

Issue 16 Autumn 2023

Design&D

A Central Region School Trust Publication



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A note from GUY SHEARS

Welcome to the first edition of DesignEd for 2023/24, our Trust magazine. As ever, you'll discover some interesting articles news celebrating the fantastic schools in CENTRAL, as well as articles taking a view across the whole Trust.

As a Trust, one of our founding principles is that of 'community' which is held dear as one of our important values. This applies at local level, where we aim for each school to be a beacon of pride within the local community. We are, of course, also a community of schools, and our aim is, through shared endeavour, to support each school in being that beacon of pride.

I recently visited Oldbury Park Primary School on a training day in November to listen to, as well as to see what was going on. What became clear in listening to colleagues was the powerful impact of being part of the Trust, as well as being a proud school serving the Oldbury Park community.

For example:

I enjoyed seeing Tim, Assistant Principal, delivering a high quality session on the Trust-wide attendance strategy, which we are devising in partnership with Wayne Harris and Inclusive Attendance. Tim also reflected to me, following the session how he, and others, had been apprehensive upon the school joining the Trust, and yet looking back he felt that the benefits he could now see for the children at the school, and for his and others own learning, were huge.

Ange Crawley, as Executive Principal currently leading Oldbury Park, told me how the Trust estates team, through Bryan and Adam, had been hugely supportive this term. As examples, Adam, based at Waseley Hills had supported the school in opening and locking up the school when a staffing gap had appeared, and that Bryan and Adam had been preparing the school for a Health and Safety Executive

visit which lifted the burden from her and was enabling her to focus on education and learning.

Ange then took me to see some classrooms. We met Steph in her beautiful Year 5 classroom. For clarity, it is, like all other staff in the school have, a classroom that she has made beautiful. It embodies Our Distinctive Culture – Places. There are working wall displays, and she has created a special reading area, with a 'big top' type tent cover over it, that celebrates reading. There are the latest preferred books for 8 and 9 year olds, as well as a well-stocked and up to date choice of books for a range of reading ages. Steph was also animated in describing her ongoing learning through the Trust-wide reading strategy, and the use of 'choral reading' to promote fluency. Steph is also the history lead for the school, and she shared her positive thoughts on the impact of co-design and the cusp history curriculum, as well as her thoughts on the selection of fiction and non-fiction book selections through the school, which are currently being revised to ensure alignment.

As well as Trust-wide approaches having clear impact, it was also great to hear the strength of local community partnership which is so vital for each of our schools in the delivery of our mission. The parents' association have raised nearly £5000 for the school, as a tangible action to support the school. This will be utilised for book purchasing, so that each and every one of the pupils at the school benefits from their endeavours.

So, in a short visit to one of our schools, it was possible to see that community as a value is thriving at local, as well as Trust-wide level. A huge thank you to all of our staff, and volunteers, such as our school governors, as well as our supportive parents, for the huge effort that goes into delivering one of our founding principles, that of 'community'.

As the new academic year begins, we are eager to recognise the remarkable resilience and dedication exhibited by our young people in their exams and assessments. We appreciate the countless hours of hard work and determination they have invested in their studies, and we are incredibly proud of the results achieved.

I'd like to extend my heartfelt thanks to every member of our Trust for their unwavering dedication. We understand that challenges are a part of our journey, but we continue to confront them with resolve and convert challenges into opportunities for growth. Our commitment to fostering a sense of community is exemplified daily, and it's this spirit that keeps us flourishing. We extend our warmest wishes to all our Trustees, Governors, staff, families and students for a brilliant year ahead.

Thank you for your continued support, and we look forward to the journey that lies ahead in the coming academic year.



Guy Shears
Executive Principal (CEO)



MEET THE TEAM

The Central Team

- Guy Shears**
Executive Principal (CEO)
- Penny Harrison**
Trust Finance Director (CFO)
- Stephen Brownlow**
Chief Operating Officer (COO)
- Sarah Bates**
Trust Executive Principal – Primary
- Samantha McMonagle**
Executive School Improvement Leader
- Harinder Sidhu**
Business Improvement Partner
- Jennie Homer**
Head of Governance & Corporate Services
- Edward Cooper**
Head of IT
- Bryan Tait**
Lead Estates Hub Manager
- Carley Brookes**
Lead HR Hub Manager
- Breea Hayes-Burke**
PA to the Executive Principal (CEO) & Office Manager

Trust Board

- Elizabeth Keates**
Co-Chair of Trustees
- Orla MacSherry**
Co-Chair of Trustees
- Trustees**
 - Gareth Bower**
 - Nicholas Clifford**
 - Claire Grainger**
 - Eric Griffiths (Vice Chair)**
 - John Howard**
 - Christopher Smith**
 - Joanna Townshend**

Executive Leadership Team

- Guy Shears**
Executive Principal (CEO)
- Penny Harrison**
Trust Finance Director (CFO)
- Stephen Brownlow**
Chief Operating Officer (COO)
- Sarah Bates**
Trust Executive Principal – Primary
- Samantha McMonagle**
Executive School Improvement Leader
- Ian Mellor**
Executive Principal
- Angela Crawley**
Executive Principal – Primary School Improvement
- Ross Trafford**
Executive Principal

