

SIGMA NEWS

For Students, Parents and Carers of The Sigma Trust

Greater than the sum of its parts



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Welcome to the fifth, bumper issue of Sigma News!

We have doubled the size of the magazine as there are so many stories to share across the growing number of schools within the Sigma Trust.

This term, we welcome Colne and Philip Morant students, staff and families. The two schools joined Sigma on January 1, but we have had the pleasure of supporting both schools through the transfer process and providing significant leadership support in that transition period. I was very pleased to be able to confirm the appointment of Neil Gallagher and Scott Holder into their executive headship roles at Colne and Philip Morant respectively. Both have created stability in the leadership of the schools and have ensured effective communication and consultation is in place for all stakeholders.

As the picture on the front shows, work on completing Paxman Academy is progressing well. We no longer need to rely on artist impressions to see what it will look like. I had the pleasure of walking around the building recently and it really is impressive. Headteacher Carol Anne Moffat is in the process of recruiting staff for the school. Senior colleagues have now been appointed and a number of teaching posts have been filled.

We are once again coming up to the annual Essex Teaching Awards and you will see in the list below that a large number of staff at Sigma schools have once again been nominated. Last year, we had tremendous success with winners in the Headteacher of the Year, Secondary Teacher of the Year and Lifetime Achievement categories.

However, it is the achievements and the experiences of the pupils that this edition most celebrates. Congratulations to all for a great few months and for ensuring all pupils and staff are fully benefiting from the collaborative work that is at the heart of the Sigma Trust.

Jeff Brindle, CEO, The Sigma Trust

Sigma staff nominated for Essex Teaching Awards

A long list of Sigma Trust colleagues have been nominated in this year's Essex Teaching Awards.

The annual awards are an opportunity to give recognition and to celebrate and share best practice. Over the last five years, the awards have acknowledged outstanding teachers and headteachers, teaching assistants, governing bodies and school teams who work in Essex.

Jeff Brindle, CEO, said: "It is fantastic to see so many colleagues nominated for awards this year. This demonstrates the strength that exists among both teaching and non-teaching staff across the Sigma Trust. It would be great to see Sigma matching the success we achieved at last year's awards and I wish all of those nominated every success."

Nominations include –

- **New teacher of the year** – Naomi Wilson and Abi Bond, Clacton County High School; Paul McCullough, Harwich and Dovercourt High School; Jason Beerieraz, Monkwick Junior School; Naomi Clarke, St Helena School; Alex McPhail, Jasmine Dunn and Dan Brown, The Stanway School; Katie Dunne, The Thomas Lord Audley School
- **Teaching assistant of the year** – Steve Kemp, Monkwick Infant School; Tina Byrne, Monkwick Junior School; Susan Went, St Helena School; Maria Ross, The Stanway School; Samantha Mann, The Thomas Lord Audley School
- **Primary teacher of the year** – Ashleigh Pool,

Monkwick Junior School

- **Secondary teacher of the year** – Beau Robinson, Craig Laurie and Dave Hodgson, Clacton County High School, Harwich and Dovercourt High School and Monkwick Infant School; Sandra O'Donnell, Lizzie Annandale and Clare Mulhern, St Helena School; Helen Marr and Rebecca Reilly, The Stanway School; Ross McKenzie, The Thomas Lord Audley School
- **Secondary headteacher of the year** – Neil Gallagher, Clacton County High School
- **Governing body of the year** – The Stanway School; The Thomas Lord Audley School
- **School team of the year** – pastoral hub, communications team, Clacton County High School; site team, Harwich and Dovercourt High School; humanities, St Helena School; pastoral, The Stanway School; pastoral, The Thomas Lord Audley School
- **Lifetime achievement** – Louise Horton, Clacton County High School; Carolyn Simpson, Harwich and Dovercourt High School; Maureen Hooton, The Stanway School; Ann Bryant, The Thomas Lord Audley School
- **Student choice** – Andrew Chitsakamile, Clacton County High School, Harwich and Dovercourt High School; Jo Davies, Dom Davies and Susan Jones, The Stanway School; Kerry Rowland, The Thomas Lord Audley School.

We are the Sigma family...



The STANWAY SCHOOL



St Helena School



Monkwick JUNIOR SCHOOL



Thomas Lord Audley School

Leadership in Clacton is “outstanding”

Clacton County High School is celebrating success having achieved Outstanding judgements in several areas by Ofsted.

The school was visited by an inspection team in September who noted the quality of leadership and management and the 16 to 19 study programmes were top quality and graded by inspectors as Outstanding. All other areas were judged to be Good.

Principal Neil Gallagher said: “The comments made by Ofsted reflect the dedication and hard work of our staff, whether it is teaching incredible lessons, supporting students with pastoral issues or the behind the scenes administrative support.

