We emptied the school kitchens, providing packed free school meals

to those who needed them until our Trust rapidly came on board with a voucher system to enable parents to get what they needed. We printed and delivered to all those who needed us to. Many families needed food bank vouchers in addition, which we got out in emergency situations when families were suddenly without income."

The school provided families who had no access to the internet with free Kindles, donated by Teach First.

Mrs Holmes said: "Making these deliveries was our way of seeing the children; they waved to us, danced for us and parents shared their circumstances and fears all from a safe distance."



## "As more and more Kindles were collected, more and more children completed online learning for the first time"

Pupils with a lack of access to the internet were able to learn from home, thanks to a donation of devices.

Alton Park Junior School provided pupils with Kindles donated by Teach First.

Emma Preston, Year 5 lead, said: "In the first week of phone calls home, it became clear there were a significant number of children who were unable to engage with

Purple Mash due to a lack of equipment. Virtually all houses had internet, but lacked a suitable device.

"As more and more Kindles were collected, more and more children appeared on Purple Mash for the first time. The children were so excited to be on there.

"Not only will these Kindles have impacted the children's learning, they will have made a big difference to their emotional wellbeing as for some children it will have provided the first safe opportunity to communicate with their friends."



## The importance of working together

A podcast featured Holland Park Primary School and its links with other schools in Colchester.

The Multi Schools Council holds collaborative meetings to break down negative perceptions around special needs and mental health difficulties.

Sarah Edwards, behaviour and wellbeing lead at Holland Park, was invited to take part in a podcast by Council founder Kierran Pearce.

She said: "The podcast was to explain the importance of our work with the Multi Schools Council and to highlight just how much is on offer there.



"I explained about our Inclusion Ambassadors and parent council, our nurture provision which opened in January and the importance of wellbeing for our children with the phased return to school after the Coronavirus outbreak."

Each term, children and young people from mainstream and special schools meet to learn more about each other and to improve school life for those with special educational needs and disabilities.

Listen to the podcast at <https://player.captivate.fm/episode/0e627a9a-c41f-4305-a2e4-f9628e58d609>."

## Watching over the crops from home

Green-fingered pupils continue to watch over crops they planted at school, despite not being on site.

Year 5 pupils at Monkwick Junior School set about growing their own produce as part of the Advantage Curriculum focusing on cultural capital. The aim was to be able to use vegetables they had grown themselves in a meal.

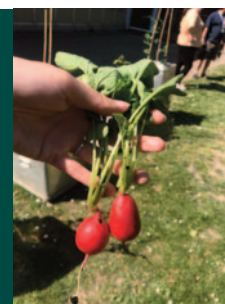
Megan Houghton, admin assistant, said: "This is a great project to enable children to understand where their food comes from and the work involved in growing food.

"The project started in the classrooms, with each Year 5 class having a large vegetable trough. Children sowed the seeds

and labelled each, so they knew what would be growing and where and then took care of the plants. As they were growing in each classroom, children were able to see the shoots start to appear and watered them daily."

Essex Wildlife Trust helped pupils to dig and prepare outside beds and planters for the crops to be moved into. Since lockdown, the children of key workers who have been attending school have helped to water the shoots and replant them as they have got bigger.

Year 5 have been able to keep watch from afar, with photos and updates shared with them online.



Schools across The Sigma Trust used their skills and materials to produce desperately needed personal protection equipment to frontline workers during the Coronavirus outbreak.

## Vital PPE provided to frontline workers by school



A design technology team supported key workers by producing and donating personal protective equipment (PPE).

Technicians at Clacton County High School produced laser cut face visors for nurses and carers, using equipment stocked for lessons and donations from Clacton Rotary Jubilee, staff and their families.

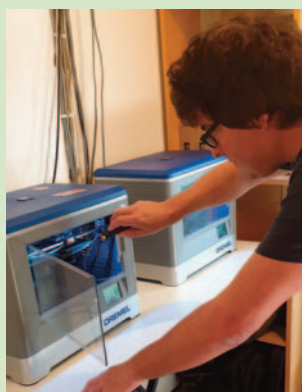
The team produced more than 500 visors for The Oaks Hospital, St Helena Hospice, care homes and Clacton Hospital.

Laura Shukla, St Helena Hospice's head of clinical operations, said: "We are extremely grateful to Clacton County High School for making and donating these masks to St Helena Hospice.

