

# SIGMA NEWS

For Students, Parents and Carers of The Sigma Trust

**Greater than the sum of its parts**

## Brand new school for Sigma



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# Welcome...



Welcome to the latest edition of Sigma News. As you will see from the cover, we are pleased to announce we will be running the new school being built on the site of Alderman Blaxill School. The school, to be called Paxman Academy, is due to open in September 2019.

The building work is now well under way and we recently appointed Carol Anne Moffat as headteacher. She will continue in her role as deputy head at Stanway School as well as setting up the new academy.

New headteachers have also been appointed at Harwich and Dovercourt High School and at St Helena School and I wish all of these colleagues every success in their new roles. As you will see below, the achievements of a number of staff within the Trust were recognised in this year's Essex Teaching Awards.

Across all schools, we have seen significant improvements in the premises pupils work in, either through major expansion work or improvements to the existing fabric.

The work on expanding both Monkwick Junior School and Stanway School is due to be concluded later this term and it will be great to see these new classrooms handed over to the schools before September.

The achievements of the pupils across all of our schools has been fully demonstrated throughout this edition. They have once again been involved in a wide range of activities within the classroom and beyond and have shown themselves to be strong ambassadors for both their schools and The Sigma Trust.

We will continue to explore ways of enriching the curriculum and creating an exciting learning environment for all youngsters.

I hope you all have a great summer break.

**Jeff Brindle**  
CEO The Sigma Trust

## Essex Teaching Awards success

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."



We are  
the Sigma  
family...



The STANWAY SCHOOL



St Helena School



Thomas Lord Audley School



Paxman  
ACADEMY

# 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 Moffat, 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 of 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 (Presentation, Respect, Organisation, Understanding and Determination) 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.



## 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.

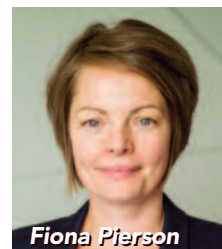
The school became part of the Sigma Trust in June, with a raft of improvements put into place, including work to upgrade the building.

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.



Kate Finch



Fiona Pierson

### NEWSBITE

#### Building work at junior school

A two-storey extension to Monkwick Junior School is on schedule to be completed for September.

The extension and remodelling project is making way for an interventions area, a studio and space for food science and design and technology lessons.

Headteacher Rebecca McCutcheon said: "We can really see it looking like a building with clear walls and windows, instead of just scaffolding! We have chosen paint colours and are starting to order the furniture."

"Phelans, the building company, have worked well with us and held an assembly about how they keep safe on site. They have also run a poster competition in the school."

"We are looking forward to our new space and the extra opportunities it will give the children. We can't wait to move in!"



# What does it mean to be British?

Students at Clacton County High School are learning how to be great British citizens.

Day to day life at the school takes into account the principles of individual liberty and freedom of speech, democracy, the rule of law, mutual respect and acceptance of others.

Throughout the curriculum, opportunities to express British values are sought and REAL (religious, ethical and life-long learning) days also link to them.

Principal Neil Gallagher said: "Clacton County High School is very proud of its standing within the community and we consider that part of our educational responsibilities lies with teaching and guiding our students towards life

beyond school. British values form the basis of a successful, caring yet progressive society and students need to be aware of the roles all citizens need to play within this."



## Artists create for Britishness project

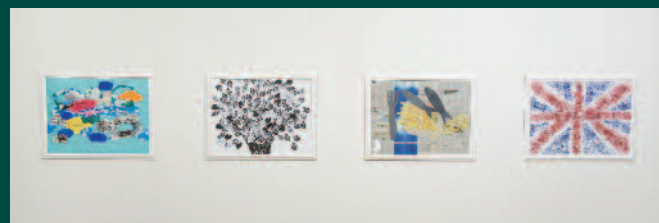
Creative students at Harwich and Dovercourt High School collaborated with a London artist for an art project.

