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CONNECT



July 2024

SANDSTONE TRUST

Experiencing excellence through dynamic partnership



Hello from our CEO

Dear Colleagues

The summer break is almost upon us, so it is a good time to update you with some of the work which has taken place across our schools this year and some information about next year. There have been many things to celebrate across our schools this year, not least the tremendous achievement of Eaton Primary School receiving its Good Ofsted judgement.

As I said at our conference in November, Sandstone Trust is in a phase of growth and consolidation. A key part of this is in establishing work across our schools which will benefit both staff and students. Following the conference, it has been good to see expertise being shared across schools for example in the form of reviews. Just as important is the informal support through colleagues contacting peers in other schools to share ideas, discuss approaches and visit one another. We will build on this next year as collaboration is one of our four core values: Respect, Collaboration, Honesty, Exploration; I give some examples of the areas we are exploring in the Vision and Values section.

You will remember at our conference in November that I mentioned some Trust roles we were advertising. We are delighted with the appointments we have made; we know that they will have a positive impact in our schools. You can read some further information about these colleagues and the work they have done and are planning in this newsletter.

It has been helpful to have an external review of SEND this year to support our SENDCos with their work in ensuring that we have the best possible SEND offer. Our Trust SEND Lead will be able to build on this next year.


Our vision is **Experiencing excellence though dynamic partnership**. Work has begun so that everyone in our schools benefits from and contributes to us achieving this. I am looking forward to our Trust continuing to grow next year and building on our partnerships; meanwhile, I hope you have a well-deserved break over the summer.

Jason Lowe, CEO



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 sandstonetrust.co.uk

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Our Vision

Experiencing excellence through dynamic partnership

Our Values



Exploration is one of the Trust values; looking within and beyond the Trust for ideas, support and evidence informed practice which will benefit us. An area of need is Alternative Provision (AP); this is used to provide support for students to enable them to access their learning. Whilst there is some AP which headteachers can utilise, we are looking into the possibility of developing our own AP which would be bespoke for our students. As well as visiting a school with its own AP with Bryn Heely, one of our Trustees, Andy Davies has visited three primary AP units and we both met with Edward Timpson MP to discuss the growing need for AP in schools. Mr Timpson subsequently raised our concerns with David Johnston, Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing who wrote to us with some potential opportunities for AP.

We are continuing to explore what might be possible; it may be that we are unable to open our own AP for financial or other reasons but we believe the value of 'exploration' is an important one so that we are able to test things out – just in the way that teachers regularly do in the classroom. Some things work, others don't but both are learning experiences.

I also mentioned flexible working at the conference; obviously this is a challenge in our profession when compared with some others. However, we are keen to explore what might be possible and have met with a flexible working ambassador school to see the work they have done on introducing some flexibility in their school. Thank you for completing our recent survey. We will use the ideas from this as well as our own research to see if we are able to introduce elements of flexible working to our schools.



Newsletter Focus: Growth

New roles for a growing partnership



Ellen Green

School Improvement Lead

Ellen commenced in role for one day per week from February; this will move to two days per week from September.

“What excites me most about this role is the opportunity to drive systemic change across our Trust, fostering a culture of excellence and partnership. I am eager to work collaboratively with educators, students, and families to ensure that our schools offer an educational experience that meets the needs of every learner. By embedding a culture of continuous improvement and leveraging strategic partnerships, we will strive to achieve exceptional outcomes for all our students, empowering them to thrive and succeed in their chosen paths beyond school. By building strong, collaborative relationships within and across our schools, we can create a dynamic and inclusive community where everyone is empowered to contribute to and benefit from our collective efforts.”



Emma Gildea

Professional Development Lead

Emma officially begins this role in September but, as you will be aware, has, with Andy Davies, launched our Trust Leadership programmes for those colleagues aspiring to middle or senior leadership.

“I am looking forward to working with colleagues across our Trust to support you in your continuing professional development. In leading the People Strategy, I am privileged to work with staff across our family of schools to develop our practice via the shared experiences at our annual conference, in our professional learning communities and by leading our specialist network groups. This year I am particularly looking forward to working with colleagues seeking to develop their leadership skills in our Sandstone Trust Leadership development programmes. In this way, we can all ‘experience excellence through dynamic partnership’.”



Vicky Marsland

SEND Lead

Vicky has a great deal of experience in SEND. I know that our SENDCOs and therefore our students will benefit from her support. Vicky will oversee the Trust SEND strategy to ensure that we are well informed of new legislation in an ever-changing environment. She will also offer staff training to TAs and to teaching staff to ensure all students receive the best practice.