Principals

- Rachel Whiting**
Principal of Abbeywood First School and Church Hill Middle School
- Ian Mellor**
Executive Principal of Arrow Vale High School and Waseley Hills High School
- Sarah Allen**
Principal of Arrow Valley First School
- Christopher Czepukojc**
Principal of Gospel Oak School
- Ross Trafford**
Executive Principal of Holyhead School
- Angela Saul**
Principal of Ipsley CE Middle School
- Jane Lloyd**
Principal of Lickhill Primary School
- Angela Crawley**
Principal of Oldbury Park Primary School
- Sarah Callanan**
Principal of St Stephen's CE First School
- Lorna Weatherby**
Principal of Sutton Park Primary School

Co-Design Leaders

- Tom Preston and John Barratt**
Trust Leads for Maths
- Rebecca Quirk and Clare Sidaway**
Trust Leads for English
- Hattie Hayhurst**
Trust Lead for Science
- Alison Bailey-Green & Hannah Tinsley**
Trust Leads for History
- Hannah Weynberg**
Trust Lead for Geography
- Matthew Purslow & Jenna Brown**
Trust Leads for Modern Foreign Languages
- Ed Lee**
Trust Lead for Drama
- Lauren Clarke & Alice Pearson**
Trust Leads for Religious Education
- Matthew Purslow & Josh Prentice**
Trust Lead for Physical Education
- Angela Saul & Francesca Stanley**
Trust Leads for PSHE/RSE
- Sheetal Sommel & Peter Garnett**
Trust Lead for ICT/Computing
- Dale Holt & Matthew Purslow**
Trust Lead for DT
- Stacey Geal**
Trust Lead for Art
- Francesca McCullough & Daniel Wright**
Trust Leads for Personal Development
- David Hunt**
Trust Lead for Music
- Dawn Salter**
Trust Lead for Food Technology

Teach Central Leaders

- Matthew Purslow**
Trust Assistant Principal (School Improvement)
CENTRAL Lead Professional Learning, Research & Development
- Teresa Wilson**
Trust Lead for ITT & Early Careers

Chairs of LAGBs

- Richard Davies**
Abbeywood First School & Church Hill Middle School
- Richard Davies**
Arrow Vale High School
- Nicola Robinson**
Arrow Valley First School
- Joanne Goodman**
Gospel Oak School
- Sajid Hussain**
Holyhead School
- Matthew Setchell**
Ipsley CE Middle School
- Anna Tyler**
Lickhill Primary School
- Kirstin Bluck**
Oldbury Park Primary School
- Vicky Jackman**
St Stephen's CE First School
- Katherine Maynereid**
Sutton Park Primary School
- Chris Passey**
Waseley Hills High School

Strategic Leads

- Samantha McMonagle**
Trust Lead for Disadvantaged and Vulnerable (including Pupil Premium) Strategy
- Matthew Purslow**
Trust Lead for Staff Development & Training
- Claire Round**
Trust Director of SEND
- Sarah Bates**
Trust Lead for Reading
- Scott Crane**
Trust Lead for Safeguarding
- Niall Brennan**
Trust Lead for Remote/Digital Learning Network
- Matt Rash & Michael Williams**
Trust Lead for Behaviour and Attendance
- Samantha McMonagle**
Trust Lead for Curriculum and Pedagogy
- Samantha McMonagle and Matthew Purslow**
Trust Leads for Co-Design

Meet the TRUSTEE TEAM

Having been a strong lead for the Trust over many years, Trustees offered sincere thanks and appreciation for the hard work, dedication, and commitment of Eric Griffiths, who would be stepping down from his role as Chair to the Trust Board. Trustees were thrilled that although offering thanks, this was not goodbye, as Eric would continue in the role of Safeguarding link to the Trust and Trust Board Vice chair, in a supportive capacity to the new Co-Chairs, Orla MacSherry and Elizabeth Keates, who were thrilled to take up the new dual role.

Other appointments of Trustees included:

- Nick Clifford - Chair to Education and Standards Committee
- John Howard - Chair to Audit and Risk Committee and Chair to Remuneration Committee
- Elizabeth Keates - Chair to HR Committee
- Orla MacSherry - Chair to Finance & Resources Committee

Two new Trustees were also given a warm welcome to the Trust Board at the start of the academic year:

- Christopher Smith (Member appointed)
- Claire Grainger (Diocesan appointed Trustee)



Gareth Bower

Finance & Resources Committee/Audit and Risk Committee

Gareth joined the Trust at the start of 2023 and sits on the Finance and Resources committee and most recently also the Audit & Risk Committee. Gareth qualified as an Accountant with KPMG and has since held a number of senior financial management roles in the IT, telecommunications and construction industry. He currently works for Transport for London, responsible for guiding the finances of a large number of construction projects through a very challenging few years. Gareth is keen to leverage his financial experience in both the private and public sector through his membership of the Committees to support the Trust and develop best-practice processes. Gareth lives with his partner and dog and enjoys muddy walks on the weekend, commuting to work on his bike and travelling to far flung places whenever the opportunity arises.



Nick Clifford

Chair to Education & Standards Committee

Nick specialised in executive education and worked for a broad range of clients. His doctoral research concentrated on the barriers to corporate organisational change using ground-breaking action research methodology concentrating on 'learning through doing'. This was written up in thesis form and more recently in a chapter in a research handbook on public service change.

