



Summer 2017 - Issue 2

SIGMA NEWS

FOR STUDENTS, PARENTS AND CARERS OF THE SIGMA TRUST

Greater than the sum of its parts



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WELCOME...



This has been a busy year for the Sigma Trust and it is good to see so many exciting events and stimulating initiatives taking place in our schools.

The activities are vast, ranging from teaming up with local business for a STEM project at Clacton County High, budding journalists on

the BBC School News Report project at St Helena, ancient Greeks bringing history to life at Monkwick Junior and therapy dogs visiting Monkwick Infant School; to name but a few. The expansive happenings across the Trust continues to enhance our mission

statement that education should foster in its learners a curiosity to discover who they are and what they are capable of.

Building work and improvements continue in many of the schools and, once completed, will enhance the learning environment and general facilities; we all look forward to seeing the results on the completion of the projects.

As we approach the end of the academic year, it is with a sad heart we have the inevitable farewells to say. This term is particularly poignant as we say goodbye and good luck to one of our headteachers, Mark Walter, at Monkwick Junior School. Mark is relocating to Yorkshire and we wish him and his family every happiness in their new endeavours and thank him for all his hard work.

Jeff Brindle, CEO, The Sigma Trust

Seventh school joins the Sigma Trust

Harwich and Dovercourt High School joined the Sigma Trust on June 1.

The school, rated Good by Ofsted last year, will benefit from the arrival of four additional senior members of staff – including strategic leads for maths and science – as a result of joining Sigma.

An investment of £1.1million will also be made to overhaul the school's building, including replacement windows to improve conditions.

Jeff Brindle, CEO of Sigma, said: "Our mission with Harwich and Dovercourt High School is to retain its Good rating and make sure all outcomes are above the national average. That is our aim for all Trust schools, with a view to all becoming Outstanding education providers in the future.

"The culture of each of our schools remains down to the individual teams. The focus of Sigma is on teaching and learning, outcomes and governance of the schools."

National award for SEN provision

The Stanway School has been awarded the 2017 National SEN Award for the most inclusive practice across a school.

The third annual National Special Educational Needs Awards celebrated the most inclusive practice for young people in schools, colleges, educational settings and employment across the UK.

The judges were impressed with the school's inclusive practice and how this has resulted in improved progress and outcomes for students with special educational needs.

Vincent Maiella, assistant headteacher and SENCO, said: "The hard work of teachers, support staff, students and parents has paid off and has been recognised by this national award.

"This is a real testament to our mission of ensuring no child is left behind and evidence that all children can achieve, given the appropriate support and environment."

We are
the Sigma
family...



The STANWAY SCHOOL



St Helena School



Thomas Lord Audley School

Longer lessons introduced in Clacton

The school day is being restructured at Clacton County High School to meet the growing demands of the curriculum.

From September, lessons are being extended from 60 minutes to 75 minutes to ensure all subjects are able to meet the demands of the new GCSE specifications, particularly for English.

The start and finish time of the school day will remain the same, but students will have four lessons per day instead of the previous five.

Principal Neil Gallagher said: "The new GCSE specifications for English language and literature are now very disconnected. We recognise the way English was previously

taught, by developing the English language skills through the literature texts, would be difficult without additional curriculum time allocated.

"We were teaching four hours of English in Year 9 and 10 and five hours in Year 11 which required students attending an additional lesson each week after school. Going forward, from Year 9, we will devote five hours per week to teaching English literature and language; that's a significant change."

The new four lesson timetable has allowed the school to build in one lesson of bespoke intervention each week for Year 10 and 11. The 75 minutes of intervention will be tailor-made for each student delivered by subject teachers.

Monkwick Junior School – farewell to headteacher

After nine years of headship, Mark Walter will be leaving Monkwick Junior School to relocate in the Yorkshire area. During his time at the school, he has seen more than 1,100 children pass through the school. Staff are certainly going to miss his sense of humour and singing ability and the Sigma Trust wishes him all the best for his new life in the north of England.



