



PENK VALLEY
ACADEMY TRUST

*Learning
Together*

Newsletter

PENK VALLEY
ACADEMY TRUST

Issue No. 1

Spring 2023



WOLGARSTON HIGH SCHOOL



COLLABORATION



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CURIOSITY



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From Our Chief Executive Officer...

Welcome to the latest issue of our Trust newsletter '*Learning Together*'.

We have included news and developments from across the Penk Valley Academy Trust (PVAT) including from our seven schools and the central team.

All of our work is informed by our ethos of teamwork and continual improvement ('*Learning Together*'). Our core values of 'collaboration, challenge, care and curiosity' also underpin everything we do.

As well as the positive culture across PVAT, I hope that this newsletter will give you an insight into the energy, skills and achievements of our children as well as that of our staff, governors and trustees.

We are also grateful to our many partners outside the trust – both individuals and organisations who provide such valuable support.

Thank you to everyone for *Learning Together*!

Brynley Evans

Successful Ofsted Inspections

2022 saw five of our schools being inspected by OFSTED. Wolgarston, Marshbrook, St Johns, Penkridge Middle and Princefield Schools were all judged to be 'good' schools last year.

In general terms, all schools were commended for having high standards of leadership, behaviour, teaching and personal development.

However, there is no sense of complacency in these schools or within PVAT. We note that despite strong aspects to each school's curriculum, there is also further work to be done in ensuring that every subject is planned and delivered in line with the very best. This is the key focus for all schools together with support from PVAT (Penk Valley Academy Trust)

We would like to formally thank and congratulate everyone working in or supporting these schools including teachers, support staff and local governors.

High Standards Of Health And Safety In PVAT Schools

Our schools are currently being audited for standards of health and safety. We are pleased that all schools that have been inspected recently have received high praise and the top grade for this aspect of their work. Given the many facets and complexity of health and safety, these positive findings are a testament to the relentless efforts and collaboration of school and PVAT staff. Indeed, the partnership work between schools and the PVAT central team was highlighted as a key strength. Again, thank you to everyone for delivering and maintaining these high standards.



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Our Practice

Curriculum Development

Ensuing that our curriculum is rigorously planned is a key priority for us this year. To this end, teachers have been reviewing, refining and rewriting curriculum overviews and plans. We are focusing particularly on ensuring that, for all ages, we are extremely precise about the knowledge, concepts and skills that we want our pupils to learn. This level of precision often requires much thought, discussion and prioritisation, but ultimately it will deliver even higher standards of teaching and academic achievement.

'Curriculum Symposium' Meetings

To support the process, we are holding termly subject meetings across PVAT in order to share ideas, plans and expertise with colleagues.

Success In Exams and Tests

Towards the end of the last academic year we received the results from national tests and public exams. The general trend was positive outcomes or improvements since the last series of exams in 2019. Given the disruption of the Covid pandemic, this shows the resilience of our pupils and also it indicates that PVAT schools and families had provided a good level of support to our children.

As well as sending our congratulations to pupils, we would also like say a 'thank you' to all school staff for the hard work, expert teaching and the wider support provided to our children.

PVAT Partnership With Manor Teaching School Hub



Since September we have been working with Manor Teaching School Hub who are supporting our training provision to teachers. Specifically, they are supporting us with our training programme for new teachers who are in the first two years of their careers. They also provide a suite of NPQ (National Professional Qualifications) leadership courses relating to different aspects of schools, including early years, literacy, teaching, training, behaviour and senior school leadership. We have all been impressed with the communication and quality of support being provided by Manor Teaching School Hub and we look forward to developing our partnership further.

Our Practice (cont...)



Talk for Writing

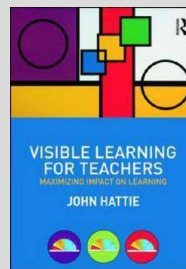
Improving Writing

'Talk for Writing' is an engaging writing framework which we use in our First Schools. The programme developed by Pie Corbett and supported by Julia Strong, has changed our approach to writing. With features such as encouraging discussion, stimulating interest and teaching planning techniques, this programme is driving up standards of writing in our schools.