“CCHS is a great school, with high expectations and a determination to continue to raise the aspirations of our students.”



Specialist centre helping children to grow



A new GROW provision was opened by Monkwick Junior School in September.

The centre is a provision for children whose progression in their current school is of a concern due to barriers caused by behaviour, emotional wellbeing needs or social difficulty.

The specialist staff at GROW are experienced in working with children with these difficulties and are committed to keeping

up with best professional practice.

The centre is based in the main school building while a new purpose-built provision is completed on the school site.

Nina Rownes, head of provision, said: “We are delighted with our move to the Monkwick site. We have been made to feel very welcome and look forward to a long, positive relationship with the infant and junior schools.”

Gavin Bradley, primary strategic lead at Monkwick, said: “Having the GROW team on site is providing valuable training and advice for the staff at Monkwick Infant and Monkwick Junior schools to help support pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties.”

Healthy Schools status revalidated at TLA



The Thomas Lord Audley School is working towards the next level of Healthy Schools status.

Having had its status revalidated recently, it is

working towards Enhanced Healthy Schools status, focusing on emotional wellbeing and mental health.

The work involves –

- improving attendance of students who are absent due to reported anxiety/stress issues. A programme of work has been developed, as well as a facility to encourage students into school and build confidence and attendance

using a therapeutic approach alongside academic work.

- training and qualifications (CACHE) offered to staff to improve understanding of mental health and wellbeing, enabling early recognition of issues and identification of need before there is a deterioration. More than 30 staff have undertaken the training
- transition work developed to include additional support strategies and monitoring for students where anxiety/stress have been reported from primary schools
- introduction of regular whole-school monitoring of emotional wellbeing. Student Voice data is used to improve strategies and support.

Healthy School for the third year

St Helena School is celebrating achieving Healthy Schools status for the third time.

The school successfully proved it was providing education and support for students around the areas of physical and mental fitness.

Headteacher Fiona Pierson said: “This is the third year in a

row the school has been successful. It shows parents that we recognise the importance of these areas and that we take their child’s wellbeing seriously. We are not just an exams factory who want to get results. Of course, that is important, but we balance that against the Healthy Schools criteria and show that we provide a healthy environment for our students.”

Brand-new Paxman Academy is taking shape



Paxman Academy is being built by The Sigma Trust on the site of the former Alderman Blaxill School in Colchester.

The 900-place school opens in September 2019 - with 180 Year 7 students - to cope with the anticipated increase in demand for secondary school places.

Headteacher Carol Anne Moffat, appointed in May, recently took a tour of the site and was able, for the first time, to walk around the rooms which will make up the new school.

She said: "I am really impressed. I am loving the way the school is taking shape. What is really nice is seeing how the school is coming together from our original plans."

Barnes Construction is working with the Trust to ensure the school functions well in the modern world, with industrial styling providing links to Paxman and STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths).

Innovations include lockers built into the walls so they do not restrict corridor width and a community entrance which enables part of the school to be hired out without giving visitors access to the rest of the building.

A large special educational needs (SEN) area was also a priority when planning the school.

Mrs Moffat said: "I feel it is important that children should be taken care of and that the staff who work in SEN feel involved and have a professional work area that is fit for purpose."

The new year will see interviews take place to fill the roles of SENCo, assistant headteacher and maths, science and English teachers. A deputy headteacher has been appointed and is working with Mrs Moffat to bring the team and the school together.

The headteacher, also working at The Stanway School while Paxman is under construction, said: "I want this school to be

aspirational. STEM is a big thing for me. That is what makes a difference to our economic viability. The top end students being pushed and a focus on STEM will all help us to achieve that aspirational feel.

"Equally, sports and performing arts are important, so we have thought ahead to plan out our performance space, with space for monologue evenings for GCSE students, for example. The space and natural light we have is amazing; not many schools have that. We are very lucky and look forward to sharing that with the community.

"It is really exciting. I have pictured myself in my office and what that first day will feel like. I feel privileged to be the first headteacher at a brand-new school and want to do my best for the students and the community.

"I have felt very supported by The Sigma Trust in everything we have done so far."

The building is due to be handed over to the Trust in June when there will be inductions for Year 6 and celebration events before the opening in September.

Brian Markham, from The Sigma Trust, said: "We have the benefit of already running a great number of schools; we have not got to reinvent the wheel. We have got best practice from our other schools and will base systems at Paxman on what we do at those other schools."



Two schools join The Sigma Trust

The Colne Community School and Philip Morant School have been transferred to The Sigma Trust.

The two schools previously formed the Thrive Partnership Academy Trust.