The 12 Year 10 students worked with Eyewright to create works for the First Site gallery in Colchester.

Using new-found skills of animation and stop motion filming, they produced a series of short films around the story of Britishness – how you become British, what it means, how it is formed.

They looked at birth – inspired by the recent Royal baby – and how when we are born we have no identity.

The final artwork will be a large projected film in a room which will be both visual and auditory, along with artwork used for the animations framed to form snapshots from the film.



## STEM club leader awarded

The dedication and commitment of a senior science technician has been recognised by the Jack Petchey Foundation.

The Leader Award enables schools to honour staff going the extra mile to support young people.

Will James, from St Helena School, has been awarded for his contribution to the school's STEM – science, technology, engineering and maths – clubs, including VEX Robotics and Arduino Club.

Esme Grainger, science technician, said: "Mr James has also played a pivotal role in setting up a STEM account which has offered a way for staff, parents and local businesses to support STEM at St Helena. The most recent non-uniform day, organised by Mr James, raised £867.79."

Mr James will receive a certificate and medallion and his school invited to apply for a £750 grant to support the STEM clubs.



### NEWSBITE

## Critical thinking developed

Early years staff have been working with the local consortium of schools to develop critical thinking in the youngest pupils.

Independent early years consultant Amanda James and staff at Monkwick Infant School have been focusing on developing critical thinking and independent learning in the early years.

She spent three days with staff developing activities which lead to the development of these skills with a view to raising outcomes for reception aged pupils.

## National SEND conference appearance

Two senior leaders from the Stanway School were invited to speak at the National SEND Conference in London.

Co-headteacher Scott Holder and assistant headteacher Vincent Maiella were asked to present on provision and outcomes for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) after the school won the National SEND Award.

The conference provided an opportunity to explore what constitutes outstanding SEND provision and how schools and local authorities can deliver high quality interventions.

Participants gained insights from SEND policy experts and leading best practice case studies on enhancing SEND teaching and professional development, effectively assessing and meeting SEND needs, successfully utilising funding and meeting inspection standards following the full implementation of SEND reforms.

Mr Maiella said: "We are very pleased the hard work and dedication to SEND from staff, students and parents has resulted in the opportunity to share our experiences to a wider audience."

# TV cooking show features GCSE students

Students from the Stanway School were filmed for Channel 4's Jamie and Jimmy's Friday Night Feast.

Textiles teacher Melissa Newman worked with Jimmy Doherty at Jimmy's Farm in Suffolk to build a hydrator to teach students about food preservation, healthy eating and sustainability during filming at the school.

A group of 20 Year 9 food preparation and nutrition GCSE students featured in the show.

Mrs Newman said: "We felt we needed to add another twist to the teaching of 'farm to fork', sustainability and healthy eating and so that was our pitch – the production company jumped at the idea."



## Learning about learning at Monkwick

Monkwick Infant and Junior School 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.

### NEWSBITE

#### One man's scrap...

The Scrapstore PlayPod has been introduced at Monkwick Infant School to inspire imaginative play.

The large shed is filled with recyclable materials to develop resourceful den building and creative language. The scheme is a holistic process to change the human and physical play environment to transform play.

Headteacher Claire Holmes said: "We have seen wonderful games as the children ride in buggies, use crutches and build hammocks. Already, we have seen children co-operating better together."

The PlayPod scheme, supported through Sports Premium funding, has also led to training for all midday staff in developing and supporting children during playtimes.



## Democracy in Schools outreach



A new outreach programme has been launched by St Helena School with the University of Essex and the Government.

The Democracy in Schools programme was trialled with 15 students at the school through after school workshops.

Undergraduates gathered views from the students as a way of allowing young people to form and voice their opinions on political topics.

Hollie Thorman, careers co-ordinator, said: "Another exciting finding from the feedback was that a large proportion of school students advised they are more motivated to attend university having taken part in the programme and learnt more about university life from the undergraduate student facilitators."