“I am passionate about supporting students with SEND and have had experience supporting students from EYFS to Key Stage 5. I believe everyone can achieve their full potential with the right support and I am looking forward to working alongside the trust's fantastic SENDCOs, teachers and parents, to ensure the best outcomes and opportunities for our students.”



James Bowland

Marketing & PR Lead

James will lead on a range of areas on our communication strategy including support with brand identity, prospectuses and school communications. James has been a teacher for fourteen years of which ten have been spent as Subject Lead for Art & Photography at Tarporley High School. During this time James has held roles as a school governor, SLE and Associate Assistant Headteacher.

“Owing to my background in marketing & visual merchandising I'm looking forward to working with colleagues across our Trust to capture our values in action, sharing the great work we do and contribute to the growth of our Trust by implementing marketing strategies and responding to consumer demand. This year I am looking forward to developing a shared approach to our Trust identity and how this can support the individual identity of each school.”



Spotlight on Growth: Staff Development

Investing in you; a commitment to professional development

As part of our People Strategy, our Trust aims to attract and retain the best staff at all levels. We aspire to offer our colleagues comprehensive professional development and support at all stages from their first steps in initial teacher training and their early career to moving into senior and system leadership roles.

We know that our leaders are the drivers of our vision for Sandstone Trust schools and that their dedication and expertise is what impacts positively on our whole community. This is why we have chosen to focus on providing our colleagues with the practical leadership development opportunities that we know will impact on the success of our schools and the outcomes of our students with the launch of the Sandstone Trust Leadership Programmes. With two pathways into either Middle or Senior Leadership, we have worked with our headteachers to design programmes that are bespoke to both colleagues and context.

Colleagues on our Leadership Programmes will learn from experience within and beyond the Trust with professional development that draws on in-house and external expertise. Whilst we will draw from the best evidence-based practice, we are aiming for these courses to be hands-on leadership experiences with real, practical outcomes for our colleagues and schools. The programmes will offer our future leaders an opportunity to share experiences as part of a dedicated professional learning community and learn from current leaders in all four schools.

Focusing on face to face training that will offer the support and challenge of others, colleagues will benefit from working in each of our schools in turn and will be afforded time to think and plan in a series of out of school network meetings to ensure the well-being and work-life balance of our new leaders is at the centre of what we do.

Emma Gildea, Professional Development Lead



Our family of schools



Spotlight on Improving our Estates

Greg Murphy is our Trust Operations Manager; Greg works closely with Jonathan Hayes our Chief Financial and Operations Officer and the site team in each of our schools. Existing projects they are working on include a new 12 classroom block at Tarporley High School and a 3G pitch at Weaverham High School. One of the benefits of being in our Trust is that we are able to bid for funding that will improve the working environment for both staff and students and also ensure school budgets can be used elsewhere. Over the years, we have been successful in securing over £15 million of Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) bids to improve school estates. This year, we were granted all of the bids we submitted. These are:

School	Bid	Works	Money Recieved
Eaton Primary School	Boiler and Heating Infrastructure Replacement with Low Carbon Solution	To replace the entire heating and hot water infrastructure of the school with a low carbon solution which will be an air source heat pump, powered by solar panels.	£1,421,170
Tarporley High School	Electrical Safety and Statutory Compliance	Phase 2 of the rewire of D Block to include, distribution boards, defective wiring, lighting circuits etc.	£457,112
Tarvin Primary School	Heating Infrastructure Replacement with Low Carbon Solution	To replace the entire heating and hot water infrastructure of the school with a low carbon solution which will be a ground source heat pump, powered by solar panels.	£1,884,388
Weaverham High School	Water and Heating Infrastructure Replacement Project	Replacing the school's heating infrastructure – heating and water pipes, radiators.	£998,097
Weaverham High School	Electrical Safety and Statutory Compliance	To bring the school's electrical infrastructure up to spec – to include, distribution boards, defective wiring, lighting circuits etc.	£496,159
			Total: £5,256,926

Spotlight on Learning: Collaborative Reviews

Sharing best practice through exploration

As the year draws to a close, I am thrilled to share the exciting progress and outcomes from our collaborative reviews across our Trust. Tarvin and Eaton schools have further established their collaborative work with joint best practice in pedagogical approaches INSET and joint reviews of practice working with phase colleagues cross schools.

These reviews are a testament to our commitment to continuous improvement and the power of teamwork in enhancing educational outcomes. This term, we focused on comprehensive reviews of the Literacy provision and of the Pupil Premium provision at Weaverham High School, utilising a supportive process that brought together expertise and passion from within our Trust and beyond.