Neil Gallagher, principal at Clacton County High School, became interim executive headteacher at The Colne Community School and has now been appointed as the permanent executive headteacher at both schools.

At Philip Morant, Scott Holder, former co-headteacher at The



Stanway School, was appointed as the executive headteacher alongside his role as director of education for The Sigma Trust.



Jeff Brindle, The Sigma Trust CEO, said: "We are proud and excited to be named as the new sponsors of the academies that previously formed the Thrive Partnership Academy Trust. The five secondary schools within The Sigma Trust have a long history of partnership working with both The Colne Community School and Philip Morant School. We very much welcome the opportunity to establish these formal links."

Quick progress at The Colne Community School

Ofsted inspectors have confirmed The Colne Community School now operates an effective safeguarding policy.

A "no formal designation inspection" visit in November was in response to previous concerns raised by inspectors in May with regards to safeguarding and behaviour.

Neil Gallagher, interim executive headteacher, said: "HMI looked at a wide range of evidence, observing lessons and breaktimes, talking to our students and meeting staff from the school and Essex Local Authority.

"I am delighted that Ofsted has now judged safeguarding to be effective."

The report highlighted other positive changes made since the last inspection and stated: "You have taken decisive action to begin to eradicate the significant weaknesses identified at the last inspection.

"Your appointment and the leadership restructuring has restored staff confidence and clarified lines of accountability. Safeguarding is effective. Your team are now in a better position to build on emerging improvements.

"Suitable strategies are established to deal with the issues arising from the previous inspection."

The report also said students, teachers and parents said behaviour had improved.

Mr Gallagher said: "The report accurately captures the work that has been done since the last inspection, but also the work that we still need to do to move the school forward.

"We agree with each of the priorities HMI identified and had already identified these for our close attention. I can assure you we will deal with the issues the school faces in a clear, sustainable way to ensure the Colne provides the high-quality education our young people deserve."

The Section 8 letter from Christine Dick, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), is available on the school's and Ofsted's websites.



"Calm and purposeful" lessons at Philip Morant School

The new executive headteacher of Philip Morant School has joined a team ready for a new chapter.

Scott Holder joined the school in September as executive headteacher and found the school to be "welcoming and ready to face the challenges ahead".

In a newsletter to parents, he said: "I walked around the school and popped into a number of lessons to talk to students about their learning; lessons were calm and purposeful.

"As I returned to my office, I was handed a letter from a member of our community thanking our students for supporting them while they were helping an elderly couple. Our students called an ambulance and stayed with the couple until it arrived.

"These examples reflect our ethos of Aspiration, Success and Kindness, which underpin our approach to all aspects of school life. We will endeavour to use these values to inform our decisions to make the improvements that

we all wish for our young people."

The school received a monitoring visit from Ofsted which found safeguarding at the school to be "effective".

A new Behaviour for Learning policy is being produced to ensure behaviour in the school consistently supports high-quality teaching and learning to further develop the pastoral system.

Mr Holder said: "Since starting in September, it is clear to me there is a genuine drive by all stakeholders for the school to improve still further. We do not underestimate the challenges ahead and will work hard every day in our commitment to deliver the very best education for your child."



Literacy challenge – read 20 minutes daily

Harwich and Dovercourt High School has been rebranded as a reading school to improve standards of literacy.

Students are encouraged to complete 20 minutes of reading each day to develop the skills needed to read complicated exam questions.

The school is encouraging students to take out a book whenever they are waiting in line and special reading areas have been created.

Kate Finch, headteacher, said: "We've got 15-year-olds standing in a dinner queue with 11-year-olds talking about the same book. They're at the same place. They're reading, they're enjoying, they're discussing."

The school is looking to change mindsets by developing a culture of reading, based on research suggesting those who



read for 20 minutes each day are more successful than those who read less.

Ray Gallagher, assistant headteacher, said: "Reading is escapism. It develops really important skills and I think it's our job as educators to present that in front of students."

Jack Petchey Awards for STEM success

The science and STEM clubs at St Helena School are receiving a boost after students were awarded for their enthusiasm in the subjects.

The four students who received the Jack Petchey Award each decided to spend their £250 winnings on the school clubs.

Will James, senior science technician, was awarded the Jack Petchey Outstanding Award for his work with VEX Robotics in school. The award entitled him to access a £750 grant which has enabled the club to upgrade its VEX EDR Robotics equipment to support competitions.

Mr James said: "We were also able to launch a new drone club with three drone kits with VR headsets and controllers and teams are ready to start competing in February."



Sigma students have big ideas!



An educational ideas initiative brought together Year 6 and 7 students from across Sigma Trust schools.

The Sigma Ideas Project challenges students to create an idea which could change the world, before

presenting their designs and prototypes.

Each school held its own internal competition before putting forward their winning teams to the grand final, held at The Stanway School.