In 1997 Nick was offered a sabbatical year to study full-time for an MBA at the Judge Business School at Cambridge University. On completion he briefly ran his own consultancy company designing and delivering executive education programmes but quickly developed a relationship with Alliance Manchester Business School. It led to teaching full time as a director of programme design and delivery. His doctorate research grew out of understanding the relationship between teaching and applied learning. He left full-time employment just before the pandemic retaining his relationship with AMBS and consulting with a number of organisations on managing organisational change.



Claire Grainger

Education & Standards Committee

Claire Grainger has been a headteacher since 2007 and is an expert in primary educational leadership. She has led three primary schools with varied communities in rural and inner-city locations in both the South-West and West Midlands. Currently, Claire is a CEO of a small C of E MAT. Claire has been a Local Leader of Education and an active member of Devon SACRE for 13 years. More recently Claire was invited by the local authority to be a member of an Interim Executive Board (IEB) for a Secondary School, which involved chairing the School Improvement Committee. Claire has a passion for coaching and mentoring leaders and is currently working & collaborating with other schools (outside of her own Trust) to further develop school improvement priorities, notably with developing rigorous monitoring systems, holding leaders to account and supporting school culture and ethos. Claire is an active advocate for CENTRAL, having been appointed in September 2023, and is keen to be part of a governance team that makes a difference for the students in all schools. Her skillset can be used effectively to work alongside executive leaders and trustees, with a particular focus on Christian distinctiveness for the Church schools within CENTRAL. In Claire's spare time, she enjoys supporting her children in their love for cricket and is a committee member at the local cricket club. Part of this role includes being the Safeguarding/Welfare Officer. Claire has recently received the Safe Hands Award by Worcestershire County Cricket Board for her work; ensuring that her club goes above and beyond on the welfare front and helped to deliver a safe and fun environment for all.



Eric Griffiths

(Trust Board Vice Chair) Finance & Resources Committee

Eric was appointed Trust Board Chair and had fulfilled the role successfully and with support to the Trust for over 10 years; more recently Eric has stepped down in his role as Chair and has taken on the role of Vice Chair in a supportive capacity. Eric Griffiths began his teaching career at Ipswich Civic College and subsequently taught a wide

range of courses, including Pre-Vocational, GCSE and A Level. In 1985, he joined Suffolk County Council to work on the development of sixth form provision. He moved to the Midlands in 1988 to work for Wolverhampton Council and went on to become Chief Inspector of Schools.

Eric was appointed as Executive Director for Education and Lifelong Learning in Sandwell in 2001. In 2005 he became interim Director of Education and Children's Services for that Borough. He left in March 2006 to set up an Educational Consultancy business, with much of his activity focusing on work with the Department for Education and the Baker Dearing Trust until his retirement in 2015.

Eric is married with three grown up children and eight grandchildren. His leisure pursuits include walking both in this country and abroad.



John Howard

Chair to Audit and Risk Committee

John Howard was re-appointed to the Trust Board in March 2022 as a Trustee, having previously been a Trustee with Central RSA Academies Trust from April 2017 following a period of being an RSA Nominated Governor at Arrow Vale High School in Redditch, where he was Chair of the Audit and Human Resources Committees. John has worked in education for over 40 years and since his retirement from full-time employment as a College Principal in the FE/HE sector, he has through the establishment of his own successful consultancy firm, worked with a range of secondary schools and colleges across a number of local authority areas, providing support in terms of post-inspection requirements, school/college improvement planning and curriculum development. He is confident in making use of this experience as a Trustee supporting the strategic direction of the Trust Board and the work and achievements of staff and students across all schools in the Trust family. John also served as a Lay Member/Non-Executive Director in the NHS in Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire over a period of 20 years, having a particular responsibility for good governance and Chaired the Audit and Remuneration Committees.



Elizabeth Keates

Trust Board Co-Chair

Liz has been an active member of the Central Region Schools Trust board for a number of years and Vice Chair for the past 5 years. Liz joined the Trust to utilise her knowledge and experience of working at a senior level within Human Resources to the benefit of the Trust and the delivery of its core objectives. Liz has supported the Trust during periods of change and growth, utilising her skills to assist in the management of change. Liz has now taken on the challenging and rewarding role of Co-Chair along with Orla MacSherry. Liz is keen to use the respective knowledge to assist in the development of the Trust Board and develop its future strategy. Liz retired 5 years ago having spent 40+ years in the Transport and Construction sectors working in all aspects of HR, with her specialism being in Employee relations and engagement. Outside of her work with the Trust Board, Liz is enjoying retirement with a variety of activities, including, travelling, keeping fit and enjoying the company of friends.