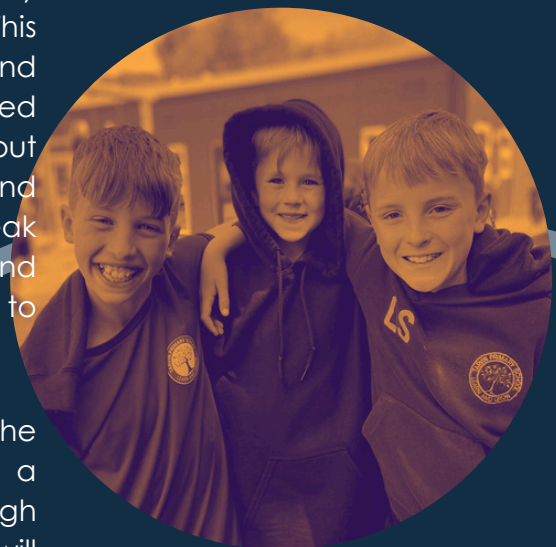
Literacy Review at Weaverham High School

A key highlight this term was the review of literacy practices at Weaverham High School. This review was enriched by the insights of Liam Wright, Assistant Headteacher (AHT) at Eaton Primary School, and Liam Holian, AHT at Weaverham High School. Their expertise have been invaluable in identifying both the strengths and areas for development in the literacy provision.

Highlights of the Review

The review found that there is strong Literacy Leadership and a sound dedication to literacy development from all staff. This dedication is reflected in the implementation of evidence-informed strategies and interventions. The disciplinary approach to literacy has been strategically implemented across the school. This recognises the bespoke nature of individual subject areas and ensures that the teaching and responsibility of Literacy is shared and is not confined to English lessons but is integrated throughout the curriculum. The review also found that the systems and processes are in place to enable proactive identification of weak readers, resulting in targeted interventions having a timely and positive impact on students' literacy levels and their ability to access the wider curriculum.

The areas for development have already been embedded into the Literacy Development plan for next year, where there will be a focus on achieving consistency across all curriculum areas through the disciplinary approach and further cross phase collaboration will take place addressing the discrepancies in literacy expectations between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. By aligning these standards, we will ensure a smoother transition and more consistent progress for our students.



Spotlight on Learning: Collaborative Reviews

Cross-Trust Collaboration and Future Plans

Pupil Premium Review at Weaverham High School

A comprehensive Pupil Premium (PP) review was conducted at Weaverham High School, drawing on the collective expertise of leaders across our Trust and beyond. The review team included; Jason Lowe, CEO of The Sandstone Trust; Darran Jones, CEO of The Learning Trust; Lyndsay Watterson, Improvement Director at The Learning Trust; Mike Holland, WHS Governor and former Headteacher of Hartford High School; and Paul Gildea, AHT at Tarporley High School.

The review found that the schools Pupil Premium Strategy is ambitious, PP is high profile and the direction of travel around culture and knowing PP students is excellent. The review concluded:

“The Headteacher of Weaverham High School is supported by a forward thinking and hard working SLT. The strategic priorities of the school have been well thought through and, in the opinion of the review team, are the right ones to take the school forward. There is significant buy in from the staff who also work extremely hard”

The team at Weaverham now need to continue to embed and evaluate their approach and priorities, as they continue to move the school forward.

In addition, we have initiated cross-phase work to support Year 6 students from Eaton and Tarvin Primary Schools in their transition to secondary school. The cross-phase Forest School Programme, facilitated by Andy Davies, Primary Lead, and Simon Cole, Head of RS and Forest School Lead at Weaverham High School, exemplifies our commitment to holistic education and smooth transitions.

As this academic year concludes, we are already preparing for the Trust Conference in November. Heads of Departments from Tarporley High School and Weaverham High School are collaborating to identify common areas for development. Their insights will inform collaborative working meetings during the Inset, ensuring our teams are aligned and focused on continuous improvement.

Ellen Green, School Improvement Lead



Looking Forward

Athene Communications

We have worked closely with Athene Communications in developing our communications strategy. Many thanks to colleagues who took part in the information gathering exercise which Athene conducted across all schools. This has given us an insight into how we can make communication across the Trust better. It was particularly encouraging to hear that there was a strong consensus from colleagues that they wanted to be involved in more Trust work and collaboration across schools.



Trust Conference 2024 - Belonging

Our Trust conference next year will take place on Friday 29th November at Weaverham High School. The planning has already started around the theme of 'belonging'. Our starting point was to review the feedback from this year's conference where there was consensus around valuing the workshops, having something more bespoke for teaching assistants and more time for subject teams to meet.

Thank you for completing the recent survey on ideas for the conference; this will help us to plan an even better day for you.

We are looking forward to the opportunity to come together once more; sharing best practice, exploring current challenges and ideas in education and supporting one another in our shared goal of creating the best opportunities for our learners to reach their personal and academic potential.





**GET IN
TOUCH**

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