Project organisers 7Billion Ideas questioned teams on their development and future plans for their ideas.

Year 7 students from Clacton County High School came out the overall winners, with their idea for the Food Saver – a smartphone app which alerts users when food in the fridge is going out of date to avoid waste.

The design will now be developed and made into a book, available to buy on Amazon.



Juniors on way to "good" Ofsted

A new leadership team is helping to improve Monkwick Junior School.

A visit from Ofsted inspectors confirmed progress is being made and that the school is on its way to being graded Good in future.

The report stated that "the considerable challenges the new school has faced since September 2016 have been tackled effectively by the Trust".

The school is particularly proud to have been graded Good for behaviour.

Inspectors, who visited during the last week of the summer term, said: "Pupils say they are happy, safe and enjoy coming to school."

Rebecca McCutcheon, headteacher, said: "We acknowledge that there is need to improve further and accept the findings in the report.

"Thanks to all parents for their contribution to the improvements made and for being 'overwhelmingly supportive of leaders and the school'."

Homework system well received

Students, parents and staff have welcomed the relaunch of Home Study.

Home Study is Philip Morant School's version of traditional homework and comprises of three elements – Home Study with tasks set according to students' needs; Home Revision with tasks to support assessment and follow-up from assessments having identified gaps in skills or knowledge; and Enrichment to encourage a love of learning.

All Home Study or Home Revision is set on Go4Schools to enable parents to see what is set.

Claire Pretty, assistant principal, said: "We have been pleased with how students have adapted to completing work set and we are now working with staff and parents to evaluate and further improve this provision to support learning."

Each department decides how much time each year group should spend on Home Study and Home Learning tasks.

Celebrity guest at community picnic

Heart FM breakfast show presenter Su Harrison helped a community picnic go with a swing – and a floss.

The radio personality attended the event at Monkwick Junior School along with pupils and parents and played music for guests to dance – and floss – to.

Teachers arranged games for families to take part in and Su officially opened the school's brand-new building.

The extension adds three new classrooms, a new Rainbow room and a studio space. Year 5 and 6 moved into the classrooms in September.

Rebecca McCutcheon, headteacher, said: "The community



picnic was one of my favourite moments of the year. There was a fantastic atmosphere and it was well attended. We were lucky to have Su also open our new building while she celebrated with us."

SEN hub of positivity and respite

New areas of special educational needs (SEN) expertise have been developed at The Thomas Lord Audley School.

Over the last two years, the school has made improvements, including renovating the sensory room, launched the SEN Student Ambassador Program, getting Year 9 and 10 mentors to assist SEN students in KS3 with reading and getting student mentors to deliver art therapy.

Headteacher Helena Boast said: "The SEN department aims to be a hub for positivity, dynamism and respite, while encouraging students to be the very best they can be. We pride ourselves on ensuring every student feels valued and helping them to be independent and resilient.

"The Learning Academy is home to a team of professionals who strive to be excellent role models prepared to innovate as they engage students and their families to plan, map and celebrate their individual progress stories."



NEWSBITE

Parents go back to the classroom

Pupils looked a little older during a phonics session at Monkwick Infant School recently.

Parents and carers of pupils in Reception and Year 1 were invited in to school for open sessions to promote phonics teaching.

They were told how phonics is taught and took the opportunity to experience the engaging activities used to support children's learning.

A session was held to help families to further support their children at home with phonics.

Headteacher Claire Holmes said: "The open afternoons supported the fantastic effort the school has made in raising phonic outcomes."

£850k hall and kitchen refurb

The next phase of building work at The Stanway School will take place this year.

After a two-year project, students now have access to new rooms in A block, including science labs, DT rooms, new changing rooms and large art and music classrooms, as well as extra practise rooms and a new multi-use sports area. With two year groups full to an increased intake capacity, there is now the need to expand the kitchen and catering facilities.

Designs are under way to begin an £850,000 refurbishment of the school hall and kitchen area, including new servicing facilities to cope with the increase in student and staff numbers. The split-level hall will also be levelled to create additional room for students to stay inside and eat with their friends.

Headteacher Jonathan Bland said: "I am really pleased to have a kitchen and dining area that is able to cater for the increased number of students in the school.

"Once the refurbishment is finished, the kitchen will provide more food and choice for all students to enjoy and the new hall will provide a very pleasant space for students to take their



breaks in. The hall is the last part of the original school remaining, so while it will be nostalgic in some ways to lose this area, it will be exciting to see up-to-date facilities that are fit for purpose for our school community."

It is hoped the work will be completed for September when the third increased year group joins the school.

Students quiz head over new building



Having seen the transformation of The Stanway School, headteacher Jonathan Bland was put in the hot seat by students keen to know more.