School Review 'Focus Days'

This term four school reviews or 'Focus Days' have taken place. These are carried out by school and PVAT leaders working together. These 'Focus Days' look at areas that need evaluating and/or improving. Focus Day activities include lesson visits, discussions with staff and children, looking at children's work and checking planning documents. An agreed report communicates clear strengths and areas for further development.



Visible Learning

The research of Professor John Hattie ('Visible Learning') has been a long-standing influence on the work of our schools and teachers within PVAT.

One of Professor Hattie's key findings is the importance of teachers collaborating effectively, which he terms 'collective efficacy'. This can clearly be seen in our increased commitment and time for teachers to meet together to plan their curriculum, both within and between schools.

Ensuring Higher Standards

School and PVAT leaders are committed to raising standards in all of our schools. Local governors have received and scrutinise termly reports and presentations from each headteacher.

Trustees hold separate primary and secondary meetings every term where standards across all schools are evaluated. Key actions and support are discussed and, where necessary, additional PVAT support, expertise and resources are identified from within or external to PVAT.

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Our Practice (cont...)

Exciting Enrichment Activities

Enrichment activities are vital for inspiring and engaging children in their learning and for their wider personal development. Activities can range from school lunchtime clubs to residential trips. Please see below a selection of events from that have taken place in PVAT schools since September 2022.

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Our Practice (cont...)

Our Church Schools



"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me." "God is like a good shepherd. He knows us, leads us, protects us and keeps us from harm." John 10:14



"Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." Isaiah 40:31

We have two Church of England schools within PVAT. As such St Mary and St Chad and St John's First Schools have a strong Christian ethos, reflected in the aims and objectives for every child and adult within their educational community. All aspects of these schools' day to day work are informed by the Christian mission and ethos. For example, daily collective worship provides an important means of promoting Christian values as well as time for stillness and reflection, in what is often a busy, active day, for our children.

Close links are enjoyed with local churches, where progress is followed with interest by church members. The children regularly visit their local church throughout the school year. Church members also visit and support with a variety of the schools' activities and events.

PVAT also works in partnership with Lichfield Diocese. For example, we always have a Diocese representative as one of our Trust members. For several years, this role has been fulfilled by the Lichfield Diocese Director of Education, Claire Shaw, sadly Claire is leaving both this role and therefore her role within PVAT. We are extremely grateful to Claire for all her work, expertise and support and we wish her well in her new role.