## Interactive tech workshop for girls

The male dominated technology sector was promoted to girls during an interactive workshop. Year 8 girls at The Thomas Lord Audley School took part in the TechGirls Challenge by designing their own apps on the topic of How do we keep our oceans clean?

Sue Green, careers adviser, said: "Technology is still a male dominated area and the purpose of the workshop was to highlight to our Year 8 girls that there are many women who have successful careers in this sector and the different types of opportunities available to them to hopefully help to bridge the gender gap and to influence the development of a growing industry."





# Bringing Macbeth to life through drama

Exam preparation took on a dramatic twist with a performance by a theatre company.

Box Clever helped Year 11 students at The Thomas Lord Audley School to prepare for their English literature GCSE with a performance of Macbeth.

Laura Brown, head of English, said: "The theatre group conveyed Shakespeare's play in an engaging way, by approaching the text from a narrative perspective, narrating the events and the characters' thoughts and emotions. The performance increased students' understanding of Macbeth as a performed play, which will have helped to develop their analysis and explanations in the GCSE exam."



## Headteacher turns heads on catwalk

The annual Harwich and Dovercourt High School hair show saw headteacher Kate Finch become a disco diva.

Hairdressing students created looks based around the overall 1970s theme as part of their assessments before launching the catwalk event to a packed audience.

The event was judged by Alter Ego Hair Design, Colchester; Raymond's Hair Studio, Dovercourt; and Carmel Tate, City & Guilds IQA.

## SEND information evening for parents

An inaugural information evening for parents with children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) was held in Clacton.

The event at Clacton County High School brought together agencies and support groups, as well as an opportunity for parents to meet the SEND team. Parents of children in Year 6 with SEND who will be joining the school in September also attended to help with the transition to secondary education.

The evening also provided parents and carers with an opportunity to discuss various strategies they could employ at home, as well as pick up resources and information from the organisations represented.



## Bringing literacy to life with author

A visit by children's author Stewart Foster saw pupils act out scenes from one of his books.

Year 6 pupils at Monkwick Junior School took part in a creative writing workshop, Year 5 enjoyed guided reading and the whole school got the opportunity to attend a book signing.

The author of The Bubble Boy and All The Things That Could Go Wrong told pupils what inspired him to become a writer, as well as answering questions about his books.

Assistant headteacher Ashleigh Pool said: "The visit really complimented our drive to improve reading at school and has inspired children to write their own stories."



### NEWSBITE

## Construction competition win for Stanway

Year 10 students took part in the Construction Competition, focusing on electrical, plumbing, carpentry and design engineering.

Teams - including The Stanway School and Clacton County High School - were given points for leadership, teamwork, accuracy and participation, with the Stanway School coming out on top.

The team won hard hats, hi-vis jackets, safety footwear and work experience at Andersons Construction Company where they can learn more about architecture, project management, site work, design engineering and plumbing.



# Bridging the gap between home and school

A family focus team is helping to engage parents with the education of their children.

Events have been organised across subjects including science, English and food technology at Clacton County High School to give parents an opportunity to try their hand at activities with their children.

A recent Come Dine with CCHS evening was such a success, the food technology department is looking to host a second cookery event towards the end of the summer term.

During a science event for Year 7, parents and students worked together to make slime.

Principal Neil Gallagher said: "Clacton County High School

is committed to working in partnership with our parents; the importance of parental involvement in all aspects of a child's education cannot be underestimated."



## Celebration of British Science Week

Exploding balloons, dissections and elephant toothpaste were on the agenda during a week dedicated to science.

Students in Year 7 to 10 at St Helena School experienced a range of science activities including egg drop competitions and car races as part of British Science Week.

They had to apply their scientific knowledge and understanding to the STEM – science, technology, engineering and maths – activities.

The recreation of the periodic table using cakes raised £60 which will be donated to Cancer Research UK.