Jo Townshend

Dr Jo Townshend is a consultant working at the intersection of arts and education. She brings leadership and management experience from across school, college and university settings and draws upon her arts-based research to re-imagine education futures. Her research investigates the possibilities of new materialist methodologies to develop critical approaches for education leadership. As a passionate advocate for social justice and the value of the arts in education, Jo joined the Trust Board in support of the Trust's mission and values. She contributes to the HR and Remuneration committees and has a special interest in equality, diversity and inclusion. Jo is a graduate of the Royal Academy Schools and gained her Doctorate of Education at Canterbury Christ Church University. Previous roles include Principal Partnerships Management (Creative Industries) at UCL; Principal, Rye Studio School for the Creative Industries; head of department, visiting lecturer and an advanced skills teacher. She is Chair-Director of London's Contemporary Visual Arts Network, Trustee of Blessed Foundation and Co-Founder of UCL Art Futures.



Orla MacSherry

Trust Board Co-Chair

Orla has been a Trustee since 2016 and is Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee. She has recently been appointed as Co-Chair of the Trust Board.

Orla is a debt finance lawyer and headed the real estate finance team of a leading city law firm for over a decade. She now provides consultancy services to investment banks and law firms. She has a wide range of experience in finance, management and governance. Orla has leveraged her professional experience for a number of years to provide support for the education sector and she is passionate about aiding social justice through the provision of exceptional schools.

Outside work Orla is a keen horse rider and tennis player. Orla is a fellow of the RSA.



Christopher Smith

Chris is the headteacher of South Bromsgrove High, a 13-18 single academy trust of approximately 1350 students in North Worcestershire. He has been headteacher since 2017 and prior to this has had roles as a Head of School, Deputy Headteacher, Assistant Headteacher, Director of Learning, Assistant Head of Science and Head of Biology.

Chris strongly believes in the transformative power of education and was attracted to becoming a Trustee by the Trust's commitment to social justice, particularly for those students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. He is a member of the Education and Standards Committee where he hopes to support leaders within the Trust by drawing on his 25 years of experience working in education.

Away from school, Chris is a big rugby fan and enjoys walking in the mountains, both in the UK and around the world.

THREE LESSONS WE LEARNED ALONG OUR CENTRALISATION JOURNEY



Stephen Brownlow

Chief Operating Officer

01 KNOW YOUR WHY?

Keeping a clear sight of the reasons behind making this transformation will be pivotal in responding to the challenges that will inevitably arise. For us at CENTRAL, initial conversations around centralisation centred around two primary aims: driving efficiency and alleviating pressure on our senior leaders. We knew that in terms of streamlining processes and delivering economies of scale, centralisation could provide much needed extra capacity.

At a time when principals are struggling to manage what can feel like an ever-growing workload, with many considering leaving the profession entirely as a result, centralisation provides much needed support from trust colleagues. Principals have strong leadership and teaching skills, what often comes less naturally is the ancillary work that comes alongside the role. Dealing with staffing, managing school estates and planning digital strategies are increasingly complex, and are not necessarily tasks principals are prepared to deal with. Creating extra capacity in the form of dedicated Trust-wide processes and staff has been hugely beneficial to our colleagues at all levels, allowing our principals to focus on what matters most to them – teaching and learning.

Centralisation may at first appear to be an overwhelmingly complex project to undertake, with so many factors to consider, but there are a few key considerations which can make this process much smoother.

02 COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Consistent, open dialogue is absolutely critical for success. Within CENTRAL, the voices of our school leaders were indispensable in ensuring the path to centralisation was smooth. Not only do you need an initial period of consultation, which will give your colleagues the chance to voice their priorities at the outset, I cannot overstate the importance of ongoing conversations to ensure things are proceeding in a positive direction. How this is undertaken will differ depending on what works for each learning community; we took multiple avenues to give our principals and senior colleagues the chance to voice their opinions and concerns. This feedback was gathered at our regularly scheduled Trust-wide meetings, as well as via take-home surveys, and during the many informal conversations that take place on a daily basis.

03 PACE YOURSELF

Our biggest pain points arose as a result of the undue pressure we had placed on ourselves from choosing to overhaul several major work streams at the same time; estates, governance and IT budgets, which we aimed to completely or mostly centralise within the academic year. Whilst significant progress was made, it would have been a smoother and easier process had we chosen to just focus on one of these two elements over the same time period. It can be easy to get swept up in the results centralisation will deliver, but trying to do too much too quickly can lead to unnecessary stress and can jeopardise the success of the process. Tempering your ambition with realism is vital in making sure the transformations you are initiating will succeed long-term.

CENTRALISATION IS COLLABORATION – HOW TRUSTS CAN BALANCE AGENCY WITH EFFICIENCY

A core tension for Trusts is to maintain balance between the needs of individual school contexts and the streamlining of processes across the organisation (and therefore reducing unnecessary duplication). It is essential to approach this tension strategically.

Successfully executed centralisation provides clear benefits for schools. The mental load being placed on principals is immense. Indeed, a third of heads are actively looking to leave the sector entirely, with the majority citing unmanageable workloads.

To stop the brain drain, we must find ways to alleviate the burden. For us, centralising operations within the trust has allowed us to give valuable time back to our principals, cutting out activities which had previously been blocking them from what drew them into the sector in the first instance – teaching and learning.

In this regard, centralisation of shared services can be the ultimate tool to deliver freedom and agency. However, like any change-management process, it can stall if open lines of communication are not maintained. School leaders and teachers should never be caught by surprise by the time final changes are announced.