"The benefit of these particular visors is that we are able to clean and reuse them, which is especially helpful right now as we are getting through about 500 facemasks a day.

"It is vital that our staff wear PPE to protect themselves and our patients."

## Home production line set up for PPE



A plea for urgent supplies of personal protection equipment (PPE) saw a family set up their own production line.

William James, senior science technician at St Helena School, was shielding at home when he was approached and asked to help the NHS.

Collecting the 3D printers from school, Mr James and his wife set up a production line in their hallway, producing 2,000

pieces of PPE over five weeks. They received £1,500 in donations online, as well as £220 from Clacton Rotary Club to buy materials.

The face visors were distributed to care homes, schools, nurses, the police and other key workers.

Mr James said: "It was hard work, but it certainly made our time in lockdown fly and gave us a great feeling that we were doing something useful during such strange times."

Leftover funds were distributed between Colchester Foodbank, GO4 Cafe and FaNs Network for their work supporting the community during lockdown.

## Not so secret sewing club



Teachers made hundreds of face coverings as part of an initiative to keep people safe.

During lockdown, staff at The Stanway School gave up their time to make scrub bags and ear savers for key workers.

The Not So Secret Sewing Society received donations

of materials to make the personal protection equipment (PPE), with more than 250 scrub bags, 180 ear savers and 400 face coverings produced in six weeks. The group, who also took part in the Community Mask Trees where PPE is hung on a tree to be safely collected by those who need it, raised more than £600 which was donated to the Trussell Trust and Next Chapter to support them during the crisis.

## Putting school PPE to good use



The corridors may have been largely empty, but a distant hum, buzz and whirl of a laser cutter could be heard in one school.

Debra Baker, design technology teacher at Thomas Lord Audley School, spent

lockdown in school making personal protection equipment for the NHS. She made 100 face visors and 100 ear protectors to help those working on the frontline during the crisis. The school also donated goggles, safety glasses and gloves usually used by students during experiments to the NHS via Essex County Council.

The catering team handed over its gloves – not needed with the majority of students staying at home – to staff working in local care homes.

## Student produces thousands of ear guards



Paramedics, cancer care nurses, hospital and care home staff all benefited from the efforts of a student's work.

Ronnie, Year 10 at The Colne Community School and College, used his 3D printer to print ear guards for the NHS.

He produced more than 3,700 pieces of the much-needed personal protective equipment for healthcare providers across Essex.

Ronnie, who received the Jack Petchey Community Award, said: "I am honoured to be given this award. It's great to be able to help people during this time of need. I will be using my award to purchase more materials, so I am able to keep printing."

# Using the internet to boost reading

Free online resources have helped children to continue reading at home.

Reading during lockdown has been a priority for Holland Park Primary School. Pupils have been accessing online resources for their reading material, including information sites for research, the online reading of audiobooks from celebrities and companies such as Audible.

Younger readers have had the chance to read free online books from Oxford Owl and Collins Big Cat books and use

phonics websites to play games. Children have also signed up to the Summer Reading Project with the library.

Clare Edwardson, reading co-ordinator, said: "We also had a whole week where the entire school's distance learning was based on Tuesday by David Wiesner.

"So many families embraced the project with enthusiasm. We had police reports written, artwork submitted and maths and science learning linked to the text. We even had whole families getting into role to perform scenes from the book and film."

## Admin team praised for support

A team of administrative staff have been praised for their "incredible support" to their school community.

Claire Holmes, headteacher at Monkwick Infant School and Nursery, thanked her team as they prepared to welcome back more pupils to the site.

She said: "My front of house admin team and have worked so many hours getting letters out, collating responses, reassuring parents by phone, helping me sort

health and safety/risk issues and have been supporting staff.

"They have even been taking copies of letters and Free School Meal vouchers out when parents struggle to manage IT or cannot read! They have helped me and worked tirelessly across lockdown to support the school community. But, the week before we reopened, their contribution was exceptional; all with an amazing smile, laughter and positive attitude which has kept everyone going when it got tough."

## Letting our creative juices flow

Children who have attended school during lockdown have rolled up their sleeves and got creative.

Pupils on site at Monkwick Junior School have enjoyed a range of arts and crafts activities, including weaving, scratch drawings and making windmills.