New leadership team for Monkwick Junior School

With members of the existing leadership team progressing with promotions elsewhere, the Sigma Trust has brought in a fresh group of leaders to work with executive headteacher Gavin Bradley from September.

Mr Bradley, who is headteacher at White Hall Academy in Clacton and has been working with Monkwick since January, said: "This is a new, exciting chapter in Monkwick Junior's history.

"The new team will build upon the good foundations laid by the outgoing team."

The new team is –

- Rebecca McCutcheon, headteacher – with a proven track record of improving teaching and learning in her previous schools. Currently co-head at a large junior school on Canvey Island
- Jacqui Beavis, deputy headteacher – provided leadership support to Essex schools through school improvement roles at Randstad Education and Stanway Federation Academy Trust
- Ashleigh Pool, assistant headteacher – instrumental in raising standards in literacy in her current school where she is deputy headteacher

- Mark Visagie, assistant headteacher – currently curriculum lead for Monkwick. His new role will focus on personal development and behaviour



NEWSBITE

Monkwick infants have got talent!

Comedians, dancers, singers and storytellers performed at Monkwick Infant School's annual talent show.

Sixteen brave pupils took part in a Britain's Got Talent type event, with a panel of judges complete with big red buzzers.

An audience of parents cheered on the young performers before a winner was selected to represent the school at the Colchester Schools Consortium Talent Show.

NEWSBITE

Infants and juniors to share governing body

It is the first time Monkwick Infant School and Nursery and Monkwick Junior School have had one team guiding and overseeing operations.

While some members have sat on the governing body of one or the other of the schools, new governors have also been brought on board for the fresh approach.

Sandy Tate has been appointed as the new chair of governors.

Claire Holmes, infant and nursery headteacher, said: "Having a shared governing body for the first time enables more joined-up thinking. The two schools can now work more closely together and there is an opportunity to support our families through the transition and provide continuity. It's a really positive change."

Exciting playground to transform infant grounds

Work has started on overhauling the exterior of Monkwick Infant School and Nursery now the building work has been completed to accommodate extra pupils.

Playground designers Schoolsapes have arrived to begin the process of creating a landscaped area full of interactive activities for all year groups.

Funded by the school and the Lottery Awards for All grant, work is to be carried out in two phases.

Claire Holmes, headteacher, said: "The outside area was in need of landscaping after the recent building work. The space is going to be transformed to include activities which focus on the senses, including music and storytelling."



Building work continues at The Stanway School

Three new science and two technology classrooms are due to be handed over this month, along with a new catering outlet to enable more students to be served at lunchtime.

By September – when an extra 55 students will be joining – the school will have a new multi-use area providing more covered space at lunchtimes, a second assembly venue and an enhanced provision for shows and performances. Retractable seating will enable the space to be switched from one use to another.

Work will also soon start on the next phase of building which will see a new arts and music block built on the site of the old Gainsborough building.

Dave Boggis, operations manager, said: "Both departments are very excited about moving into new state-of-the-art



facilities. The rooms these subjects vacate will be used by the expanding maths and English departments; part of several pieces of remodelling in the main building.

"With primary schools in the area expanding, there needed to be expansion at the school to cope with demand."

NEWSBITE

Work begins on the extension of Monkwick Junior School

A consultation was held in April for the community to look at the plans for a two-storey extension and remodelling of the existing site to create more teaching areas.

The new building will also house a Special Educational Needs area, a studio and space for food, science and design and technology lessons.

The work is needed to cater for the school's move to a three-form entry.

Headteacher Mark Walter said: "We saw a great turnout for the consultation event. It went well and I think people found it really useful to be able to come in and ask questions of the contractor."

The new building is due to open in September 2018.

Pastoral hub to provide haven for students

Pastoral support services are being brought together into a dedicated hub at Clacton County High School.

Over the summer, part of the office space of the school will be remodelled to create an open-plan haven for students with a range of issues.

All first aid, child protection and attendance matters will be handled from the one place instead of being dotted around the school.

