



SIGMA NEWS

For the Staff and Stakeholders of The Sigma Trust

Greater than the sum of its parts



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Welcome...

As we reach the end of The Sigma Trust's second year, we take stock of how established we have become in a short period of time. As you will see here, much has happened in the last few months; three new headteachers have been confirmed in post and we have been appointed as the sponsor for the new Paxman Academy.

Over the last few weeks, we have been asked to provide interim support at the Colne Community School. Neil Gallagher, principal at Clacton County High School, has been appointed as the interim executive headteacher until long-term decisions are made regarding the school and Thrive Partnership. Neil is being supported at the school by colleagues from across The Sigma Trust. Already significant improvements in behaviour and safeguarding have been put in place and parents are growing in confidence that their concerns are being addressed.

Once again, we have been able to demonstrate the capacity we have within the Trust and how, by working with a local group of schools, we can provide high levels of support as and when it is needed. The establishment of a strong and expanding central team also ensures we have expertise on hand to support with operational as well as educational aspects of a school.

My thanks to all colleagues for their continuing hard work and dedication in ensuring that "no child is left behind".

Jeff Brindle, CEO The Sigma Trust



New headteachers for Sigma schools

Two schools within Sigma are welcoming new headteachers.



Kate Finch was appointed as the new headteacher at Harwich and Dovercourt High School in February after acting as headteacher designate since September.

The school became part of the Sigma Trust in June, with a raft of improvements put into place, including work to upgrade the building.



Fiona Pierson will take over the leadership of St Helena School from outgoing executive headteacher Zoë King on September 1.

The runner-up in the Headteacher of the Year category of the Essex Teaching Awards this year, Ms Pierson has been principal at Colchester Academy for the last three years.

Follow us ▶▶▶

You can now follow Sigma Trust on social media.

The science Twitter account - @ScienceSigma - has links to science related activities, news and competitions from schools across the Trust.

You can also now follow @sigmatandl for teaching and learning updates.

Brand new school for Sigma

Work is under way on a brand new secondary school in Colchester.

Paxman Academy, sponsored by Sigma, is being built on the site of the former Alderman Blaxill School, in Paxman Avenue.

The project comes as Essex County Council projections show an anticipated increase in demand for secondary school places in the town.

The 900-place school will open in September 2019 with Carol-Anne Moffatt, current deputy headteacher at the Stanway School, as headteacher.

CEO Jeff Brindle said: "The Sigma Trust is proud and excited to be announced as the

sponsor for the new academy.

"The schools within the Sigma Trust have a long history of working with Alderman Blaxill School and the wider community and we very much look forward to building on this relationship."



Ofsted success in Clacton

Inspectors have confirmed Clacton County High School is on its way to becoming Outstanding.

While grading the school as Good once again, the Ofsted inspection team stated they had found sufficient evidence of "strong practice and marked improvement" which "may indicate the school is improving towards being an outstanding school".



Principal Neil Gallagher said: "I am exceptionally proud of all of the staff and the students; all were a real credit, demonstrating to the inspectors how our PROUD ethos is embedded into every day

school life and how our vision of Higher Expectations, Raising Aspirations is reflected within all aspects of teaching, learning and extra-curricular."

A Section 5 inspection will take place within two years.

Essex Teaching Awards winners



Colleagues from across Sigma came out on top at the Essex Teaching Awards.

Sue Crotty, from Clacton County High

School, won the Lifetime Achievement Award; Helena Boast, of The Thomas Lord Audley School, was named as Headteacher of the Year; and Sarah Cross, from Harwich and Dovercourt High School, won the Secondary Teacher of the Year title.

Beverly Wrobel, of St Helena School, was

highly commended in the Teaching Assistant of the Year category, and Fiona Pierson – who joins Sigma as headteacher at St Helena School in September – was runner-up in the Headteacher of the Year award.

CEO Jeff Brindle said: "It was a fantastic and thoroughly deserved achievement by all colleagues. It was also a proud moment for the Trust, not only in celebrating the fact the headteacher of the year and secondary teacher of the year both work in our schools, but also the recognition of the outstanding contribution of our support staff."

The first Sigma history day

Year 7 students from across Sigma took part in the inaugural history day.