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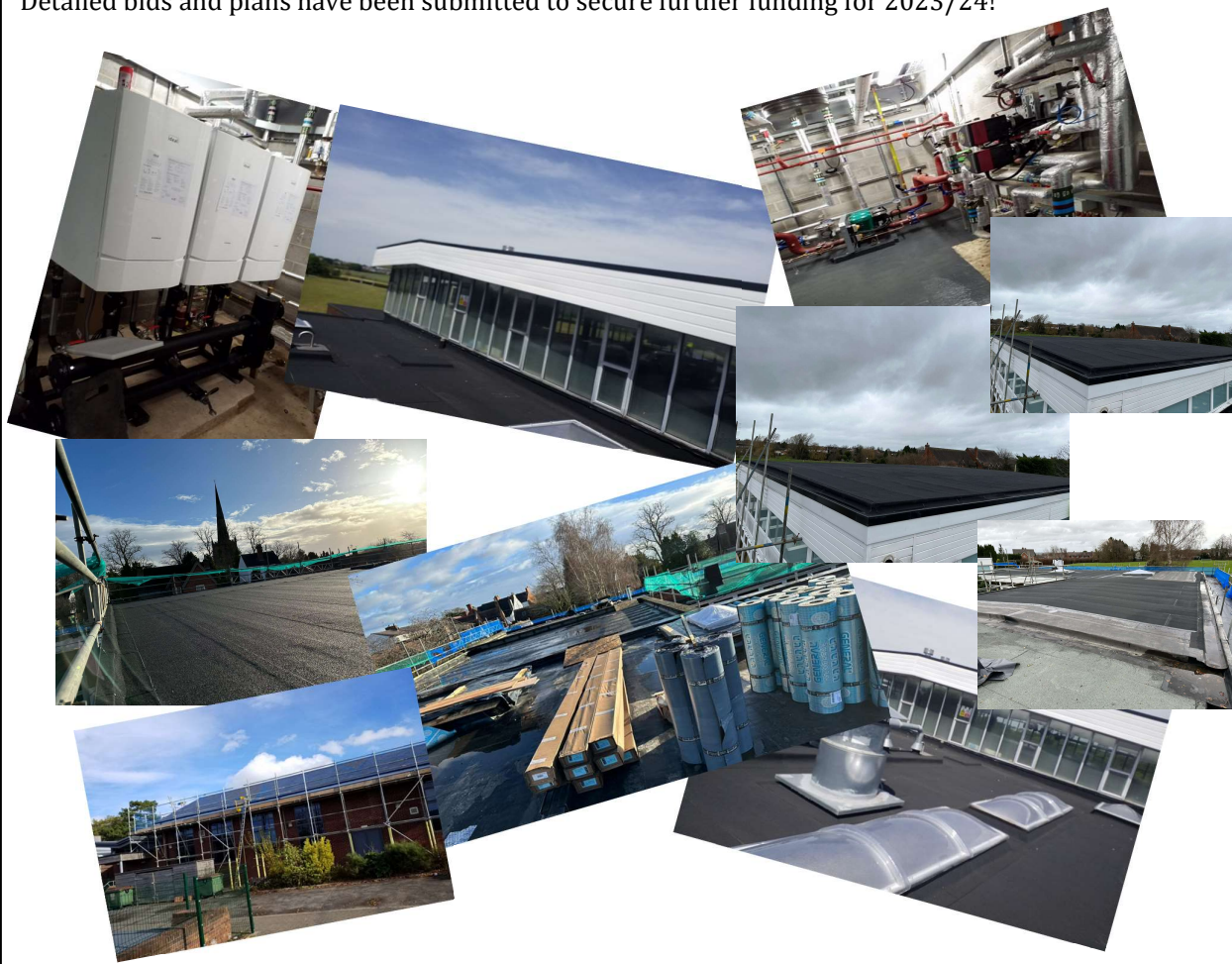
Our Places

PVAT Secures £2.3 Million Investment In Building Improvements

PVAT has successfully secured six individual building projects to improve our school premises through the Government's 'Condition Improvement Fund' (CIF). This represented approximately £2.3 million in total investment.

We have installed new heating systems at Wolgarston High School and The Rural Enterprise Academy. New roofs have been installed at St John's CE, St Mary and St Chad CE and Marshbrook First Schools, as well as with The Rural Enterprise Academy.

Detailed bids and plans have been submitted to secure further funding for 2023/24!



Our Places (cont...)

Improving ICT Across PVAT



New Computers In Every School

PVAT has negotiated a new contract with Dell to lease new desktop computers in every school. Further detailed planning is ongoing but we expect new equipment to start arriving in the summer term and to be completed by September 2023.

New Websites

New PVAT and schools' websites are being planned and due to be launched by September 2023. All websites will follow a standard structure, whilst giving schools the ability to compile and update details on each site.

'Penk Valley' Microsoft Tenancy

We are continuing to move all schools on to a single Microsoft tenancy. This will help to join up ICT infrastructure and networks to enable us to work more collaboratively and efficiently across all aspects of PVAT.

Support For School Premises

PVAT continues to lead and manage the maintenance and development of school premises. For example, PVAT leads and coordinates the work of school site managers and skilled employees who carry out day to day duties and repairs.

This helps headteachers and their leadership teams to focus on educational provision.

PVAT continues to develop this vital support to schools. As well as our own plumber, we now have our very own PVAT electrician, Rad Adameczek, who joined us in October.