They also took part in a nature themed scavenger hunt, helping them to explore their senses by hunting for things

which were smooth, bumpy or rough.

Wendy Watts, learning mentor, said:

"It was great for children to experiment with arts and crafts which they may not be able to do in their home. It also provided us with some lovely outdoor art which will make our eventual return so much brighter."



## Engineers get set a weekly challenge

Students have been scouring their homes for materials to enable them to get creative and rise to a weekly challenge.

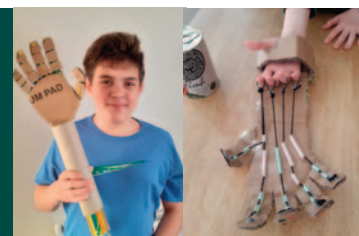
The weekly STEM Challenge at Paxman Academy has seen students produce a range of products, including a bionic hand, a rubber band car, a paper rollercoaster, a flipbook and a chain reaction obstacle course using household objects.

James Newton, STEM co-ordinator, said: "Students have really enjoyed getting involved with the weekly STEM Challenge and have been producing some fantastic creations. It is incredible to see the perseverance that students are showing to improve upon their designs and achieve success.

"The challenges are all easily accessible with items that students have at home and they encourage the students to hone skills vital to lots of subjects, especially STEM subjects – problem-solving, critical-thinking, investigating, applying formulae and theory, creativity and resilience.

"I felt it was especially important during lockdown to not only keep students engaged with STEM subjects, but also to give them something different to their usual school work that would excite and challenge them."

Winners each week receive a £10 Amazon voucher.



## Recognising extra effort in home learning

Lockdown was the perfect opportunity to step up a school reward system. The Philip Morant School and College has two reward systems – Standards Awards recognising everyday commitment to learning and Philip Morant Awards celebrating achievements of students who go above and beyond. Despite school being closed to the majority, it was decided to continue with a revamped scheme.

Gareth Howard, assistant headteacher, said: "Some might suggest that the middle of a pandemic is an odd time to be fiddling about with your school rewards systems. At Philip Morant, we beg to differ. A time like this is exactly the right

time to be recognising and celebrating the efforts of our students."

Brothers Michael, Year 7, and Alexander, Year 11, were both awarded for studying hard on their music in lockdown.

Mum Ilona said: "The school awards system was an additional stimulus to learn something new - the awards increased the level of their self-esteem and self-motivation for both of them during this uneasy time."



# Weaving their way into the heart of the community

Children attending school during lockdown put their time into bringing some comfort to an older person.

Pupils at Alton Park Junior School who continued to attend school took part in art and craft activities.

Pat Whalley, higher level teaching assistant, taught pupils how to weave and use a sewing machine to create a blanket. The completed item was donated to an older person cared for by pupil Scarlet's mother. Headteacher Nicky Sirett said: "It is

sometimes hard to see anything good coming from the Covid crisis. But, this project is an example of some of the positive aspects I can reflect on.

"It has been very interesting to see the children responding to opportunities for learning different skills and to see them really blossom.

"Positive links have been developed with many families and this weaving project is an example of good coming from adversity in these challenging times."



## What have you done today to make you feel proud?



Selfless students spent lockdown making themselves proud by looking out for others.

Before schools partially closed in March, Year 7, 8 and 9 students at Clacton

County High School wrote letters to older people in the community who were self-isolating. Recognising it was a difficult time for those living alone and who were unable to see their relatives for a long period of time, students sent messages of encouragement, jokes and anecdotes about themselves to bring smiles to their faces.

The letters were delivered to residents at Hanover Gardens, Holly Court and St

Clements Court and became the basis for the launch of the school's Proud (Perseverance, Responsibility, Opportunity, Unity, Diversity) Community.

Students were encouraged to share details of how they had been bringing cheer to others in the community during the uncertain time, including by displaying rainbows in their windows and taking part in the weekly Clap for Carers.

## Rainbow art provides a sign of hope

Creative students used their imaginations to put together colourful rainbows.

Students at Harwich and Dovercourt High School were set the Rainbow Art Challenge to create a rainbow out of anything they wanted. Displays were made from paint, Lego, digital art, clothes, cardboard, sticks, handprints, candles, cake, papers, shoes, jewellery and bookshelves arranged into colours.

Rosie Good, head of art, said: "Given that rainbows were being put in windows and were being created all over the country as a sign of hope, we wanted to get our students

involved in this too and show their creativity and appreciation.