To that end, in our efforts to centralise processes we first undertook a prolonged period of initial research before deciding on a path and making changes. Pivotal, we gained the perspective of principals and other senior leaders in our schools to ensure we could address their core concerns, challenges and inefficiency pinch-points.

Based on the priorities our leaders voiced to us, we chose to start by centralising IT budgets, estates and governance, rather than transforming everything all at once. Even this was an onerous task, and taught us the importance of a more interspersed approach.

Our approach has been guided throughout by a cyclical format of consultation, implementation, review and evaluation. This has allowed us as trust leaders to maintain a flexible attitude; there are no right or wrong answers in the journey to centralisation in this regard. Anticipating that there will be feedback, setbacks and road blocks is critical; adapting your approach in response to these is how to plan for success.

Gathering feedback and ensuring your schools' voices are heard is a continuous process, and should not be relegated to a job ticked off the to-do list at the start of the journey, never to be revisited. In addition to regularly scheduled check-in meetings, we also issued questionnaires at several points and in different formats – both in a take-home format and in-person during Trust-wide meetings. Our aim was to give people as many chances as possible to get involved with review and evaluation processes, ensuring we remained aware of potential hiccups and could steer further changes in the right direction.

While Principals are adaptable and capable individuals, support to learn about the wider responsibilities of headship can often be thin on the ground as leaders climb the ranks. Much of the administrative work that preoccupies principals and their teams can be redirected through centralisation. A particularly salient example is hiring practices: filling vacancies is a challenge in the current climate, but pooling applicants trust-wide can be an excellent way of developing a talent pipeline. Carrying out hiring processes at Trust level is fruitful in ensuring great candidates are sourced and shared across the network.

Likewise, we cannot reasonably expect our Principals to be experts in IT infrastructure, the intricacies of estates management, procurement, accounting and HR legalities while also being excellent teachers and leaders. One of the primary benefits of being part of a trust is being able to draw support from dedicated experts, giving leaders more freedom and agency to focus energy on supporting staff and shaping the learning experience of students.

But school leaders having assumed all of these responsibilities, unsustainable though that might be, Trusts can't simply walk in and whisk them away. Communities function at their best when everyone is supported in their role to use their expertise and capabilities to their fullest, and that includes deciding what to help them with, how and at what pace.

In this way, centralisation does not rob leaders of agency. Instead, it is a collaboration that means they are supported with the growing list of challenges they face.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENTS

EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

2022 saw a new era for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) across CENTRAL. The Trust welcomed a new Director of Early Years and an Early Years SIP, both of whom wasted no time in enhancing our Early Years provision, ensuring its continuous growth and development.

Initial reviews were conducted for the five schools with EYFS provision. These reviews celebrated not only the unique strengths of each setting but provided tailored recommendations, suggesting areas for reflection or action individual to each school. These reviews subsequently led to a Key Findings and Recommendations report which highlighted the need for action within the Trust on a number of key areas:

- Strategy
- Quality of practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- Leadership of the EYFS
- Staffing
- Capital Investment and Resource Development
- Communication, Business and Marketing

Work began on many of these areas immediately. The EYFS Leaders from the different schools met several times and worked collaboratively to create a clear, shared vision, curriculum intent, implementation and impact statement for the Trust. Individual schools should then adapt this for their unique setting. A shared understanding of the education programmes set out in the EYFS Statutory Framework has been created, enabling Leaders to effectively reflect on their curriculum, ensuring it develops foundational knowledge and understanding children will need for Key Stage 1 and for the rest of their schooling.



The creation of standardisation and moderation documents is underway. These will ensure that data at baseline and end of term checkpoints is standardised and a more accurate picture of starting points and pupil progress across the Trust is possible. They were already used for baseline assessments in the autumn Term 2023 and staff have been very positive about using them. **"I have to admit that I found it SO much easier this year to have some guidelines to go by rather than just my gut feelings!!"** - Helen Digger, Sutton Park Primary School.

Additionally, each school is trialling a new Assessment in Action tool, based on the model at Oldbury Park Primary School. This gives a really clear overview of the starting points of all children, and the journey they will need to take to get to a Good Level of Development at the end of their Reception year in school. A review of this will take place at the end of the year, with schools able to share adaptations they made, their successes, and reflect on any amendments they will make for the following year.

The 2023-24 school year kicked off with a meeting with Sarah Bates, the Executive Principal – Primary, The Director of Early Years and the Early Years SIP, ensuring that Early Years remains high on the Trust development agenda. Reviews and re-visits have been scheduled and with clear identification of specific support requirements. A detailed action plan was drawn up to ensure the continued raising of standards across all Early Years settings within the Trust.

Carol Newman
Director of Early Years

CPLR&D

“PEOPLE MATTER; IN CENTRAL WE BELIEVE THAT EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING, RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT MUST BE AT THE HEART OF OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITIES. COLLABORATION ACROSS OUR TRUST TO IMPROVE LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR ALL PUPILS IN OUR CARE IS KEY TO OUR MISSION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE.”

We fundamentally believe in establishing and implementing a clear infrastructure which supports expert teacher development through all stages and phases of career.