A new role will be created for an isolation manager to also operate in the hub.

Principal Neil Gallagher said: "All services in terms of student support will be in one place which will be a healthier way to operate the school."

The internal building work will involve knocking down walls to create a larger office area.

School community raises £10,500 for charity

Each house at The Stanway School – Gainsborough, Rutherford, Shakespeare and Wellington – has a charity it supports through the year with non-uniform days and events. This year, the coffers were boosted further with two major events.

Year 11 took on members of staff in a football match, held annually, which this year received even more support as it was held in memory of a classmate. The event raised £2,500 for The Samaritans.

Jonathan Bland, co-headteacher, also took on the mission of completing The Three Peaks Challenge, climbing Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon over three days.

Before the trip, he attended school in fancy dress and had his head shaved to raise another £1,500.



Mr Bland said: "Raising such an impressive total this year shows the caring attitude of our staff and students towards other people and I am extremely proud to have been a part of these events. Sometimes, young people do not get the recognition they deserve so I thank them all for their encouraging charitable endeavours this year."

Money raised will go to various charities, including The Samaritans, Comic Relief and Hand In Hand.

Pupil with cystic fibrosis inspires classmates



Monkwick Junior School held a cystic fibrosis awareness day on the suggestion of ten-year-old Lily-May Frost-Ely, in Year 5.

Pupils wore purple for the day – raising £84 for the Cystic Fibrosis Trust – and posed questions to Lily-May and her nurse from Ipswich Hospital on her day-to-day challenges.

Proud mum Wendy Ely, a midday assistant at Monkwick, said: "Lily-May just gets on with it and never complains so people around her don't necessarily understand what the condition is about. It was good for her school friends to understand a bit more about how she copes day to day.

"I am very proud of Lily-May."

TV competition winner talks careers

The winner of BBC Two's Great Pottery Throw Down taught students about careers in ceramics.

Ryan Barrett, who runs his own ceramics business, visited Harwich and Dovercourt High School after getting in touch with his former art teacher, Louise Craigie, to see if he could teach students about the art of pottery.

Mrs Craigie said: "I got a phone call from the BBC to see if I would be a reference for Ryan to enter the Great Pottery Thrown Down.

"I was contacted along with his grandma as we were both

considered to be his biggest inspirations – which was very touching."

He gave a talk about his life before getting Year 10 and sixth form art students spinning clay on the pottery wheel.

NEWSBITE

School awarded for its good citizens

Students are developing skills that employers, colleges and universities are looking for.

Year 11 students at Thomas Lord Audley School are taking part in the government-funded National Citizen Service.

The scheme, available to 15 to 17-year-olds, gives students the opportunity to take part in outward bound activities to challenge them and to work on a community project.

The work by the 40 students has resulted in the school being awarded the Bronze Award for student engagement.

There are still places available for students to get involved over the summer.

Visit ncsingeus.co.uk to sign up.



Textbooks ditched in language lessons

Thomas Lord Audley School (TLA), which saw 91% of students achieve A* to C in German last year, believes a more bespoke, unique approach is the reason for its success in modern foreign languages.

Melissa Capes, deputy headteacher for teaching and learning, was head of department for eight years and an advanced skills teacher. She said: "We are consistently above national average for our results. We have high quality teaching in the department with staff who are passionate about their subject and who want students to love languages, too."

"We engage in reflective practice and adapt teaching, finding out what works and developing this into departmental strategies. We offer an exciting and relevant curriculum, with topics that are up-to-date and taught with a range of skills.



the language.

National competitions such as Have Your Say and Spelling Bee give the school another platform to demonstrate its success – with three Year 7 students reaching the regional final of the Spelling Bee this year and the school hosting 250 schools for the Have Your Say language competition final where six TLA students achieved second and third places against grammar and private schools.

We don't use textbooks as we found they disengage students. Instead, we make our own resources which allow for greater challenge."