They quizzed him on his favourite room in the new A block, whether there would be any future new blocks, why the school logo was changed and how the school has developed over time.

Mr Bland told them: "Since it was founded in 1956, our school has changed beyond recognition. The number of students has grown and we have expanded to meet modern demands. Through interactive whiteboards and computer suites, we have kept up with technology; the uniform has been updated and so has

the school logo, but our core values have not changed.

"The priority has always been to create a happy and safe place to learn."



Building work uncovers historic treasures

The demolition of part of The Stanway School to make way for a new art block lead to the discovery of diaries, photos and memories.

More than 60 years of changing curriculums, school trips and award ceremonies were unveiled in the haul. The diaries revealed details about the school's first day in September 1956, when just 183 of the 200 students

turned up. By 1973, the school was officially a comprehensive school and had been renamed as The Stanway School with 56 full-time teachers. Throughout the years, the school has continued to grow and now has more than 1,000 students.

The six original classrooms have now increased to 66 across three blocks.

The archives also included a number of vintage images of original staff members and sports teams through the decades.



Fabric of school to be enhanced

Extra seating capacity will enable more students to eat their lunch together in future. Building work at St Helena School will bring a whole new kitchen area, with new modern equipment and extra indoor and outdoor seating areas for students.

Headteacher Fiona Pierson said: "This work will enable the kitchen to run more efficiently and for students to have access to a wider range of meal options. The lack of space previously has meant

the food options have been more limited than we would have liked. There will be healthy food options, as well as an opportunity to sample foods from around the world. It is a huge project."

The work, funded by The Sigma Trust, is due to be completed over the summer break. Corridors and toilet areas are to also be overhauled. Ms Pierson said: "Toilet blocks are key social areas which can make children's lives happy or unhappy. Due to the age of the building,

our toilets are due to be refurbished.

"Our corridors are also being refurbished to make them lighter and brighter for both students and staff.

"The fabric of the building is so important to how young people want to learn and the attitude they have to their learning. These improvements will help current students and parents and those of the future feel even more positive about the learning spaces we are providing."

Inspirational talks from the world of work

A range of inspirational talks have been given to students at Harwich and Dovercourt High School through the Speakers for Schools initiative.

Visitors have included Joanna Prior, managing director at Penguin books, and Ian Twinley, chairman and majority shareholder in John Grose (Ford).

Simon Garnham, assistant headteacher, said: "We have found the speakers to be very generous with their time and resources. Joanna gave away a wide selection of books and encouraged students in their writing by offering to read and critique their work.

"Ian loaned the school a car to strip down and reassemble.

"Students respond well to these opportunities. Several have kept in touch with speakers and one student was even confident enough to ask for work experience with Ian - something he was happy to support.

"The sessions increase students' awareness of careers and offer very helpful advice and guidance for them."



Hospital taken over by teenagers



The Take Over Challenge Day gave Year 11 students an opportunity to sample careers within Colchester General Hospital.

The students from The Thomas Lord Audley School interested in careers within the health sector took part in workshops looking at how the hospital deals with medical waste and learnt basic life support.

Danielle Weldon, Year 11 student, said: "The best part was the work shadowing, which I especially enjoyed as I got to assist a doctor in the A&E department, treating major patients, assessing x-rays and CT scans and having conversations with patients. The day was tailored to suit each student's dream job role. I would love to be able to be a part of this day again, as the work experience will benefit me with my future."

Creative tribute to service men and women

Inspired by the poppies at the Tower of London, students got creative to produce their own remembrance display.

To mark the 100-year anniversary of Armistice Day, students and staff at The Colne Community School spent weeks collecting plastic bottles to be turned into poppies for the tribute. Poppies were also made out of old records.

In English, students researched WWI and wrote poems to go on display in the main school entrance. Colleen McCutcheon, Learning Centre and IEU supervisor, said: "It ended up being a fitting tribute to all our service men and women who gave the ultimate sacrifice."



Sampling life as a marine



Teenagers were put through their paces when they got the opportunity to see what life is like as a Royal Marine. Year 9, 10 and 11 students at Clacton County High School took part in a taster session where they learnt about life in the Marines and took part in a physical training session. Principal Neil Gallagher said: "After a gruelling warm-up, it was time for some special circuit training comprising of

different exercises. Students on the first station carried heavy bags from one end of the gym and back three times, while the other students exercised non-stop until the carry team had completed their task before moving to the next station.

"Although very tiring, all of the students felt the session gave them a great opportunity for a taste of life as a marine."

History leaps off the page

Year 4 pupils took a step back in time as they worked with a drama group to enhance their learning. The 70 pupils at Monkwick Junior School worked with History Off the Page to take a trip to 490BC as part of their Ancient Greek topic.