Our staff development programmes recognise the profound impact which teaching, and the wider educational sphere has on the lives of the young people in our care. From our initial teacher training (ITT) provision, which seeks to recruit and train the very best in new entrants to the profession, through to our leadership provision and extensive support programmes for excellence in teaching, the CPLR&D function of CENTRAL provides support for schools across our Trust and the wider West Midlands, to transform outcomes for young people and bring about positive social justice through exceptional schools.

CENTRAL has, from inception, ensured multi-tiered levels of support across its school direct programmes, its innovative early career stage initiatives and throughout its comprehensive continuing professional development provision which, as a result, continues to successfully embed future leaders into schools across the trust and empowered individuals to support their own and others' progress.

Our mission is to ensure that our trainees progress through the wide range of programmes available to then, themselves, become experts who, in turn, support trainees to develop into the next generation of great practitioners and leaders, thus fulfilling the

cycle of learning and guaranteeing a legacy both within our schools and to the benefit of those young people in our classrooms.

The Trust has established itself as a centre of excellence, and a champion for staff development throughout all the work which has been undertaken. CENTRAL has established effective and socially focused relationships with Teaching School Hubs to provide Early Career Stage Fellows and is an integral part of the NPQ provision across the region, delivering and facilitating across a suite of leadership courses. As a trust, we continue to work with maths & science enhancement provision in developing mastery in STEM subjects across schools in the West Midlands, and beyond.

Our commitment to cultivating leaders and collaboration is at the heart of the CPLRD model, with colleagues dedicated to ensuring the highest quality of training for schools in the trust, through the teaching school hubs, through subject hubs and for partner schools and academies throughout a wide-reaching geographical network.

Our subject-based co-design conferences support collaboration across all schools within the trust throughout each academic year. Our dedicated, and resilient, year, subject & co-design leads continually demonstrate their commitment to our model of curricula collaboration and the quality of CPD facilitated at all these sessions is of the highest calibre. This consistency across the trust, ensures that colleagues and practitioners continue to have access to the best possible opportunities which then lead to positive outcomes for pupils. This commitment is equally mirrored in the breadth of strategic groups which work across phase and ensure that the quality and consistency of provision in each of these areas supports the development of our Trust and the impact it has on the young people in our schools.

For more information about our CPLR&D provision and offer, please email mpurslow@crst.org.uk

Matthew Purslow
Trust Lead for CPLR&D



OUR OFFER TO STAFF

In Central Region Schools Trust (CENTRAL) we recognise that it is people who will enable our pupils to flourish, we understand that happy, well-motivated and well-trained staff will make the biggest difference to our pupils. Staff at CENTRAL go the extra mile so that pupils can achieve excellence.

We know that working in schools and for the Central Team can be demanding and pressured so we have a solution focussed mind set to try and remove barriers and make life that little bit easier. Whether that's making sure that you have time to have a cup of tea during the day or ensuring that you have access to the best professional development – it all counts!

The quality of our staff's experience at CENTRAL is a priority for all of us. We want staff to enjoy their time at work and thrive professionally.

CENTRAL is a great place to work. Our Staff Behaviours underpin the way we work together:

- We lead by example
- We communicate effectively
- We keep our promises and commitments
- We develop each other through line management
- We are solution focused
- We put the 'team' first
- We think about the bigger picture

In our school our pupils are hard-working, their behaviour is outstanding, our teaching pedagogy is based on research and we have excellent facilities.

We believe that a successful school is founded upon communication and teamwork and so staff contributions are essential in helping us move our Trust and schools forward.

We recognise the importance of being heard and feeling valued and are relentless in our quest to ensure that our teachers are supported during their time in CENTRAL.

Here are some of the ways, already established, recently introduced or planned, which makes CENTRAL an excellent place to work.

1. A commitment to your professional development and growth whether you are in your first few years of teaching or have been teaching for 20 years or longer.
2. Regular planned CPD sessions that are led by colleagues, conducted in small groups to aid discussion and designed in house taking into consideration the school priorities and the views of the staff.
3. Access to a vast range of training courses offered by Central Professional Learning, Research and Development (CPLR&D).
4. Part payment of fees and use of apprenticeship levy towards further qualifications such as masters and doctorate programmes.
5. Opportunities for promotion. We are always looking for different ways and opportunities to promote colleagues within CENTRAL.
6. Opportunities to work at other schools within CENTRAL.
7. Cross-school/cross department working on training days to share best practice.

Safeguarding your time

8. Staff break duties scheduled on days where they are either free before or after break.
9. There is no expectation for staff to answer out of hours emails. Guidance has been issued to staff in dealing with communication via email. The use of personal mobile phones to pick up emails is discouraged.
10. Training days that are calendared with a view to alleviate pressure at key times in the year.
11. Year 11 and Year 13 summer lesson time is safeguarded to provide you with extra training time

There when you need us

12. A designated member of the senior leadership team in charge of staff well-being and workload.
13. Each school has a trained mental health first aider.
14. A half termly staff forum so that staff can highlight issues and concerns and we can move the school forward together. No issue is too small!
15. We offer an employee assistance programme that offers a wide range of support from emotional support and counselling to financial and legal advice and information.
16. Identification of pinch points during the year for teacher and consideration of this when creating the yearly calendar.

