



Winter 2020 - Issue 7

SIGMA NEWS

For the Staff and Stakeholders of The Sigma Trust

Greater than the sum of its parts



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- SIGMA SIXTH IS LAUNCHED
- £4M SPENT ON BUILDINGS
- LINKS WITH LPAT GROW
- DEPUTY CEO APPOINTED



Welcome...

Welcome to the latest edition of Sigma News containing a wide range of articles celebrating what we have achieved together in the last six months. Sigma is now in its

fourth year and its collaborative way of working has become firmly established and enhanced in that time.

In this edition, you will find news of the creation of Sigma Sixth, the brand name for post-16 provision across the Trust. This is an exciting development as it will enhance the range of courses and learning opportunities for all of our 16 to 18-year-old students. We hope this will also provide a high quality alternative to the existing provision for those students at our 11-16 schools and opportunities for staff from these schools to experience teaching at this level for part of the week.

There has been massive investment in building improvements across a number of schools, with many more projects in the pipeline. Up to now,

we have focussed on less visible, but urgent upgrades to the fabric of all schools and we now aim to ensure the learning environment is enhanced and the toilets and social spaces are of equal high quality.

Major expansion is planned for Clacton County High School and The Colne Community School and College over the next 18 months. This will entail substantial refurbishment and remodelling of existing spaces, as well as some additional new buildings.

The Say Yes to the Prom Dress initiative at The Stanway School is a fantastic idea and one that hopefully can be rolled out across all schools. This is a great way of cutting costs for parents for something that may only have been worn once. I am sure other schools have similar schemes linked to uniform.

Finally, as you will see below, I will be stepping down at the end of this year, but will be looking to continue to support the development of Sigma in a different capacity and help to build on its continued success.

*Jeff Brindle,
CEO The Sigma Trust*

CEO of The Sigma Trust to step down

Jeff Brindle, CEO of The Sigma Trust, is stepping down from his role as CEO this summer.

The former headteacher of Clacton County High School led on the creation of The Sigma Trust in 2016.

Mr Brindle, who will continue to play a part-time role in the operation of the Trust, said: "We have had massive growth in the last 12 months, with The Philip Morant School and College and The Colne Community School and College joining, The Paxman Academy opening and now two more primaries - Holland Park Primary School and Alton Park Junior School - joining the Trust.

"I am really proud of how Sigma has developed over the last four years. We have achieved our initial vision of creating a strong, collaborative partnership of local academies and have provided support and leadership capacity to a number of schools facing challenging circumstances.

"While we are planning for a period of stability after significant recent growth, we will continue to strengthen the capacity of The Sigma Trust during this period of transition.

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank all colleagues for their contribution and support during my time as CEO."

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Enhanced sixth form facilities are being offered by The Sigma Trust from September



Following a consultation by the Trust, Clacton County High School and The Philip Morant School and College are launching enhanced sixth form facilities this September.

Under the banner Sigma Sixth, the sixth form will be set across two campuses –

- Clacton County High's sixth form will relocate to the new Sigma Sixth Tendring Campus at the Tendring Education Centre
- The Philip Morant's sixth form facilities are being expanded and enhanced to create the Sigma Sixth Colchester Campus

Jeff Brindle, CEO, The Sigma Trust, said: "The Sigma Trust has been working on this vision for quite some time in conjunction with the local authority. We are extremely pleased it is finally becoming a reality.

"The two campuses will not only compliment other sixth form providers already available within the Clacton and Colchester areas, but extend the curriculum offer and range of courses to suit all levels of learners. We will also continue to work in collaboration with others, including the VI6 Partnership supported by the University of Essex."

In recent years, demographic changes have led to a growing demand for places at secondary schools, especially within the Tendring area.

The sixth form move and the planned development to expand the Walton Road site of Clacton County High will allow for the creation of the additional school spaces required.

The increasing numbers will be accommodated in Sigma Sixth, with capacity for 600 students in Clacton alone.

Prospective students and their parents have already had the opportunity to look around the Sigma Sixth campuses and have been impressed with the development of a more adult environment, with rest areas, catering and serving points and sports facilities.

The Sigma Trust has also been able to extend the range of Level 3 courses available by utilising teaching professionals within the Trust's other secondary schools - The Colne Community School and College, Harwich and Dovercourt High School, The Stanway School, Thomas Lord Audley School, St Helena School and the brand-new Paxman Academy.

Celebrating European Day of Languages

Events were put on across The Sigma Trust schools to mark the annual European Day of Languages.