Mark Visagie, assistant head, said: "Pupils enjoyed researching facts about the Ancient Greeks. History Off the Page used storytelling about the Battle of Marathon, drama – focusing on Greek plays and having a celebration feast because of the victory over the Persians by the Athenians - and practical learning making lanterns, charm bracelets and mosaics to deepen the learning of our pupils.

"They were totally immersed in this period. Pupils enjoyed the day; a worthwhile experience for all."



Silent reminders of wartime sacrifices

The centenary of the Armistice was marked in numerous ways at Philip Morant School.

As part of the national There But Not There project, the history department quietly placed life-size silhouettes of Tommies around the school to serve as a silent reminder of the sacrifices

made by so many.

Year 9 students also took a trip to the battlefields of Belgium and Northern France and visited cemeteries and memorials, laying a wreath on behalf of all students at the memorial service at the Menin Gate in Ypres.

Assemblies were held during

remembrance week with a focus on the personal accounts of soldiers and loved ones, including poetry and readings from letters to highlight the individual stories behind the fallen.

The school also observed the two-minute silence and added 100 poppies to the memorial at the front of the school.

Citizenship students visit Parliament

A trip to the Houses of Parliament gave citizenship students an insight into how UK parliament works.

Students from Philip Morant School were given a tour, looked at the structure of the building, took part in an interactive quiz on the structure

of Parliament and watched a presentation on how UK voting works.

They also found out about how the House of Commons and the House of Lords operate and looked around the Women in Parliament exhibition marking 100 years of female suffrage.



Teens find out their kinda future

A trip to BT gave students an opportunity to explore future career options.

The 39 Year 10 students from The Thomas Lord Audley School visited the Martlesham Heath site of BT to also learn what employability skills are needed to help their future careers.



During the trip, organised through the charity MyKindaFuture, students heard

a presentation about the organisation and the career options it offers.

They also saw the BT internet control room and developed ideas for items using technology.

Susan Green, careers adviser, said: "The students enjoyed the day and learnt a lot from BT staff."



A new initiative...

...has been launched to boost reading among both primary and secondary pupils.

The SMILE team at Harwich and Dovercourt High School has committed to supporting the whole-school reading initiative. The 24 Year 7 and 8 students within the Windsor Learning Community spent an afternoon reading with pupils from All Saints Primary School, with primary pupils reading to secondary students and vice versa.

Paul Day, head of Windsor Learning Community, said: "All students were fantastic showing themselves to be excellent ambassadors for the Windsor Community and the school. This is going to be a monthly event where the SMILE team work with a different school each time. It is a pleasure to watch our younger students leading on such an important initiative.

"It also helps the transition for the Year 6 students as they prepare for life in Year 7 at Harwich and Dovercourt High School."

Infants take part in national breakfast scheme

Starting this term, Monkwick Infant School is taking part in the National School Breakfast Programme.

In partnership with Magic Breakfast and funded by the Department for Education, the aim of Magic Breakfast is that no child is too hungry to learn.

Research has shown a direct link between the breakfast habits

of children and their educational attainment, with children in primary schools where breakfast is provided achieving on average up to two months' additional academic progress over the course of a year.

All children will be provided with bagels or Cheerios and fruit as part of their morning provision.

Students rise to the drone challenge



Young "airineers" took to the pilot seat as they competed in a unique competition.

The STEM drone club at The Thomas Lord Audley School competed with other schools in Colchester in the Airineers scheme by Rapid Electronics.

Pilots had to wear goggles to get a first-person view as if they were inside the drone and guide it around two courses.

After a session of testing, troubleshooting and rebuilding the drones, the teams took part in a straight three-lap race through gates and around flags.

For the second event, teams had to hit each other's light pole flags to change them to their own team colour. William James, STEM drone club, said: "The event was a great day out and has given us some areas to think about for development of our own drones ready for the next event."



The VEX IQ Essex regional competition took place at St Helena School, with 25 teams taking part – including four from Moscow, Russia!



Students had to design and build robots capable of playing a game called Next Level, which involved manipulating and stacking plastic hubs to score points.

Teams had to use skills to drive their robot using a remote controller, program their robot to perform without a controller and work in pairs to take on a knockout challenge.

William James, senior science technician, said: "The games were great fun yet challenging."

"At St Helena, students had been working all year to build and perfect their robots to play Next Level. They were so keen, they stayed after school twice a week and every lunchtime to perfect their robots."

Two Russian teams won the teamwork championship, while St Helena School and The Stanway School qualified for the UK national competition in March. Last year, St Helena came fourth in the UK.

NEWSBITE

Learning to be safe on the road

Younger students at Clacton County High School have learnt how to ride safely on the road.