Other

17. Coffee and tea is provided in the staff rooms at break time and available at other times.
18. Access to the Teachers' Pensions Scheme and Local Government Pension Scheme.
19. Free eye tests.
20. Salary sacrifice cycle scheme.
21. Flu jabs are offered annually.
22. Pre-planned and published calendar so that staff can plan in advance.
23. Access to on-site gym and sports facilities.
24. Pay portability when arriving from other schools.



OUR OFFER TO MIDDLE LEADERS

Central Region Schools Trust (CENTRAL) recognises that middle leaders play a critical role in our schools. Middle leaders are the engine of a Trust and school ensuring the vision is turned into reality and that policies translate into practice. They provide a vital bridge between our senior leaders and our teaching staff, acting as both a filter and buffer.

We could not imagine a successful school without effective middle leaders. It is our belief that successful middle leaders do not happen by accident nor is there such thing as a natural leader. Middle leaders become successful through continued support, targeted CPD and by working within an organisation that works hard to identify and remove barriers and red tape from leadership and teaching. We understand that teachers who progress either within our school or move onto promoted positions in other schools are a sign of our success as a school. Here are some of the ways, already established, recently introduced or planned, which makes CENTRAL an excellent place to be a middle leader.

Professional development

1. Full induction prior to starting as a middle leader.
2. Full in-house training programme for all middle leaders.
3. Handbook for all middle leaders to clearly define the role and expectations.
4. Access to recognised training and leadership courses such as the National Professional Qualifications and other accredited courses with travel expenses covered.
5. Designated middle leader buddy to make sure you always have a sounding board and someone to discuss and share ideas and solutions with.
6. Designated experienced line manager with fortnightly line management meetings.
7. Guidance on ongoing leadership support, such as what research to read, who to follow on Twitter and which professional bodies to join.

8. Opportunities to visit other Trusts and schools to identify and discuss best practice.
9. Opportunities to attend and/or organise area networking meetings to enable the sharing of best practice.
10. Regular middle leaders' meetings which include reading and discussion of educational research and discussion about the application of research in our Trust and school.
11. Opportunities to shadow senior leaders and support with long-term career planning.
12. Opportunities for promotion. We are always looking for different ways and opportunities to promote colleagues within the Trust and our schools.
13. Opportunities to work with middle leaders within CENTRAL.

Time to lead

14. Ongoing review of systems to improve efficiency.
15. Departmental time during the summer term to help you plan and prepare for the following year.
16. Safeguarded Year 11 and Year 13 summer lesson time so that you can focus on core priorities and staff training.

Safeguarding your time

17. Access to data analysis programmes that ensure quick and easy analysis of data.
18. Ongoing review of systems to ensure that systems meet the needs of all involved.
19. Discussion with your designated line manager about your 'to do' list and how to prioritise tasks.



TACKLING WORKLOAD TO IMPROVE WELL-BEING

Central Region Schools Trust (Trust) knows that teaching is exhilarating and rewarding, but recognise that it can also be exhausting. We understand that time is precious and that tired teachers do not make effective teachers.

Our vision for workload is to enable every teacher to become highly effective by:

- Ensuring every teacher has time to focus on what is important, namely planning, teaching and feedback;
- Believing in simplicity and aiming for maximum impact on pupil/student learning with minimal workload for staff; and
- Continuously reviewing and evaluating our systems in order to support all staff to achieve a healthy work life balance.

We care deeply about the well-being of our staff and are signed up to the Education Staff Well-being Charter (Education staff well-being charter - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)).



WAYS THAT WE MANAGE WORKLOAD AND WELL-BEING

Teaching and learning, planning and curriculum

1. Collaborative planning enables teachers to discuss and share best practice rather than everyone busily planning the same lessons in their individual classrooms.
2. Where possible, and appropriate, staff have PPA time together to allow for collaborative planning.
3. We share resources across departments, year groups and through subject leads both at Primary and Secondary level.
4. We use high quality schemes of work that have either been developed by our co-design groups or are research-based programmes that have clear

learning sequences, progression, teacher resources and carefully written guidance.

5. We aim to use quality textbooks, booklets and ready-made resources wherever possible to help reduce planning time and support better teaching.
6. We schedule extra TED days to support schools with the planning of any new initiatives and for staff training.
7. ECTs are supported through a carefully structured programme, an experienced mentor, weekly meetings, extensive CPD, Trust wide networking events and no unhelpful evidence collecting!
8. We have established a culture of support and challenge around the monitoring of teaching and learning – there are no graded lesson observations.
9. Creative timetabling with workload in mind.
10. We are staff and pupil focussed, not Ofsted focussed. Any inspection will see us as we are normally. We are Ofsted ready not Ofsted compliant.

Behaviour

11. Everyone has the highest expectations of behaviour, with all staff (not just teaching staff) reinforcing those expectations.
12. Schools have clear and robust behaviour systems that underpin impeccable behaviour, so you are free to teach.
13. The SLT support break and lunch time duties so that behaviour in unstructured time does not affect the smooth running of lessons.
14. It is not an expectation that staff do any lunch duties.