Throughout the day, students could sample traditional foods from European countries, as well as take part in a language hunt and the Great European Bake-off run by Clacton County High School and Harwich and Dovercourt High School.

Students were challenged to bake cakes or biscuits with a European theme, to be judged during open evenings.

At The Philip Morant School and College, students learnt about other countries and practised some of the 23 European languages. They also sung karaoke in other languages and tried flamenco dancing.



Trust's first Careers Convention

Year 11 students attended the Trust's first Careers Convention to learn more about future pathways open to them.

Representatives from more than 85 training providers, colleges, universities, post-16 providers and local, national and global employers were on hand to answer students'

questions at Tendring Education Centre.

Hollie Thorman, school careers co-ordinator at St Helena School, said: "The first careers convention was a great success. Students were keen to make the most of this fantastic opportunity, speaking to many providers and gathering as much information as possible."

Say yes to the – prom – dress!

Families struggling to kit out their daughters for prom are being offered a lifeline – as The Stanway School stocks up on dresses for them to borrow.

The school has launched the Say Yes to the Prom Dress scheme, with 100 donated dresses – plus shoes and accessories - ready to be used for prom.

The Ford Britain Trust has donated 40 dresses and £250 in support.

The school now has so many dresses, it is opening up the new scheme to fellow schools within The Sigma Trust.

Luella Murray, head of English interventions, said: "It is our belief that prom should be an event that all Year 11 students should be able to be a part of and enjoy, regardless of any financial situation."

The dresses, in various styles and sizes, are free to hire, with a donation requested for dry cleaning.



Grade 9 maths masterclass

The mission to score top grades in maths was supported with a subject masterclass.

A group of 100 Year 11 students from across The Sigma Trust gathered at The Philip Morant School and College for the Grade 9 maths masterclass.

Students worked on differentiation, rates of change and their application in real-life scenarios.

Finlay Ridgwell, mathematics strategic lead, said: "All students showed excellent maturity and exceptional subject knowledge to apply their understanding of mathematics to complicated topics. The work shown by all was wonderful to see and students felt they were challenged and extended in their pursuit of a grade 9 in mathematics."

As a follow-up, some students from across the Trust will be invited to attend the Maths in Action seminar in London to get involved in sessions to inspire them to see maths in unexpected places.

Students compete in maths contest

Mathematicians came together to take part in the annual NEMO competition.

The North East Essex Mathematical Olympiad brings together Year 9 students from The Sigma Trust and other schools. The 18 teams gathered at The Thomas Lord Audley School for the enrichment session.

Finlay Ridgwell, mathematics strategic lead, said: "A fantastic turnout of students came together to compete in the latest NEMO competition.

"Students competed in three rounds of mathematics to see who could answer the most questions correctly, with the quickest scoring points for each round. Each group worked really well as a team deciphering the best way

to answer problem questions. They really enjoyed seeing mathematics outside of the classroom. Impressively, six Sigma teams were in the top six!"

The winners – retaining their title from last year – were a team from The Stanway School.



Infant school is Good, says Ofsted

Ofsted inspectors have confirmed Monkwick Infant School is Good.

Inspectors visited in the summer, grading all areas of the school as Good.

Headteacher Claire Holmes said: "This could not have been achieved without the support parents and carers gave throughout the inspection and the lovely positive comments they shared with the inspectors.

"It was a wonderful end to the last school year and really recognised how hard everyone works to care for, and to teach, the children. It recognised how brilliant the children are too, and we were so proud of them. They behaved so well and were a real credit to the school."



£4m investment in buildings

A building work programme has seen more than £4m spent on school buildings within The Sigma Trust.

Across seven schools, significant remodelling and refurbishment projects are taking place, with work completed during the summer and February half-term breaks.

Funding for each project came from School Condition Allocation, Devolved Formula Capital or school reserves. Projects included:

St Helena School

- Remodelling of two toilet blocks, creating safe open plan areas.
- Refurbishment, extension and remodelling of the canteen, including the addition of an outdoor sheltered area with its own service point.



St Helena School's canteen.



Thomas Lord Audley School's toilets.

The Colne Community School and College -

- Remodelling of two toilet blocks.

The Philip Morant School and College

- Resolve overheating and ventilation issues.

Thomas Lord Audley School

- Refurbishment of toilets and complete new plant room with two new boilers.

Harwich and Dovercourt High School

- Remodelling of two toilet blocks.
- Replacement of roof and curtain walling around school gym.

