



**PENK VALLEY
ACADEMY TRUST**

*Learning
Together*

Newsletter



**Issue No. 3
March 2024**



From our Chief Executive Officer...



Welcome to the Spring edition of 'Learning Together'. It is hard to believe that we have found ourselves at the end of the second term already!

In this edition of our termly newsletter, we look back at the accomplishments and achievements from our schools over the last two months, as well as highlighting some of the most exciting events that have taken place.

Our schools have made an incredible effort to engage the children in their learning, and pupils have been fortunate to take part in a range of activities and trips, which aim to enthuse the children about their learning. Pupils from Penkrige Middle immersed themselves in French culture on their modern foreign languages trip and Wolgarston students witnessed the transformative power of Mother Nature during a geography school trip to Iceland. Our younger children have also been out and about with trips to the Cannock Chase museum, Weston Park and the Sea Life Centre.

As always, I look forward to being able to share more news with you in the coming months, and may I take this opportunity to wish you a very happy spring and Easter break.

Best wishes,

Strategic Priorities Overview 2023 - 2025



The Trust has set out its new strategic priorities for 2023-2025. These are:

1. Ensure there is consistency high quality and inclusive education.
2. Establish effective school improvement systems.
3. Ensure the workforce is well supported.
4. Ensure high quality governance and leadership.
5. Ensure high quality finance and operations services.

As always our work is underpinned by our collaborative ethos of 'Learning Together' and our values collaboration, challenge, curiosity and care.



Staff Survey Results



We would like to thank all colleagues who completed the Staff Survey sent out in January. The survey results are an invaluable source of information which allows us to explore in more detail the areas in schools and across the Trust that can be improved.

Positive aspects included staff being proud to be a member of their school; pupils being safe in schools; and pupils being challenged to make good progress.

A key area to be further developed and improved was the IT system and network.

Things to celebrate...



The Department for Education's recently released annual school performance tables show that Wolgarston High School's Sixth Form achieved the best A Level results in Staffordshire last year.

Wolgarston's high academic standards have continued to improve year on year, exceeding local and national averages. This achievement is testament to the hard work of both students and staff. Students experience high-quality teaching, exceptional support and wide ranging opportunities throughout their Sixth Form journey. The success at A Level is also mirrored at GCSE where the school achieved a very high progress score ensuring they were in the top 10% of schools nationally.

Speaking about the school's success, Wolgarston Headteacher Jo Fairclough, said:

"We are proud of our high expectations and believe that, with 100% effort and hard work, young people are capable of achieving great things. I am delighted that the Sixth Form results have ranked us top of Staffordshire and that Wolgarston continues its track record of securing excellent outcomes.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our students for their hard work and resilience along with the support from parents and carers. I would also like to thank the staff for their dedication, expertise and commitment, which have enabled students to achieve these exceptional results and move on to the very best universities and careers."



*Jo Fairclough,
Wolgarston High School Headteacher*



Year 8 at Penkridge Middle School had a fantastic trip to Paris during this term. They travelled across the Channel and visited Brie-Comte-Robert, central Paris including the Eiffel Tower, Stade de France, Montparnasse, Sacre Coeur, and Disneyland Paris. They also took part in a river cruise on the Seine. It was a wonderful trip where pupils experienced a wide variety of French culture and an opportunity to put their French speaking and listening skills into practice.



Things to celebrate...



This is a photo of 12 amazing Year 3-4 children from St John's First school who took part in a sports athletics competition in February at Aldersley Leisure Village. The children did the school proud and demonstrated excellent sportsmanship and their 6 Christian values (Perseverance, Friendship, Trust, Courage, Respect and Compassion).



The highlight of the spring term for St Mary and St Chad's were the outdoor learning trips to Weston Park. Year groups visited Weston Park for the day and used the outdoor environment to enhance, stimulate and support writing.

Despite terrible weather, the children thoroughly enjoyed their time and have produced some brilliant writing back at school as a result. To help reduce the cost of the trip parents transported children to Weston Park and collected them at the end of the day. This helped enormously to make the trip more cost effective. Thank you to everyone who made the day a success.



Marshbrook First School had an amazing time attending the 2024 Recorder Festival at the Victoria Hall in Stoke-on-Trent.



COLLABORATION



CHALLENGE



CURIOSITY



CARE

Things to celebrate...



As part of World Book Day celebrations, Princefield children, were tasked with making a hero or villain pillowcase for an in-school competition. Every class had a chance to enter. The children had a great day celebrating with lots of fun activities. Even Mr Heathershaw dressed up as a character to 'steal' the daytime so children could drop everything and read.

The pillowcase that portrays the 'Electric Thief' linked to the whole school writing day, in which our CEO Brynley Evans had issued a pretend ban on all computers for a day in order to create a real life scenario for their writing.



Dr Probert was welcomed back to The Rural Enterprise Academy for a whole school assembly. Thoughts were focused on British Science Week and Dr Probert (with the help of Mr Smith and Miss Copland) highlighted the wonder of 'time' by inventing his own time machine.

School Review 'Focus Days'



The Trust continues to carry out regular focus review days in our schools. This term Princefield and The Rural Enterprise Academy took the opportunity to focus on a key area of the school.

The reviews include learning walks around lessons, looking at pupil work, speaking to children and discussing with school leaders the next steps to be taken.

The reviews are both collaborative and challenging and are part of school and Trust leaders' drive to continue to raise standards.

Finance Update



We would like to congratulate our Trust finance team on another successful financial audit. Their attention to detail and the work that takes place behind the scenes, ensured that the auditing process ran smoothly and we achieved a positive outcome.



The Trust finance team have also been busy ensuring the upgrade to a new Sage system went well. Training sessions were held and data moved across, ready for the 'go live' date at the beginning of March.

Schools will gradually move to the new system and will benefit from the many new features.

Further staff training will take place during the summer term in order to improve procedures and best practice.

Attendance



At Penk Valley Academy Trust, we know that excellent school attendance is necessary if academic outcomes are to be achieved. The more children are in school, the better their outcomes will be.

The vast majority of Penk Valley Academy Trust schools and pupils are above the national average due to the ongoing efforts of parents, students and staff. However, we also know that attendance rates are still not quite up to 2019 pre-Covid levels. We will continue to work together in order to support children, families and schools to achieve excellent attendance.

Menopause Training



Over 33 million women in the UK at some stage in their life will experience menopause. Due to a lack of awareness among the public, a lack of training among some medical professionals and social stigma, the needs of women during this critical life change are frequently ignored, belittled or overlooked.

No two menopause stories are the same. This contributes to the lack of understanding. Some women transition smoothly without any major effects with others potentially suffering the most extreme symptoms and enduring a significant negative impact on their lives.

In February a certified Menopause Coach was invited to hold a Menopause Support Session for Trust staff where attendees learnt:-

- What happens during menopause and when it happens
- All about menopause symptoms...the ones you know and the ones you might not!
- Long term health risks associated with menopause
- Key lifestyle changes you can make to support you to make menopause more manageable

Organised by our Trust HR Team, staff found the session thought provoking and positive with information gained from the session helping to support individuals going through this experience.

Local School Governors Required



We have school governor opportunities available in our schools across the Trust.

Becoming a school governor is a rewarding role and will allow you the opportunity to use your expertise and attributes to have a positive impact on the education of children in our schools. You will be able to develop and learn new skills, take on different challenges and work as part of an established and successful Governing Board.

If you are interested, please contact Caroline Harley (c-harley@penkvalley.co.uk).



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We regularly update our Trust social media pages. To keep in contact, please see below:-



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