The school uses songs, videos and films to teach the subject and often takes students on trips with a high emphasis on getting to know the culture of the country and using

STEM project boosted by partnership

Students at Clacton County High School have teamed up with Tridan Engineering to take their Formula 24 racing car forward.

The members of the STEM club – science, technology, engineering and maths - and Year 13 product design students paid a visit to the company to learn more about manufacturing.

Tridan will help students, who have designed and built the school's lightweight racing car, to develop a new aluminium chassis and associated metal fabrications, such as axels and supports, giving an insight into precision engineering.

Lizy Watson, lead practitioner science, said: "Students have expressed an interest in following a career in engineering and the visit reaffirmed their aspirations. Tridan Engineering offer annual apprenticeship opportunities and we hope by allowing our students to show their aptitude, it will support them in their applications."



Budding journalists hit the headlines



Year 9 media studies students from St Helena School took part in the BBC School News Report project.

The annual event challenges students across the UK to research, create and

broadcast news articles online to a deadline to give them an insight into the world of journalism. Students covered stories including the Vegan Festival in Colchester and the school's 500-word short story competition.

Diana Mitrea said of the day: "I learned that not everything is easy in the news industry; for example, while you are working on something, news stories may come in and you have to work quickly to get them done at the last minute. I would like to work in the news industry."

Intan Ahmed said: "It's taught us, as students, some crucial life skills, including teamwork and working under pressure. It has given us a great opportunity to not only learn, but also to understand what a job in the news industry is all about."

NEWSBITE

Stanfest to bring Stanway community together

For the second year, The Stanway School is putting on its three-day drama, music and dance event giving hundreds of students and members of staff a stage for their talents.

An outdoor concert stage, supported by students taking up sound and stage management roles, will host students from all year groups performing as soloists, duets and bands as well as the staff choir. It is hoped families and friends of the school will take along picnics to create a festival atmosphere during the event.

Richard Harrison, head of music, said: "Last year's event, which gives students an opportunity to perform to hundreds of people, was the first of its kind in Stanway, with three consecutive nights celebrating the arts in our school."

Money raised from ticket sales will go towards future productions.

Therapy dogs join the teaching staff

Four-legged classroom assistants are helping to boost children's self-esteem and confidence.

Dogs for Development takes its furry friends along to Monkwick Infant School each week to work with groups of children. Pupils help to train the three dogs which in turn encourages the children to be calm and respectful.

Claire Holmes, headteacher, said: "The children absolutely love these visits and are getting so much from them. The visits help with children's social and emotional wellbeing which fits in with our holistic approach to teaching."



Curious scientists indulge in Geneva

A group of 27 Year 7 to 11 students from St Helena School visited the CERN laboratory to see how science is used.

Chloe Wallis, Year 10, said: "The main point of the trip was to visit CERN, the European Organisation for Nuclear Research, famous as the home of the Large Hadron Collider. We had an intense tour led by a guide who was extremely knowledgeable about physics and even though some of it was much higher level than we've covered in school, it was really interesting."

"The Universe of Particles exhibition was my favourite part of the tour. It's all inside a massive dome and was the best bit because it was interactive and had lights and videos projected around the walls and floor."

The group also visited the United Nations headquarters, took a boat trip on Lake Geneva, saw the Little Mermaid statue and the Jet d'Eau fountain



Ancient Greeks descended on Monkwick Junior School

Year 5 pupils dressed in period outfits for the day as they indulged in the subject of ancient Greeks as history was brought to life.

History Off The Page transformed the school and held workshops to inspire children through craft, drama and role-play.



Professionals brought in to inspire careers

Thirty-seven experts shared their knowledge, experience and advice at the Thomas Lord Audley School careers and PSHE day.

The whole-school enrichment day gave students an opportunity to enhance their knowledge and develop skills for the future.