Students were tasked with researching various aspects of World War I and creating a larger-than-life newspaper page about what they had learned.

Topics included information about the causes of the war, conditions in the trenches and the roles of individuals and new weaponry in breaking through the stalemate of trench warfare.

Each team presented a spoken piece on what they had learnt.

The day helped to develop their research, analysis, design and teamwork skills, as well as boost their oracy and confidence in public speaking.



Learning about learning at Monkwick

Monkwick Infant and Junior Schools are among 100 schools taking part in the ReflectED project.

The metacognition project teaches pupils to think more about their learning, to identify where they make mistakes and what they do next to improve.

Monkwick Junior School assistant headteacher Mark Visagie said: "Failure is used as a means to move on and strategies are taught to help pupils to have a more positive mindset.

"We held a parent meeting to inform them of the theory and also to give suggestions as to how they can help children at home as the school and home need to have the same message."

Pupils learnt new skills such as juggling and knitting as part of the project.

Researching what works in our schools

The end of the first year of the Challenge for All programme was celebrated with the sharing of research findings.

Five Sigma schools came together at the Stanway School for the Sigma Summer Fete in June. Challenge for All, the research and professional development programme for Sigma schools, involved a year of lesson study and action-based research on the

theme of challenge for all.

Certified by CAMSTAR and the Faculty of Education at Cambridge University, the programme brings colleagues together to plan, teach, observe and analyse research lessons focusing on student progress.

For more information, talk to your teaching and learning lead or email charlie.mccarthy@sigmatrust.org.uk

TRAINING OUR PEOPLE...

Maths mastery across Sigma schools



A common scheme of work for Year 7 students has been developed by the strategic maths group.

The project has been implemented across all Sigma secondaries and sees Year 7 students learning from a common curriculum and assessment framework.

The vision is to generate learning that enables all teachers in all schools to promote a deep and connected mathematical understanding for all learners, by incorporating elements of mastery teaching in maths.

The strategic maths group are researching and developing ideas for the shared

curriculum, with a focus on problem-solving as well as techniques developed in Shanghai to promote maths attainment.

By the end of the summer term, the team will have enhanced the scheme of learning, taking lessons from its trial implementation this academic year. Planning days in July will bring representatives from each school together to work on the project.

Once complete, it will provide a common curriculum for all KS3 maths classes, common and comparative assessments, enhanced support of teachers in planning lessons and offer the opportunity for greater collaboration.

Grade 9 maths masterclasses

A series of masterclasses have been provided for students aspiring to achieve Grade 9 in their maths GCSE. The first masterclass focused on differentiation and how it can be applied to real life graphs.

Carol-Anne Moffat said: "All students conveyed exceptional subject knowledge and were able to apply their understanding of mathematics to a complex topic. The engagement of students throughout the

session was wonderful to witness and students felt they were challenged and extended in their pursuit of a Grade 9 in mathematics." The next maths masterclass will be on April 24 with a focus on functions.

Best practice becomes shared practice

High quality CPD was given to Sigma staff on the first Trust inset day in February.

While recognising and celebrating the autonomy of each academy, there is a need to collaborate and share the very best practice across the Trust.

The aim of the day was to provide an opportunity for colleagues to meet, share professional conversation and ensure best practice becomes shared practice.

CEO Jeff Brindle said: "Our key note speakers and staff who led sessions have provoked deep discussions and added to our already rich debate on pedagogy and practice.

"It was a great opportunity for colleagues to share teaching resources and strategies which can be used in the classroom.

"As a Trust, we will continue to develop our CPD offer in order to support great teaching across our schools."



Diagnostic Questions Trial

Clacton County High School is taking part in the EEDI Diagnostic Questions trial.

The online formative assessment programme allows teachers to set quizzes for students and provides them with feedback, so they can quickly address students' misconceptions.

The project will test the programme in Key Stage 4 maths lessons, with students completing the quizzes as homework tasks.

Diagnostic questions are multiple choice, designed to detect underlying misconceptions which cause individual students or whole classes to answer incorrectly.

The system includes a parental engagement element and parents are alerted to the quizzes their children need to complete, as well as the marks they receive.

Show and Tell event

Colleagues from across the Trust met at Harwich and Dovercourt High School for a Show and Tell CPD.