"In all of this, we wanted to promote to our students the importance of staying creative during these times. It also seemed of great relevance to encourage them to produce a piece of art in response to what is going on in our world.

"The response was excellent."



Children got an alternative history lesson as they focused on VE Day during the

## History comes to life on VE Day

75th anniversary celebrations.

A week was dedicated to Victory in Europe Day by Holland Park Primary School, ending with families marking the milestone with their own street parties. Each year group was set a task for learning based around WWII and VE Day, including making decorations, history lessons and

cooking and musical activities.

Pupils had to think about what they would pack if they were being evacuated for the suitcase challenge; considered what life was like during the war; made Union Jack flags, learnt a dance routine; designed WWII medals and posters and completed writing tasks.



"We miss you!"

School teachers and support staff came together to send a message to pupils. All staff at Monkwick Infant School and Nursery contributed to a video sent out to pupils saying: "We miss you!" Headteacher Claire Holmes said: "Parents

rang moved to tears to say how much the children loved it and that they missed us, too."

The video, which also urged pupils to make memories with their loved ones and to stay safe, features on the school website.



## Proud of work achieved at home

Pupils are proudly sharing examples of the work they have completed at home during lockdown.

Teachers at Monkwick Junior School have received photos of the work their pupils have been tackling, including a model of the

Great Barrier Reef using geography and origami skills, a still life drawing based on a virtual lesson and a poster about Egypt.



## A stitch in time saves our NHS

A team of sewers helped to produce much-needed personal protection equipment for the NHS.

Students and staff from Paxman Academy and The Stanway School came together as part of the national Community Mask Tree initiative.

From fabrics donated to the schools, the team made scrub bags, ear-saving headbands and face coverings which

were donated to hospitals, hospices and care homes. As part of the project to enable social distancing, masks were also left on trees in hosts' gardens for people to collect.

Melissa Newman, teacher of art and technology, said: "We are so proud of Paxman Academy student Emily, who helped to run one of the first Community Mask Trees in Colchester."

## Bouncing her way to fundraising success



five ((Bounce)) exercise sessions in one day. Sponsorship from friends and family brought in a total of £435 to go

A teacher helped to raise more than £50,000 for the NHS.

Sian Castleton, design and technology teacher at The Philip Morant School and College, took part in the ((Bounce)) Marathon, completing

towards the national pot.

She said: "As I watched the TV and listened to the harrowing death toll on a daily basis, I felt totally helpless and didn't know how I could help while being locked in. A message popped up on my phone advertising ((Bounce)) Marathon for the NHS.

"So, I thought to myself 'here is my opportunity to help'!

"It was also a personal challenge to see if I had the fitness to succeed. It was such an effort, but I was really proud of myself for completing the marathon."

### NEWSBITE

## DJ Pete entertains friends and supports NHS

A music lover entertained his friends with a virtual party during lockdown. Pete, Year 10 at Thomas Lord Audley School, performed a live DJ set on Facebook. He took requests in return for donations to the NHS, raising £1,025 in the process

## Rainbow of hope coming from the kitchen

The St Helena School Rainbow Bake-off Challenge was open to all students during lockdown.

Students designed their own rainbow bake, sharing photos of their completed work, including cookies, cupcakes, pinata cakes, multi-layered rainbow sponges and fresh fruit tartlets.

Monica Rys-Hand, head of technology, said: "During these unprecedented times, the rainbow has been adopted across the nation as a symbol of thanks and hope.

"Many of our students have family members who are key workers and all of our students have a full awareness of the

many difficult challenges being faced during these times. Together, they have shown great courage in these challenging times.

"Cooking, and particularly baking, has always been a pastime that has brought people together and shown that we care. Our students love any opportunity to get into the kitchen and create."



## 5km a day to support NHS



A teenager ran 5km each day for a week to raise vital funds for the NHS.

Alfie, Year 10 at Clacton County High School, set himself the challenge during lockdown after hearing about the hard work of frontline workers. Despite not being a distance runner usually, Alfie committed to

building his stamina and distance for the challenge.

He said: "During the early weeks of the pandemic and during lockdown, I found myself wanting to get out for the daily exercise as I was missing the fitness I normally get from sports. When I knew I could run 5k, I wanted to do 5k every day for seven days; I thought that would be a good fundraising event. It was great seeing people's donations and messages of support."