Contributors on the day included –

- Great Anglia – worked with Year 10 to write CVs
- Army – worked with Year 8 and 9 focusing on nutrition, creating healthy snacks
- Barclays LifeSkills – tackled the topic of managing a bank account with Year 11
- Santander – looked at spending, saving and interest on borrowing with Year 8
- Shark Conservation – helped Year 7 to understand about shark and marine conservation
- Teenage Cancer Trust
- NHS – delivered sessions on smoking, enlightening Year 8 on the effects it has on the body
- Fire brigade – provided details to Year 7, 8 and 9 on how to stay safe

NEWSBITE

Revision becomes fun adventure for Year 11 boys

The 24 students from Harwich and Dovercourt High School took a trip to Brighton on a revision weekend full of physical activities.

The group were put through their paces in the classroom with tailored revision in maths, English and science geared towards raising attainment in their GCSE exams.

They were then able to let off steam by trying their hands at canoeing, abseiling, zip-wiring and rifle shooting on the PGL trip.

Sarah Cross, English lead practitioner, said: "The boys showed fantastic teamwork skills and resilience, even when they were petrified."

"All students commented on how the revision sessions supported them in the run-up to this very important time."

Students are champions in cyclo-cross

Keen cyclists overcame obstacles and mud to become crowned champions in a lesser-known sport.

Jack Emerson, Tom Carson and Luke Orrin represented St Helena School in the eastern region Inter School Cyclo-cross event at Castle Manor Academy, in Haverhill.

Cyclo-cross consists of many laps of a short course featuring pavement, wooded trails, grass, steep hills and obstacles requiring the rider to quickly dismount and carry the bike to navigate the obstruction.



After a successful event, the boys – finishing in second, third and 14th – brought home the title of Year 7/8 eastern region champions.

Jack, Year 7, said: "We knew we had done well, but did not know if we had done enough to win. So, when they announced second place to Philip

Morant, we were ecstatic as in our first year of competing at this event we had won!

"We are looking forward to representing our school next year to hold on to the title."

England RFU teams up with Thomas Lord Audley School

A five-year partnership has been formed between the school, England RFU and Mersea Island RFC. The project will see the school offered funding, sponsorship, clubs and training from the rugby professionals. The contract is due to be finalised this term with the project kicking off next year.



The news comes after 22 Year 7 to 9 rugby players were given the opportunity to visit Twickenham to watch England V Barbarians in the Old Mutual Wealth Cup. They witnessed England win 28-14.

Harrison Westbrook, PE teacher, said: "Our students were able to watch world-class play from the fifth row. With this being many of the boys' first experience of watching professional rugby, everyone was happy with the final result and a wonderful trip."

Female football team are the best

The Under 14 girls football team from Clacton County High School have been crowned North East Essex Champions.

The girls had already won all their Coastal Schools League games, conceding just one goal throughout the campaign. As league champions, they faced the winners of the Colchester Schools League, Philip Morant School, in the finals. The coastal squad secured the win with an impressive score of 8-0, with goals by Sara Smith-Walter (five), Elise Purser (two) and Grace Rockley (one).

The success comes as the Year 7 and 8 boys and Year 7 girls were named as runners-up in their respective competitions.

Sam Horsewill, head of PE, said: "All our teams who made it through to the district finals can be immensely proud of how they have conducted themselves throughout this season. Well done to them all!"

Confidence grows during skiing trip

A group of 49 Year 7 to 11 students from Harwich and Dovercourt High School spent a week in Saalbach brushing up their skills.

PE teacher Joe Francis said: "A fantastic week was had by all with the progression in skiing ability exceeding all expectations. For many, it was a tough week and for some a rollercoaster of emotions as students pushed themselves beyond their own comfort zones. All would agree they had a life-enriching experience they will always cherish."



Basketball girls become district champions



Year 10 girls from The Stanway School took on St Mary's School in the district basketball final, having already beaten them in their league fixture. Despite being down 22-16 at the end of the third quarter, an

inspirational team talk turned around their fortunes and they battled back to win 24-22 in extra time.

Sian Larkin, PE teacher, said: "The girls were superb throughout the game and thoroughly deserved the win. They should be very proud of themselves."