Dr Jean Thackray said: "We were exhilarated by the enthusiasm of the students for the events."



## Arts Award industry day

Education has been enriched for Harwich and Dovercourt High School students who completed the Arts Award.

The enrichment programme inspired Year 9 students to develop new creative arts skills and lead their own learning in a range of projects, including Live Lounge, Directing Drama and Flash Mob Dance.

Sarah Jane Parker, head of performing arts, said: "The

programme develops creativity, leadership and communication skills. Through Arts Award, young people learn to work independently, helping them to prepare for further education and employment. Without this opportunity, many of our students would never have access to so many art forms or industry professionals to promote their creativity and raise aspirations."

The school secured £7,000 funding to deliver the award to a whole year group, having seen 100 per cent of students achieve the Bronze award in 2017.

## Students graduate at the University of Cambridge

Brilliant students who completed a scholar programme attended a graduation ceremony.

Year 9 students from The Thomas Lord Audley School were invited to take part in the Brilliant Club programme.

Working with a PhD researcher from the University of Essex to develop their writing skills, students learnt how to analyse sources, complete independent research, develop communication and how to structure their writing.

They graduated at Jesus College at the University of Cambridge and spoke with students about studying at the university.



### NEWSBITE

#### Able writers work with visiting author

Author Justin Coe inspired Year 2 pupils to write their own poetry.

Monkwick Infant School hosted the author who ran workshops with the school's most keen writers as part of Able Writers Day.

The national event brings top authors, poets and non-fiction writers into schools to work with children on pieces of creative writing.

Pupils were able to buy signed copies of Justin's collections during the event.



# Sports leaders promote inclusive events

Students with special educational needs enjoyed inclusive sport. Nine sports leaders from Clacton County High School took part alongside their less able peers in an action-packed session learning how to play baskin - a new form of basketball for people of all abilities.

The new game format, recently introduced to the UK, allows mainstream players and people with disabilities to take part together.

Inclusive sports coach Stephen Morley said: "It was great to have the opportunity to promote this inclusive game and fantastic to see the compassion shown by the CCHS sports leaders towards their guests."



## Sports tour hailed a success

A five-day sports tour of Holland gave students' confidence a boost.

The 69 students from The Thomas Lord Audley School took part in netball and football training sessions with England and West Ham coaches.



In the netball tournament, the under-13 team was crowned champions, while the under-15 football team also won their competition.

Laura Price, PE teacher, said: "It was a week full of sporting activities, which allowed students to build their confidence, improve their skills in netball / football and develop their teamwork in a competitive environment."

Before leaving Centre Parcs, the students had a tour of the PSV Eindhoven Stadium.

## Themed sports competition for infants

Hurdles, javelin and parachute games put Year 2 pupils through their paces at an inter sports competition.

Pupils from Monkwick Infant School joined others from across Colchester in competing in the Dino Games.

Organised by Colchester Institute, the event saw 30 Monkwick pupils try their hand at the dinosaur themed activities.



## GB athlete inspires Mollie

Children with physical and neurological impairments competed in the Panathlon Challenge.

Mollie Bennett, Year 8 student from The Stanway School, was among the All Stars Team of students from Essex.

She competed in five swimming events – including 25m freestyle and 25m freestyle relay - at the London Aquatic Centre, Olympic Park, where the pool can be adapted to accommodate the needs of swimmers.

During the event, Mollie met and discussed swimming with former Paralympic GB gold medallist and Panathlon ambassador Liz Johnson.



## New football team leads by example

Players in a brand-new football team are showing younger peers how to succeed with teamwork and resilience.



The ten Year 6 pupils at Monkwick Junior School have only been a team since the start of the year, but their efforts have sparked interest in the game among younger year groups.

Aaron Lee, sports co-ordinator, said: "The aim for our football team was to develop key skills and qualities such as teamwork, confidence, resilience, determination and sportsmanship / respect which they can transfer into any situation as they continue their development as young students, athletes and people."