Alfie raised £1,421 for NHS Charities Together.

## Competing in sports day – from home

The traditional sports day was revamped so students could take part from home.

Harwich and Dovercourt High School was determined to continue with the tradition and so hosted a Virtual Sports Day. Students – and their parents – were invited to take part in a host of events, including a 1.5km run, standing long jump, vertical high jump, sock shot put, ball juggling and the teabag challenge. Scores from individual events in the last week of term will be added together, with students competing for pole position.

PE teacher Paul Day said: "We thought it would be a fun way to finish off the year after what has been a tough few months for everyone."

## Cross country runners qualify for county trials



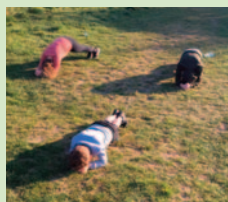
Young runners who qualified for the county trials are hoping the cross-country event will be rescheduled.

Year 5 boys from Holland Park Primary School won gold medals at the district cross country event at Birch Hall. Year 4 boys and girls teams and Year 6 boys

were runners-up in their events – achieving silver medals – with Year 5 girls placing third. All qualified for the postponed trials.

Sarah Hughes, PE co-ordinator, said: "The county trials were all postponed due to Coronavirus. We hope they will be reorganised for a later date."

## Getting active for the 2.6 Challenge



With major fundraising events cancelled this year due to the Coronavirus outbreak, the 2.6 Challenge was launched in support of charities who would experience a fall in their income.

Pupils at Holland Park Primary School were set the challenge to complete an activity based around the number 2.6 or 26. Activities ranged from walking 2.6 miles, trying to save 26 penalties, walking up and down stairs 26 times, completing an obstacle course in 26 minutes, cycling on an exercise bike for 26 minutes, holding a plank for 2.6 minutes, a sponsored silence for 26 minutes, keeping a hula hoop going around the waist for 2.6 minutes, running 26 laps of the garden, drawing 26 rainbows, building a tower

with 26 blocks and 26 bounces on a trampoline without stopping.

The results were shared on the school's YouTube channel.

Sarah Hughes, PE co-ordinator, said: "The feedback from children was great. They loved the video which we put to the soundtrack of Chariots of Fire!

"The aim was to keep children physically active and engaged during lockdown."

## First silverware for brand-new school



The girls' football team from Paxman Academy were crowned Colchester District Year 7 football champions.

Just months after the school opened and the team formed, the girls came away from the tournament at St Helena School victorious. They played nine matches, winning seven and drawing two, conceding just one goal against local schools. Nick Mussett, deputy headteacher, said: "Barely six months after opening, we picked up our first piece of silverware for sporting success."

## Father and son running challenge



Young runner Kester has completed his first half marathon alongside his dad.

The duo regularly take part in running events, but used their hobby to keep them occupied and active during lockdown.

Kester, Year 7 at The Philip Morant School and College, said: "I completed a 10k run with my dad and he asked if I wanted to try another run, but longer. I completed the half marathon in two hours and 20 minutes, which I felt was a really good time. It was tiring by the end, but I found it really fun.

"I have been doing lots of 5k runs and one-mile and two-mile trials. Lockdown would have been less enjoyable without running as I was not able to see friends."

Kester received one of his school's Philip Morant Awards for going above and beyond during lockdown.

## Swim makes teacher a World Record holder



A stiff neck, sore shoulders, blistered foot, cramp, pounding headache – and a World Record! With fundraising events cancelled due to the Coronavirus outbreak, charities have struggled this year to maintain their services with a lack of funding.

The 2.6 Challenge was launched to give people an opportunity to hold their own fundraising events – based on the number 2.6 or 26 – during lockdown.

Matthew Julier, lead teacher of PE at Thomas Lord Audley School, had access to a private pool and decided to attempt a tethered swim for two hours and 36 minutes. He completed the task – breaking the World Record and raising more than £800 for Motor Neurone Disease Association.

He said: "I did not know if my body could complete the challenge. But, what I did know was I am lucky to be alive, lucky to not be on the frontline and lucky to be able to do something to raise the profile of this charity which cared for my family and father as Motor Neurone Disease took him from us."

Donate at: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/mjs-2-6-hour-world-record-swim-tethered-challenge>

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