Having such expertise on hand means that we can significantly reduce repair times and costs, thereby improving the quality of our site service to schools.

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Our Places (cont...)

Other PVAT Building and Improvement Works

As well as working on school premises with funding from the successful CIF bids, PVAT has also been investing in other building and improvement works across the Trust.

Projects include: a new reception area at TREA; long-term maintenance work on the swimming pool; removing and insulation of roofs; new tarmac in some grounds; renovation of internal areas at Wolgarston High School; rabbit fencing; new classrooms and a forest walkway at Princefield.

As with all school buildings and premises, there is still plenty more to do!



Our People

New PVAT Executive Team

We have a relatively new PVAT Executive with Brynley Evans (Chief Executive Officer) joining the team in September 2021 and Jan Marson (Chief Finance Officer) and Donna Harrison (HR Manager) following their promotion in September 2022. More recently we have been joined by Caroline Harley in January 2023 as Governance Professional & Executive Assistant. Lee Metcalfe-Chase remains as Chief Operations Officer and is currently the longest serving member of the PVAT Executive team.

Our PVAT Executive team are all here to help and support in any way they can and can be contacted via the details below:

- Brynley Evans, Chief Executive Officer - b-evans@penkvalley.co.uk
- Jan Marson, Chief Finance Officer - j-marson@penkvalley.co.uk
- Lee Metcalfe-Chase, Chief Operating Officer - l-metcalfe-chase@penkvalley.co.uk
- Donna Harrison, HR Manager - d-harrison@penkvalley.co.uk
- Caroline Harley, Governance Professional and Executive Assistant - c-harley@penkvalley.co.uk

Message from the Chair of Trustees



I have been involved with the governing body for twenty years; firstly joining Princefield, then Wolgarston and following academisation, PVAT. It has been my pleasure to watch the Trust grow and flourish whilst working with trustees, governors and members of

staff who all add to the diversity and expertise necessary to ensure PVAT maintains its excellent progress.

There are many positives to highlight since the start of this academic year such as the rise in assessment grades, attendance levels being above the national average and the fine tuning of the school curriculum.

We should be proud of what we have achieved, and I thank everyone from children to trustees for their effort and dedication.



Local Governing Committees

Each PVAT school has their own Local Governing Committee (LGC) which are in place to help, support and challenge the schools and their leaders.

It is important for us to recognise that all governors and trustees give their time and expertise freely. 'Thank you' to all of our trustees and governors for their continual care, encouragement and assistance.



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Our People (cont...)



Face-Ed Recruitment System Launched

Developed specifically for education, Face-Ed is recruitment software that provides the ability to manage recruitment, shortlisting, interview and employment offers securely in one place. It is an end-to-end recruitment system from vacancy creation to final job offer and onboarding.

Face-Ed also gives schools and the Trust the ability to view our compliance against safer recruitment requirements at all stages.



Staff Wellbeing

PVAT offer support for all employees via 'Schools Choice' which is a free, around-the-clock and confidential assistance programme.

Contact details, if required, are as follows:-

Freephone: 0808 168 2143

Website: www.carefirst-lifestyle.co.uk

Username & password are available from Trust HR.



Successful PVAT Finance Audit 2022

Our annual audit, conducted by Haines Watts in the Autumn term, was very positive. We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and congratulate our Central Finance team who work tirelessly behind the scenes, making sure that we've effective financial leadership and management. Although, the central team lead on the financial and compliance procedures, the positive audit outcome wouldn't be possible without effective collaboration with school staff. Well done everyone!

Our Schools



St John's has truly made the most of enrichment activities over the Spring term. Here is a selection of amazing events that have taken place.

Forest School

The children at St John's thoroughly enjoy getting outside in all weathers and experiencing Forest School. During this term Oaks class made bird feeders, garden ornaments and dens for shelter!



Visit to the Gurdwara

On Monday 30th January, the whole school visited the Gurdwara in Wolverhampton. Whilst there the children experienced what it would be like to be a Sikh. The welcome we had was incredible and the children thoroughly enjoyed the visit, especially the drink and biscuits at the end. Once back in school the children continued to learn about Sikhism by dressing in authentic clothes, researching on the internet and talking to a member of our staff who is a Sikh.



