



Winter 2018 - Issue 3

SIGMA NEWS

For the Staff and Stakeholders of The Sigma Trust

Greater than the sum of its parts



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Welcome...

Welcome to the latest round-up of the key events and successes within the Sigma Trust over the last six months. This edition of Sigma News really demonstrates the strengths we have across our seven schools and, in this regard, it is great to see four colleagues being recognised for their achievements at the annual Essex Teaching Awards.

Over the last few weeks, it has been a busy period of Ofsted inspections. St Helena was visited just before Christmas and retained its Good across the board. The report has now been published and fully demonstrates the strengths with the school. Many congratulations to all staff for their hard work in making this possible.

Harwich and Dovercourt High School has benefited from a number of colleagues being initially seconded across from other Sigma schools. Many of these have now been appointed to permanent roles within

the school. One of the key advantages of Sigma is all schools are within close proximity to each other, enabling additional capacity to be provided as and when it is needed.

The developing team of Strategic Subject Leads is also adding to this capacity. These colleagues work across the Trust for one or more days per week bringing heads of department together to share and implement best practice.

Many thanks to all colleagues for the contribution they are making to ensure we achieve the best possible education for every child in our schools.

Jeff Brindle, CEO The Sigma Trust



Three new trustees join the board

The Sigma Trust has welcomed three new trustees on to the board.



Dr Kay Maddox-Daines is an experienced HR consultant with more than 20 years' management experience across the private and public sectors, including both further and higher education. Kay has recently been appointed as director of HR for the Samuel Ward Academy Trust.



Clive Bull has recently retired from local authority procurement where he specialised in buying care for older people. Clive's early career was as an IT professional during which he built computer

systems in an international environment.



Bharat Parmar is a qualified civil engineer working as senior estimator with Bouygues UK. He has more than 37 years' contracting experience in the UK, Middle

East and India on building projects linked to education. He also acts as a fundraiser and co-ordinator for charities the CAREducation Trust and BEHT which provide boarding for less privileged children in India and East Africa.

Jeff Bridle, CEO, said: "The range of experience that Kay, Clive and Bharat bring to the Trust has already significantly strengthened the board and we thank them for their support."

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 continue 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.”

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 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 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.”

Essex Teaching Award finalists

Four teachers from the 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 Boost, 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.

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.

TRAINING OUR PEOPLE...

Primary and secondary trainees work together



For the first time, Sigma Trust trainee teachers within both primary and secondary schools are working within the same base.

The move is giving more opportunities to share resources and experienced staff across the Trust's schools.

While primary staff and trainees have settled in well to their new base, the trainees have been working in their host schools and have completed term one.

They are now settling in to their second placement schools for the spring term.

Secondary trainees are now working in their schools five days a week on their block placement.

Dr Sarah Alix, academic programme director for North Essex Teacher Training (NETT), said:

"All trainees are now taking the Level 7 masters level credits for their PGCE and have completed their first assignments with good results across the programmes.

"Trainees are working on research projects in their schools to examine and improve areas of their practice. Some of the trainees are submitting research posters to the Chartered College of Teaching research competition as part of their PGCE programme."

Trainee Megan Hughes



“The course has provided endless practical experiences and is a constant learning journey. It has been challenging, but the level of support has been fantastic and the sense of accomplishment is well worth it! A very rewarding life choice.”

Trainee Courtney Day



“It's been tough, but I have learnt tremendous amounts already. With the support I have had, I have been able to enjoy the course, too. I am looking forward to the next two terms!”

Challenge For All

Best practice in the Sigma Trust schools is being researched by 12 colleagues.

A year of lesson study and action-based research on the theme of Challenge For All is being carried out by colleagues who are planning, teaching, observing and analysing a series of research lessons.

Case studies and presentations with a focus on student progress will be shared throughout the year and at the Sigma summer fete in June.

The programme is certificated by CAMSTAR, which links with the Faculty of Education at Cambridge University.

Tom Sherrington, author of The Learning Rainforest, was keynote speaker for day one

of the Challenge For All programme in September and inspired colleagues to focus research on a group of case study students and a teaching approach to make a difference.

- Trust Thursday – Sigma summer fete, an opportunity to share teaching and learning ideas, resources and classroom based research – June 28, Stanway School



November CPD thanks

An afternoon of CPD was held in November for colleagues from across the Sigma Trust and our teacher training provider.

Trust Thursday included sessions on thinking skills and approaches in the classroom; supporting SEND students with ADHD; supporting young people with low mood and anxiety; and collaborative group work.

The teaching and learning team are extremely grateful to all colleagues who presented sessions.