The Stanway School

- Widening of roads to ensure safe traffic movement, replacement of curtain walling within canteen, refurbishment of kitchen

Monkwick Junior School

- Refurbishment of six classrooms and new fire alarm.



Monkwick Junior School's classroom.



Harwich and Dovercourt High School's roofing work.

Grand opening of brand-new school

The opening of Paxman Academy has been celebrated.

The brand-new school, which opened in September, welcomed local dignitaries and community members, including councillors, representatives from Essex County Council and Barnes Construction, The Sigma Trust trustees and board members, secondary and primary headteachers and governors.

A number of community figures were also in

attendance, as well as colleagues from MAN Energy Solutions, the company which took over the production of Paxman engines and donated the engine at the front of the school.

Staff from the former Alderman Blaxill School, which used to be based on the site where Paxman now stands, provided a trip down memory lane. The evening included three students giving their accounts of the first few weeks at their new school.

LPAT links grow



The partnership between The Sigma Trust and Learning Pathways Academy Trust (LPAT) is growing.

LPAT – with three primary schools in Clacton, Colchester and Braintree – has worked in partnership with Sigma for four years, focusing on Monkwick Infant and Junior Schools.

Now, with two more primary schools joining Sigma – Holland Park and Alton Park – that joined-up working has been expanded.

Gavin Bradley, LPAT director and head of White Hall Academy, said: “With two more primary schools joining Sigma, LPAT has been able to bring in support for them, along with Monkwick. Four teachers have been seconded from LPAT to strengthen the teams within Sigma.

“That has been a big part of the support, in terms of adding capacity of good quality teachers and carrying out leadership roles. There was no time to recruit in the usual way; this way, those schools were fully staffed by September 1.

“For LPAT, it means staff are able to get leadership experience and professional development in the Sigma schools. They can lead projects, such as writing, Year 6 or curriculum.

“LPAT’s ethos is very much supporting other schools in any way we can. This is fulfilling that.”

LPAT is identifying strengths and weaknesses within the primaries and sharing best practise.

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Nurture unit opened at primary

Children with attachment issues or trauma in their lives will be supported at a new nurture provision.

Holland Park Primary School has opened a dedicated unit to offer extra support to pupils with behaviour, mental health or wellbeing issues.

Six pupils will spend their mornings in the provision, which has been set up with a homely feel, including a dining area, kitchen and sofa area.

A pupil behaviour and wellbeing lead has been appointed to oversee the project and four members of staff have undertaken behaviour management training.

Headteacher Matt Moseley said: “We are

trying to really develop the pastoral support we offer to our pupils and families.

“We have been travelling around the county looking at other provisions, taking note of what is working and what is not working so well. This is a big piece of work.

“Pupils will take part in activities which will give them an opportunity to learn key skills, such as co-operation, how to regulate their emotions, building their self-esteem, teamwork, mindfulness and meditation. They will go to the shops to buy ingredients and cook for their teachers at a tea party.”

Pupils, who will spend half the day in their mainstream class, will be reintegrated full-time after a term within the provision.

TRAINING OUR PEOPLE...

Trust Thursday – humanities and science

The latest research on the importance of developing subject knowledge was shared at the humanities Trust Thursday event.

Held at Harwich and Dovercourt High School, the event saw more than 35 colleagues come together to focus on The Power of Subject Expertise, hosted by Sarah Davies-Llewellyn,

Sigma strategic lead for humanities, and Katie Ruffell, lead teacher of humanities at Harwich and Dovercourt.

Colleagues from different schools were able to share recommended books, articles and documentaries to develop and deepen subject knowledge.



Science teachers from across the Trust gathered for a subject focused Trust Thursday at The Philip Morant School and College.

Colleagues chose between two breakout sessions - exam board feedback from the 2019 series of exams to inform teaching and planning for this year's cohort; and an opportunity to try online resources for teaching and revision.

They also took part in a speed-dating type networking event, where colleagues shared ideas, particularly around boys' engagement in reading.

John Knights, strategic science lead, said: "Ideas which resonated with colleagues included the use of Frayer model for literacy and how to develop command word use to aid exam question comprehension."

Shared resources can be found via the science intranet page – see page 9.

Sigma INSET day – February 24

The Sigma Trust will hold its third trust-wide INSET day on February 24.

The day will bring together people from all areas of education to enable colleagues - teachers and support staff - to reflect critically, establish and build relationships, promote action research, increase awareness of educational discourse and explore what works.

Scott Holder, director of education, said: "We will also be developing our professional partnership with the Learning Pathways Academy Trust (LPAT) who will run workshops on how we can develop still further our reading policy and practice.