Bikeability



On Wednesday 15th February the Year 4 children had 'Bikeability' on the playground. All children thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon and have learnt about keeping safe whilst riding their bikes.

Prayer Space

Every half term, Cathy, from the Diocese visits St John's and creates a prayer space where the children think and reflect about a chosen topic. This half term it was all about love! The children thought about who they loved and how fortunate they were to have people who loved and cared for them.



Our Schools (cont...)



Marshbrook children have had a wonderful start to the 2023 with several sporting successes, amazing interventions and wonderful visits to places such as Drayton Farm.



Orlaith Bishop - Year 4

Orlaith entered her first dance competition and won 3 trophies. She is a super star and we are all very proud of her at Marshbrook First School!



Leo Mason Year 3

Exciting news! Leo has been signed for Wolves under 8's Academy Football Team. We are very proud of him. Keep up the hard work Leo and keep scoring those goals!



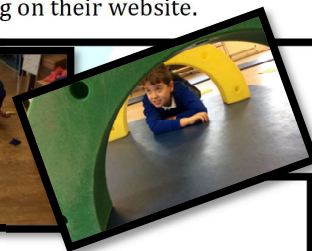
Reception children visited Lower Drayton Farm and were filmed for their promotional video on their website.

Look out for Marshbrook First School children featuring on their website.



Marshbrook Support Staff

Staff have worked tirelessly to plan and implement a range of interventions during afternoon learning sessions. These have been very rewarding for the children and their progress and confidence has soared. Thank you to all Marshbrook support staff for their hard work, dedication and care for our children.



Our Schools (cont...)



Earlier in the year Midlands Air Ambulance visited Princefield with donations of over £350.00 raised for the charity!

Also, World Book Day was celebrated in style!



Air Ambulance Visit

Midlands Air Ambulance visited with their helipod. All children got a chance to climb into the helipod.

Over the day the children worked in mixed age groups from Reception up to Year 4.

They completed activities including basic first aid – some teachers were wrapped like mummies with the bandages!

Donations were requested and as a school they raised over £350.00.

A fantastic day and well done Princefield!

World Book Day

Children and staff dressed as their favourite book character.

Classes were challenged to decorate a door with a £50.00 prize for the winning class to spend on developing reading – in fact all the doors were so good that those classes that didn't win were given £25.00 to spend as well.



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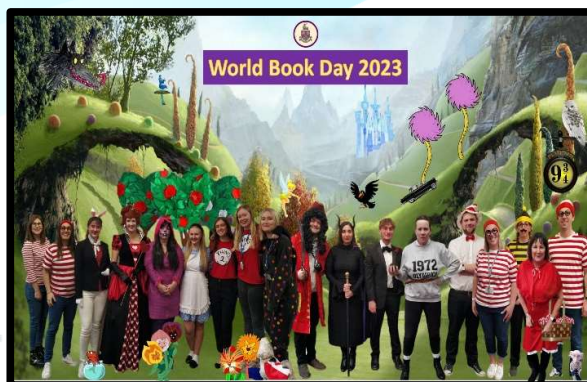
Our Schools (cont...)



WOLGARSTON HIGH SCHOOL

Wolgarston Year 10 pupils thrive on making a difference as we hear a little of what they experienced on their visit to Mafambisa in South Africa.

World Book Day was also an outstanding success with staff and students!



World Book Day

On 2nd March 2023 Wolgarston celebrated World Book Day. Staff and students were able to come dressed to school in characters from non-fiction and fiction literature.

Throughout the day the English department and the school library ran activities focusing on reading. There was the annual World Book Day tutor quiz where tutor groups competed for house points that go towards the end of year House cup.

It was a brilliant day and students and staff had so much fun.

In the week of World Book Day Year 9 students alone read over 34,636,000 words. This is an amazing achievement!