Lower school students completed the Bikeability sessions to learn how to navigate road features, such as roundabouts, to achieve their Silver proficiency qualification. As part of the safety drive, the school carried out checks on students' bikes to ensure they had working brakes, to meet both legal requirements and the school's policy.

Students and their parents sign the CCHS Bicycle User's Contract to agree to abide by the rules of the policy, including checking tyres are road-worthy, bikes are fitted with working head and tail lights and that students wear helmets.

Principal Neil Gallagher said: "This is an ideal time to ensure your child's bike is ready for the winter months, that tyres have sufficient grip and all the brakes work. We will be carrying out additional bike checks throughout the year to ensure our cyclists are not putting themselves in danger by riding defective bikes on the highway."



Celebrating the true meaning of Christmas

Students in Year 7 at St Helena School highlighted the benefit of giving, rather than receiving, at Christmas.

Working with the Homeless Shelter, in Colchester, each tutor group decorated a Christmas tree with essentials which can make a difference to the lives of the most vulnerable. The trees were displayed in school before being collected by the Homeless Shelter to provide basic comforts to residents.

Scott Rosser, Year 7 leader, said: "It is incredibly heart-



warming to see how considerate and caring our young people are. Our students are reflecting the true meaning of Christmas and are doing their best to make a profound difference in the lives of some of the most vulnerable members of our society."



Singers release charity single

Hundreds of choir members at The Colne Community School recreated a classic Christmas song.

The Year 7 and 8 students took part in The Big Sing to raise money for Cancer Research UK. They recorded 1980s Band Aid hit Do They Know it's Christmas and received more than 15,000 views on the Radio Essex Facebook page.

Head of music Anna Green said: "The 450 choir members are accompanied by our Year 11 live band. It has been a real team effort and I am proud of our students' efforts."

To support the cause, visit

www.justgiving.com/fundraising/colnebigsing2018

NEWSBITE

Creative young elves sell their wares

Entrepreneurial spirit was alive and kicking at Christmas when Year 2 pupils hosted their own festive market.

Pupils in three classes at Monkwick Infant School made and baked Christmas goodies to sell at the annual event.

Families were invited to attend the market and helped to raise £400 to boost school funds.

Headteacher Claire Holmes said: "Our Christmas market teaches and encourages our pupils' entrepreneurial skills.

"Parents and carers supported this event really well and the children were very proud to have their efforts recognised."



Pupils attend panto – oh yes, they do!

The festive season was full of fun for pupils at Monkwick Infant School.

All pupils in Year 1 and 2 went along to the Mercury Theatre, in Colchester, to watch Jack and the Beanstalk. Father Christmas visited children from Nursery to Year 2 in their own grotto and Nursery children invited their families in to enjoy a mince pie and festive sing-along.

Each year group performed their own Christmas show for their families to enjoy, with Reception performing Nursery Rhyme Nativity and Year 1 and 2 putting on A Miracle in Town.

NEWSBITE

Singing their way into Christmas

More than 200 parents enjoyed a Christmas concert performed by their children at The Stanway School.

The Stanway Music Christmas Concert saw more than 90 students from all year groups sing and perform using clarinets, strings and samba drums. Performers in the upcoming Little Shop of Horrors gave a rendition of Suddenly Seymour and Year 6 pupils from Stanway Primary School sang Walking in the Air, accompanied by the secondary school orchestra.

Comments from parents included -

- "We really appreciate all that's on offer at Stanway."
- "The kids were absolutely fantastic and showed incredible courage and confidence in their performances - each and every one of them."

Former Arsenal and FA vice chief inspires students

How to be successful in life and career was the topic of conversation when David Dein visited The Colne Community School.

The former vice-chairman of Arsenal FC and the Football Association spoke with 200 students about his inspirational career in the sport.

During David's reign, Arsenal won the league five times, the FA Cup five times, the UEFA Cup Winners Cup, the League Cup twice and the Community Shield five times.

Now, David speaks in schools, prisons and businesses, recently speaking to students of the world-renowned Harvard Business School in Boston.

Jon Taylor, director of sport, said: "David's talk was inspirational and the feedback was amazing. He shared so many pearls of wisdom on how to be successful in life through hard work, determination and a positive attitude."



Rugby academy training = 3 A-levels

The Colne College Rugby Academy signed up 18 new students in September.

The course combines Level 3 academic studies equivalent to three A-levels, with rugby training and fixtures.

Jon Taylor, director of sport, said: "The training has been well received and with much enthusiasm. Great progress has already been made by all players, with increases in technical skill, tactical awareness and physical conditioning."

The sport team have been attending open events at north Essex and Suffolk schools to promote the academy.

Developing leadership skills through sport

Year 10 students at The Colne Community School are developing leadership skills through sport.

