



SIGMA NEWS

For the Staff and Stakeholders of The Sigma Trust

Greater than the sum of its parts



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Welcome... I would like to offer a warm welcome to colleagues from Colne Community and Philip Morant schools and those colleagues who have already been appointed to Paxman Academy.

Colne and Philip Morant joined The Sigma Trust on January 1, following the successful transfer from Thrive Partnership Academy Trust. I hope the transition has been made easier by the fact we have been working closely with both schools for many months. 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. We now very much look forward to working in close collaboration with all staff from both schools and this will begin with the annual joint CPD day on February 25.

The work on completing Paxman Academy is progressing well. 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 colleagues for the

school. Senior colleagues have now been appointed and a number of teaching posts have been filled. The building is due to be handed over to Sigma on June 24.

We are once again coming up to the annual Essex Teaching Awards and we have listed in the parent/pupil edition of Sigma News the large number of colleagues who have been nominated by colleagues and students at each school. It is great to see so many colleagues have had their hard work and dedication recognised by others. Last year, we had tremendous success with winners in the Headteacher of the Year, Secondary Teacher of the Year and Lifetime Achievement categories, so it will be interesting to see if we can match this in 2019.

Over the last two and half years, Sigma has established itself as a leading example of collaborative partnership between schools. School to school support and sharing good practice has ensured all schools have benefitted from that collaboration. Congratulations to all colleagues for working together so effectively to ensure our shared vision has been fully implemented.

Jeff Brindle, CEO The Sigma Trust

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 will continue the role until a permanent headteacher is appointed.

At Philip Morant, Scott Holder, former co-

headteacher at The Stanway School, was appointed as executive headteacher.

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."



**Follow
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You can now follow The Sigma Trust on social media.

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

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

Brand-new school taking shape

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

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.

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.

Headteacher Carol Anne Moffat, appointed in May, said: "It is really exciting. 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.



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. 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: "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."

£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 practice 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: "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."

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

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."

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, 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.



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 has loaned

the school a car to strip down and reassemble.

"The sessions increase students' awareness of careers and offer very helpful

advice and guidance for them. Any Sigma schools not already enrolled on the Speakers for Schools mailing list, I would suggest it is worth doing so."



TRAINING OUR PEOPLE...

150 join Trust Thursday

More than 150 colleagues came together for Trust Thursday in November.

Meeting in specialist subject groups, teachers worked together on marking and moderation in English, memory and recall in maths, supporting students with dyslexia and sharing great practice in science, humanities and MFL.

The next Trust Thursdays are on moderation on Thursday March 7 and SigmaEd on Thursday June 27.

English teachers from across the Trust met at The Thomas Lord Audley School in November to explore AQA examiner guidance with Sigma's strategic lead for English, Fiona Cook.



Sigma INSET day - February



The Sigma Trust will hold its second annual Trust INSET day on February 25.

High quality CPD is at the heart of all thriving schools and the Trust is keen to support each academy to develop the very best provision and outcomes for young people.

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

Sigma has a great pool of talented staff and it is wonderful to see a number of colleagues have agreed to run sessions during the day.

National speakers, including Martin Robinson, Mary Myatt, Chris Runeckles, Rob Eastaway and Gianfranco Conti, will join colleagues on the day.

The event runs from 9am to 3.30pm in various venues.

Challenge For All – researching what works for Sigma

Research and professional development programme Challenge For All is now in its second year.

Participants from across Sigma schools met in October and December as they embarked on their year of lesson study and action-based research on the theme of Challenge For All.

Working in a triad or pair of colleagues from other Sigma schools, they plan, teach/observe and analyse a series of

research lessons.

Research topics this year include: modelling the process and celebrating excellence; mastery and the principles of instruction; memory matters; questioning and making links; SEND and challenge.

Case studies and presentations with a focus on student progress will be shared by participants throughout the year and at the SigmaEd event on Thursday June 27.



Placements begin for trainee teachers

NETT trainee teachers are starting their first block placements in school and have completed their first assignments on SEND as part of their PGCE.

Some trainees have already secured themselves posts on completion of their course. Programmes are under way with interviewing for the next intake in September 2019.

NETT held a Behaviour and Differentiation conference at The Stanway School, led by Sue Cowley. Trainees, NQTs, internship trainees and a range of teachers attended, taking away with them some ideas to put into practice in the classroom.

Programme directors Dr Sarah Alix, John Morgan and Jane Adamson have received the prestigious award of Founding Fellows of the Chartered College of Teaching.



Focus on...science

John Knights, strategic science lead, gives an update on what has been happening in science across Sigma Trust schools...

A science technicians' support network has been set up across the Trust with science technicians from each school meeting regularly to share ideas and resources. Discussions include the development of new practicals and how to make equipment on a budget.

Sigma inset day – February

The Sigma inset day on February 25 will involve opportunities to develop teaching and learning.

The keynote session for teachers will be from Mary Myatt, a leading educationalist, on developing teaching and learning, as well as sessions on the principles of learning in science.

Science technicians will also get a chance to develop their practical skills in making resources for use in science experiments.

Science Week – March

A science-related challenge will be developed for each school during Science Week in March.

Finalists from the event will attend an event at The Stanway School in the summer.

It is hoped the event will engage students in applying their science - as well as technology, engineering and maths - knowledge to real-world situations. The popular science photography competition will also take place again.

Developing curriculum for Paxman Academy

Creating the science and STEM provision for the new Paxman Academy will take place early in 2019.

The school is to have a STEM focus throughout its curriculum, so this offers an exciting challenge in developing a curriculum from scratch. The new-build will offer state-of-the-art science facilities and resources and will be welcoming students from September 2019.

Science faculty leads are developing the KS3 curriculum and assessment to consider knowledge trackers to highlight what students need to know at each stage of their science education.

Using online revision tools as well as links with maths departments will develop key skills consistently.

We also plan to develop our work with feeder primary schools in supporting the science provision at KS2.



The Faraday Challenge event was hosted by Clacton County High School in October.

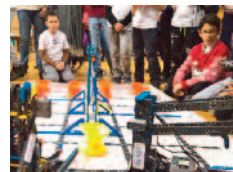
Teams from across the Trust competed to design and build an idea linked to the James Webb telescope Project. The Harwich and Dovercourt High School team won the event.



Teachers from across the Trust presented at the Sigma Science Show and Tell afternoon CPD.

The event, in November at The Stanway School, saw 49

colleagues hear suggestions for developing science teaching, including using new software ideas to challenge students' understanding, a demonstration on how to create a simple ripple tank and feedback from examiners involved with marking the summer exams.



The Airgineers drone competition and VEX robotics regional final took place at St Helena School.

The regional VEX IQ robotics event in December included

four teams from Moscow, Russia, who travelled especially for the competition.

Will James, senior science technician at St Helena School, was awarded the Jack Petchey Outstanding Leadership Award for his work with the VEX robotics club in the school.

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