Making a Difference

From the 18th February to the 3rd March a team of five Year 10 students, accompanied by staff and volunteers for the Link for Life Project, spent time visiting our partner community of Mafambisa in South Africa.

Whilst in Mafambisa staff and students spent time building relationships with orphaned and vulnerable children supported by volunteer care workers from the local community. Children assisted care workers with their daily tasks of preparing the meals and spending time playing with children, allowing them to experience the fun and happy times people often take for granted but are so important.

"It was a valuable once in a lifetime opportunity that leaves a lasting effect on those who you meet," said Isabelle Munnelly (Year 10 student), "I would recommend other students to take part if they are given the opportunity to take part."

"It is important to keep Mafambisa in our minds and hearts and to show that the link we have with them is for life," said Mr Leonard (Trip Organiser and Teacher of Science).

Our Schools (cont...)



St Mary and St Chad 's school theme for the spring term has been 'Earth Explorers' which started on the first day of term with the school being transformed into an airport.

This term they have tried to ensure that their motto 'Aim high believe, fly high achieve' is evident.

In the Spring term the children are all settled into their year groups and working hard on their learning targets. The focus in the Spring term has been delivering 'Talk for Writing', embedding the new phonics programme and then ensuring the curriculum is implemented in line with the intent.

The whole school theme for the Spring term was 'Earth Explorers' so we were keen to motivate and enthuse the children again after the Christmas break. Therefore, on the first day of term, the school was transformed into an airport. The staff dressed up as pilots and aircraft staff, classrooms were set up as departure lounges and the hall was check in and security. When children arrived at the 'airport' they had to collect a boarding pass and put their bags through security. The children then went to their departure lounge and flew off to various activities to learn about our amazing world.

To enhance the curriculum, particularly writing, each class has had an outdoor day at Weston Park, which was planned alongside Educating Kids Outdoors. The aim for this was to support and develop their writing. Activities included brainstorming vocabulary, re-enacting stories, making props and story retelling.



To support and develop their Christian distinctiveness St Mary and St Chad have had a theatre production of 'The Rhyming Bible' by the Saltmine Theatre Group and the children have taken part in a Prayer Space Day based on the value of Love and thankfulness. Also, they have received a plane to visit the school so the children can find out more about their partner charity MAF. Mission Aviation Fellowship fly small planes to isolated places to take supplies and urgent materials.



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Our Schools (cont...)



Penkridge Middle have had an amazing start to the Academic Year with particular highlights being the Autumn and Christmas Fayres, the Christmas concert, Bikeability and trips such as the Faith Tour and Key Stage 2 Theatre trip.

Bikeability

In February Year 5 children took part in Bikeability. We don't know how they do it, but the Bikeability team always seem to bring the sunny weather. Well done to all the pupils in Year 5 who took part!



Gurdwara Temple Visit

Diwali was celebrated before half term with a fantastic assembly and also a trip to a local Gurdwara Temple during the first week back. So many pupils had the chance to have mehndi patterns painted on their hands. Whatever your personal beliefs, the idea that 'good' triumphs over 'evil' is something we can all agree with.



Christmas at Penkridge Middle

It was a fantastic evening at the PMS Christmas Concert. The choir and the band were fantastic and remind us of how brilliant our pupils are.



Our Schools (cont...)



The Rural Enterprise Academy have organised wonderful enrichment opportunities which have included a trip to the 'Think Tank' in Birmingham and a New Zealand Māori Haka Workshop.

HAKA WORKSHOP

Year 8 had a wonderful time in the New Zealand Māori Haka Workshop. They learnt about the ancient story of the famous dance as performed by the New Zealand Rugby team. 'The All Blacks' had their faces painted Māori warrior style as well as getting the opportunity to choreograph their own version. Some pupils even wore the face paint for the rest of the day.



THINK TANK

Year 7 had a fantastic time at the Think Tank. This trip gave students the opportunity to explore a variety of science-based exhibits. They learnt about our solar system, wildlife, and finished off the day with a trip to the outside play area where they explored more machines.