The event in March enabled colleagues to share teaching and learning ideas, approaches and resources.

Charlie McCarthy, Sigma group facilitator, said: "All staff surveyed agreed it was a practical and useful session that would have an impact in their classrooms and went away inspired to try something new."



STEPPING STONES TRAINING UPDATE

Trainee teachers at NETT are nearing the completion of their courses and are ready to take up posts in schools as NQTs in September.

All trainees have passed their Level 7 PGCE modules and are working to complete files, tasks and final placements.

Other recent successes –

- Primary trainee Florence Pullon won Best Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Project in the Chartered College of Teaching research poster competition.
- Academic programme director Dr Sarah Alix has a research paper published in the Chartered College of Teaching IMPACT Journal, circulated to schools and members, examining a project engaging pupils with philosophy.

- NETT has become one of only 36 ITT providers to successfully submit a bid to offer Graduate Teacher Apprenticeships from September. These allow applicants to train as salaried trainees over a 13-month period to gain QTS.

The Stepping Stones to teaching programme is becoming a graduate and undergraduate internship run by NETT, with no cost to schools to train interns. Email sarah.alix@nett.org.uk for more information.

Introducing...the central team



The central team at Sigma Trust has grown rapidly over recent months. Based at the Tendring Education Centre, the centralised team now consists of finance, HR and payroll services made up of 14 colleagues.

The finance team is led by Jacqueline Tomkins, chief finance officer, and Carol Wisbey, Trust finance manager, who oversee a team of six colleagues. All aspects of financial management across Sigma is now the responsibility of these colleagues.

The HR team consists of Helen Hobbs, Trust HR manager, and Nigel Sawyer, employee relations manager, along with three colleagues. Together, they provide a comprehensive service to all academies within the Trust.

Payroll is overseen by Lindsey Clark, payroll officer, and Anna Day who faced the task in April of making sure all 900 staff got paid for the first time under the new structure. The expansion of the Trust to include a new secondary school (see page 3) will lead to further appointments to the central team.

Any member of staff who has a query or question can contact the teams on:

Finance: 01255 750910 or finance@sigmatrust.org.uk

HR: 01255 750905 or hr@sigmatrust.org.uk

Payroll: 01255 750914 or payroll@sigmatrust.org.uk

Director of education appointed

To strengthen the support for school improvement, Scott Holder has been appointed as Sigma's director of education.

Mr Holder, former co-head of the Stanway School, will support school improvement within Sigma, working with the board of trustees and headteachers to ensure the Trust achieves its mission, vision, values and strategic objectives. The director of education will have oversight of school improvement and education performance and will develop

and deploy resources to secure the best possible outcomes for students.

Mr Holder said: "My vision is for the Trust to be at the vanguard of educational thinking and discourse through establishing strong networks to continue to promote educational excellence in all areas of the Trust.

"This will involve making sure everyone benefits from working collaboratively as we are much stronger, and more successful, when we work together."

Have you thought about a career in teaching? Maybe our Internship programme is for you?

north
essex
teacher
training

NETT INTERNSHIP

- If you are a graduate, a student working towards a degree or a school based employee, our Internship programme into teaching may be for you.
- If you are interested in becoming a teacher in a Primary, Secondary or Special school but need further classroom experience and training before you apply, then the Internship programme can support you with this.
- Gain school based experience and training and then move straight to a guaranteed interview with NETT.
- Earn while you train and gain experience!



WHY CHOOSE TO TRAIN WITH NETT?

2 routes:

- Graduate Internship
- Undergraduate Internship

Key aspects for the school:

- No cost to the school for training
- Graduate/undergraduate developing to progress into teacher training
- Schools can influence and support the development of a potential trainee teacher/teacher
- Salary for the participant is paid by the school dependent on the role or hours offered to the trainee
- Full-time, part-time, or specified hours

Key aspects for the participant:

- Support for skills tests
- Support for equivalency testing for GCSEs if needed
- Support for UCAS application and personal statement
- Mentoring through half termly training sessions
- Mixing with other participants to share experiences
- Full-time, part-time or specified hours

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Dr. Sarah Alix—Academic Programme Director NETT

email: sarah.alix@nett.org.uk

Tel: +44 (0) 1255 431949

Website: www.nett.org.uk