The Essex FA offered ten students the opportunity to take part in a referee workshop and gain accreditation to referee mini soccer matches.

They have already put their refereeing skills into practise in Year 5 and 6 girls' and boys' football tournaments. The sports leaders have also supported local primary schools in the School Games Programme, running activities to develop pupils' skills in a range of sports.

Jon Taylor, director of sport, said: "Our leaders showed fantastic teamwork and empathy with the children to help them to enjoy the activities."

Year 9 sports leaders are being appointed this year.



England coaching for netball team

Netball players at Harwich and Dovercourt High School have been training with an England coach.

Louise Davey, an England Netball Development Officer, has been working with the PE department to deliver fun, skills-based training sessions each week.

Lucy Brown, PE technician, said: "Louise offered an incredibly enjoyable approach to learning the basic skills of netball and how these would be developed and used at a professional level."

"Louise's experience and knowledge proved to be massively beneficial for the netball girls."

Girls in Year 7 to 10, of all abilities, were invited along to the sessions and urged to each set two goals to achieve throughout the programme.



Netball team makes comeback

After a seven-year absence, Monkwick Junior School netball team has been reformed.

A team of 15 pupils from Year 5 and 6 have been entered into the local netball tournament, the Hi-5 league.

Ashleigh Pool, assistant head and Year 6 teacher, said: "The pupils have each had a turn at playing in a competitive match as well as playing against each other in our Friday training sessions."

During each game, they rotate positions so that they get the chance to try shooting as well as defending. "The team now hope they can continue to improve and win a game in the spring term. They have worked hard to improve their passing skills and how to mark players effectively."



Schedule change brings football success

With the coastal schools' rugby season swapping with the football season, footballers have been given an opportunity to brush up on their skills.

Players at Clacton County High School got back into training ahead of the first games of the Essex FA School Cup competitions.

- Year 7 finished mid table in their first season
- Year 8, 9 and 10 all finished top of their respective Coastal Schools' League and a place in the finals. Year 9 and 10 were crowned coastal champions
- Year 11 finished their school career having played all five of their league games, winning two

Principal Neil Gallagher said: "Well done to all of our football teams for a great season."



YEAR 7 - A TEAM



YEAR 8



YEAR 9



YEAR 10



YEAR 11

Lunchtime League broadens sport experience

Sporty students are sampling a wider range of sports, thanks to the launch of the Lunchtime League.

The league is a week-long tournament which takes place once a month at Harwich and Dovercourt High School to give students an opportunity to try a variety of new sports they may never have played before. The winner of each year group receives prizes, such as free food from the canteen, exclusive use of the sports hall for their friends at lunchtime, vouchers and small gifts.

Coach Tom Jewell, who has also set up gymnastics club Jewells GymSports for the community, said: "This opportunity encourages more of our students to stay active and healthy and broadens the curriculum for them in addition to introducing some healthy competition.

"Lunchtime League is open to all year groups with a mixture of sports on offer, from football, basketball, table tennis and athletics to street hockey, gymnastics and dodgeball."

New netball team enjoy early success

Almost 40 Year 7 girls were keen to join the netball team this year.

Having never played together as a team, the St Helena School squad of nine selected players represented the school at the first Central Venue at The Gilberd School. The team beat The Stanway School 4-0 and Thurstable School 3-0, before losing to the Girls High School 1-3. Rachel Taylor, PE teacher, said: "There was some brilliant defensive play in the circle and some consistent shooting.



"The mid court players were also extremely strong, switching playing positions with ease throughout their games. It was an excellent start to the netball season."

Students awarded for sporting success



The annual Sports Awards saw students' achievements at The Stanway School celebrated.

The evening is an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of individual students and to recognise their commitment to sport and the PE department. The winners included male and female performers for each year group, team of the year, dance awards at KS3 and KS4 and outstanding performers at KS3 and KS4.

Headteacher Jonathan Bland said: "The students were fantastic on the night and thoroughly deserved all of the awards that were given. Their commitment to lessons, after-school clubs and matches is second to none and they always give 100 per cent."

Each member of the PE department gave a speech on the reasons why that particular student had been chosen for the award.

After-school sport clubs launched

The new year saw a range of brand-new after-school clubs launched for infant school pupils.

Monkwick Infant School already offered dance and multi-skills clubs, but introduced football, mini tennis, handball and mini basketball at the start of the spring term.

Headteacher Claire Holmes said: "Our after-school clubs have always proved to be very popular and so we decided to increase them from two to four sessions. This represents a fantastic offer to infant age pupils as you do not often see such a range of after-school activities in a primary school."

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

We are now recruiting for **September 2019**

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programme to gain experience of working
in a school before training.

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

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