"It is sure to be a thought-provoking, stimulating and inspiring day as staff listen, speak, ask

questions, make connections and, above all, spend quality time talking shop and sharing best practice."

Keynote speakers include Craig Barton, Harry Fletcher-Wood and Mark Roberts.

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Science intranet expanded

Each week, science teams across the Trust receive an email to promote the study of the subject beyond the curriculum and to develop wider reading and exposure to new vocabulary.

Facts, reading and discussions are shared to all those teaching or supporting in our science departments.

Now, the information is available on the Trust's science intranet page, accessible via your school's Google account at <https://sites.google.com/sigmatrust.school/intranet/teaching-learning/science> or using the QR code shown.

Since the new year, the service has been expanded to include CPD resources and links to the latest research. It will also soon include model teaching materials.

John Knights, strategic science lead, said: "Please get in touch regarding what you would find useful on this site."



New director role to oversee training

Dr Sarah Alix has taken on a new role at NETT as the programme director.

The role will give Dr Sarah an oversight and strategic direction for both the primary and secondary programmes.

The programmes will move forward together with a focus on curriculum content, frameworks for ITT and developing knowledgeable and confident teachers.

The role will include strengthening quality assurance processes and procedures within NETT.

John Morgan and Jane Adamson will continue to lead their phase of training in the primary and secondary programmes.



UPDATE ON...OUR TRAINEES

Secondary and primary trainees have completed their first term.

Trainees are developing their practice and completing tasks and have submitted their first assignment relating to SEND.

Last year's trainees enjoyed their graduation in October, with NETT awards given in various categories, including outstanding progress (Aimee Taylor at Felixstowe Academy and Alix Van Der Zanden at Mayflower Primary); inspirational trainee (Holly Pearce at Harwich and Dovercourt High School and Jaymi-Leigh Pulumbarit at Market Field School), and academic

excellence (Celyn Evans at The Stanway School and Petra Wilton at Highfields Primary).

Dr Sarah Alix, programme director, said: "We are pleased to celebrate recent achievements with publications due in the Chartered College of Teaching Impact Journal in the summer term from Emma Green at Monkwick Junior School and Sarah Austin at The Colne Community School and College and in the Childhood Remixed Journal from Alexander Brown at Clacton County High School."



Introducing...new Deputy CEO

The Sigma Trust has appointed Lyn Wright as Deputy CEO.

The director of standards joined the Trust in February last year and took on the new role on November 1.

Mrs Wright worked in secondary schools and pupil referral units for 22 years and previously held the role of head of education and early years for Essex Local Authority.

She said: "I retain all of my original responsibilities as director of standards, now with the additional role of Deputy CEO, working closely with CEO Jeff Brindle and strategically across the Trust.

"My role will ensure there is continuity and a smooth transition when Jeff steps down in the summer.

"My main focus is still on school improvement.

"I am thoroughly enjoying my role and feel privileged to be

working in such a Trust."

Mrs Wright is ensuring schools due an Ofsted inspection are prepared, drawing on her experience as an inspector and also previous experience where she supported school leaders with one or two inspections each week."

She is also working closely with Gavin Bradley, Learning Pathways Academy Trust (LPAT) director, to support school improvement in the primary schools. She has also commissioned an experienced HMI inspector to carry out



Pupil Premium reviews at all schools to support improvements.

“
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”

Trust-wide push on reading launched

The Trust is working closely with the Learning Pathways Academy Trust (LPAT) to benefit from a reading initiative it runs in its own primary schools.

All Sigma schools are focusing on encouraging reading for pleasure and reading for purpose to ensure pupils can develop the vocabulary they need to be successful in whatever they choose to do in life.

The project, launched to Sigma in the summer, will see colleagues attend four training days across the year.

Lyn Wright, Deputy CEO, said: "I was keen for

all Sigma schools to access high quality training delivered by LPAT to enable us to bring their reading strategy to the Trust.

"It is about training as many teachers as possible, so whether they are teaching maths or science, they can use the same strategy to support reading.

"This is an important strategy if you consider reading is fundamental to learning.

"If a pupil cannot read, this is a real barrier to their learning, progress and potential life chances."

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

We are now recruiting for **September 2020**

Alternatively, consider the Internship
programme to gain experience of working
in a school before training.

For further information on a career in teaching or the
Internship programme contact:

Dr Sarah Alix, Programme Director,
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Jane Adamson, Secondary Programme Lead

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