- **Trust Thursday – a Teachmeet style event for sharing teaching and learning ideas – March 8, Harwich and Dovercourt High School**

February joint inset day

Strategic subject leads, headteachers and the teaching and learning team have been working on plans for a joint inset day for February.

The day is an opportunity to meet with colleagues from across Sigma schools and to take part in training, moderation and the sharing and development of resources to benefit all students.

Guest speakers presenting on the theme of challenge include Tom Sherrington, headteacher and author of The Learning Rainforest, and Andy Burns, teacher and author of Teaching Backwards.

A full programme for the day has been sent to schools.

- Sigma joint inset day – various venues - February 19

Introducing central Strategic Leads...



Charlie McCarthy, group facilitator, Vince Maiella, Sarah Davies-Llewellyn, Carol-Anne Moffatt, Scott Holder, strategic development officer, Fiona Cook, Melissa Capes and John Knights.

The Sigma Trust is keen to support each academy to develop the best provision and outcomes for young people.

While recognising and celebrating each academy's autonomy, there is a need, thirst and desire to collaborate and share best practice. To do this, the Trust has formed strategic groups covering EBACC subjects alongside SEND, attendance and curriculum to ensure best practice is shared. The strategic teams are made up of heads of subject or faculty who will lead improvements across the Trust.

There are other opportunities throughout the year for staff to collaborate on strategic objectives and common areas of interest, such as challenging high achievers, promoting literacy and improving attendance.

Senior teachers have been appointed as strategic leads to work across the Trust...

Vince Maiella – SEND strategic lead

"While recognising the uniqueness and achievements of each academy, we aim to ensure no school is left behind, resulting in the best possible outcomes for all students with SEND.

"We have spent time embedding a new provision mapping tool across the Trust to provide consistency and ensuring interventions provide value for money. We have also evaluated the impact of SEND interventions, so each school has access to a portfolio of high impact interventions for each area of SEND. During the February CPD day, teaching assistants will be trained on strategies based around the research produced on Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants."

Sarah Davies-Llewellyn, humanities strategic lead

"It will be good to spend time talking, reflecting and working on improving outcomes for Sigma students.

"Since December, the humanities team has worked on moderating mock papers, so all schools are in line and confident in getting to grips with the new specifications. We will be producing clear actions on how best to plan, assess and support our students to achieve in their summer examinations.

"During the February CPD day, we will share best practice on what works for revision in our humanities departments and creating quality resources to help our students to reach their full potential in their exams."

Carol-Anne Moffatt, maths strategic lead

"The maths team has been working to ensure consistency across schools, so data comparisons are meaningful. This work included a training session on marking the new specification papers. The majority of work this year has focused on curriculum development so students are prepared for the demands of the new GCSE. A mastery scheme of work for Year 7 produced by the strategic group is in place, with common assessments for all students.

"The February CPD day will provide two sessions to examine key models to enable mastery teaching to take place, with a focus on understanding ratio and proportion. A series of masterclasses has also been planned where potential grade 9 students will be introduced to higher level topics to support them if they study maths beyond GCSE."

Fiona Cook, English strategic lead

"The English team has been analysing and reviewing the outcomes of the first exam series under the new GCSE specifications and grading for literature and language to improve on our best. Exam scripts have been collated so a wide range of exemplar materials and exam responses can be shared with colleagues and students to showcase the skills and depth of detail required to achieve the highest grades. We will spend time on the February CPD day on planning resources and teaching approaches which support and challenge students at KS4 to meet the demands of the exams."

Melissa Capes, MFL strategic lead

"The MFL team has been creating resources to be used across our schools to support the new GCSE specifications. Best practice has been shared in a range of skill areas which has helped move forward the attainment of our student linguists.

"We have spent time moderating work for all four skill areas, so all staff are upskilled and confident in giving feedback linked to the new criteria.

"We are using what we have learnt from the most recent PPEs to help inform our future planning.

"We will spend the February CPD day joint writing KS3 schemes of work, which are more explicitly linked to the new course."

John Knights, science strategic lead

"Having joined the Trust in January 2018, I am keen to work closely with the heads of faculty and their teams in first investigating how schools are preparing students for the new style GCSEs this summer.

"So far, I have seen an array of innovative ideas used to deliver the new curriculum and by sharing the best practice between all schools, students will benefit.

"Each academy is unique, but fundamentally the content of the science curriculum is the same for all learners. Therefore, by building strong relationships between teams, there will be many opportunities to share ideas, resources and to co-operate in Sigma-wide events."

north
essex
teacher
training



Have you thought about a career in teaching at a primary or secondary school?

We are now recruiting for September 2018

Alternatively, consider the Stepping Stones
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in a school before training.

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