Assessment, feedback and reporting to parents

1. Wherever possible we encourage the use of online packages for homework to further reduce planning, setting and marking.
2. We have significantly reduced the number of data collections and the amount of data collected.
3. The whole school assessment calendar is created alongside middle leaders to ensure the best possible timings of assessments, exams and moderation, avoiding pinch points.
4. Wherever possible tests and exams contain multiple choice questions and knowledge questions so that they can be quickly marked.
5. The use of formative and summative data is purposeful and informs planning and next steps.
6. We work collaboratively within the Trust when creating assessments. This also improves their reliability and validity.
7. We use tests and exams that can be self/peer marked with minimal teacher marking whenever possible.
8. No onerous or impossible marking policies. Instead, we have a feedback policy that focuses on whole class feedback, verbal feedback and daily quizzes. We are aiming to prevent hours of marking at home wherever possible.

Professional Development

9. Directed time is built with staff at the forefront of planning.
10. Staff training on effective and ineffective feedback so that teachers are fully aware of what has the greatest impact on pupil/student progress.
11. Lesson observations are low stakes, high frequency, focussed upon supporting colleagues to develop their practice.
12. After school meetings and events have been rationalised. The gained time has been given to departments to support collaborative planning, subject specific CPD and preparation time.
13. There is a Trust programme for training middle and senior leaders which enhances the excellent training opportunities offered within schools.
14. The number of line management meetings have been reduced.
15. Comprehensive support for all teachers in their first five years of their careers-e.g. dedicated mentors, specific training, regular meetings and access to the early career working party. The number of line management meetings have been reduced.
16. The school does not roll over its timetable during the summer term. Instead, this time is used on core priorities and providing staff with extra training time.

ESTATES BUILDING PROJECTS

CHURCH HILL MIDDLE SCHOOL

Two exciting projects have taken place at Church Hill Middle school and Gospel Oak School which will add additional learning capacity to both schools and have a hugely positive impact on the students in our Trust.

Due to the increase in students numbers, Church Hill was given a grant from Worcestershire County Council to create more learning space to cater for the additional student numbers that have recently joined the school.

The school, in collaboration with the Trust, decided that the best use of this additional funding would be to create more space in the Main hall. This was achieved by extending the hall to allow for more dining hall tables and chairs to ensure that all of the children from their years group could gather for their lunch in their year groups, and hold whole year group assemblies.

As well as the hall, the additional grant enabled the modification of two classroom room spaces, converting an IT room to a teaching space and converting a music room to an intervention space working with the students to support their individual learning need.

The works took place over the summer break and were successfully completed in time for the students to return for the 23/24 Academic Year.



GOSPEL OAK SCHOOL

The Trust, in collaboration with Gospel Oak School, have started the building weeks to provide additional SEND provision to the students at Gospel Oak School. The building works are well underway and will provide extra capacity to provide smaller classroom to allow the focus on the high level SEND students.

The main aim of the building is to create a unique space where our SEND students can study and learn. Together with Hawker Construction and S2E, CENTRAL are project managing a purpose-built single storey SEND focused building.

The foundations and new fire engine access road have already been finished and the project is due for completion in February 2024.



MEET THE DATA TEAM: DRIVING DATA EXCELLENCE TOGETHER

Allow us to introduce you to the individuals powering our data-driven initiatives - the Data Team. This dedicated team consists of Simon Austin, Trust Data Manager; Sam Sewell, Data Improvement and Systems Improvement Partner; and our newest addition, Ezra Simms, Data Apprentice. Together, we collaborate closely with the 12 schools across CENTRAL, providing essential support with data services.

In summer we welcomed Ezra Simms, our first apprentice, into the team. Working alongside our experienced professionals, Ezra brings a fresh perspective, eagerness to learn, and has quickly becoming an integral part of the team. Ezra actively contributes to our data initiatives while gaining invaluable hands-on experience. Apprentices are not only beneficial for our team. They also address the industry's need for skilled talent and support with our values of nurturing young talent.

This year, one of our key projects will be to support and harmonise all assessment data collections, with the standardisation and alignment of all Key Stages from EYFS to Key Stage 5 across the Trust. With the move from three to one Management Information System (MIS) in the Trust, we can establish a unified data infrastructure, aim to streamline operations, and improve the overall quality, consistency and delivery times of our data and reporting. This will empower us to leverage data effectively for informed decision-making.

Our Data Team stands committed to supporting schools in leveraging data to enhance educational outcomes. Together, we work towards improved learning experiences and academic success for all students.

Projects delivered in 2022/23

Distinctiveness Trackers: We set up for the trackers for all Secondary and one Primary school, creating a tracking tool for all enrichment activities, with a standardised reporting specification in place for all Trust schools.

Power BI: Online analytics available for reports with information on pupil/student numbers, attendance, exclusions, behaviour & phonics. The purpose of the analytics is to provide senior leaders and key staff with up-to-date information daily info to actively monitor and identify areas early.

GL NGRT: We provided training to the Reading Strategy group and Power BI analysis of the NGRT tests results across the Trust schools. We also promoted interaction with GL's online reports and visualisations.

FFT Pupil Tracking reports: We set up the software and provided training and support for all schools to use it. It compares school's weekly % attendance against FFT benchmark, by pupil characteristics.

GDPR and Data Protection: We provided training and presentations across the Trust to all staff and supported on incidents and subject access requests across the Trust.

Simon Austin
Trust Data Manager



DRIVING PROGRESS: ACHIEVEMENTS IN ARBOR AND IT PROJECTS

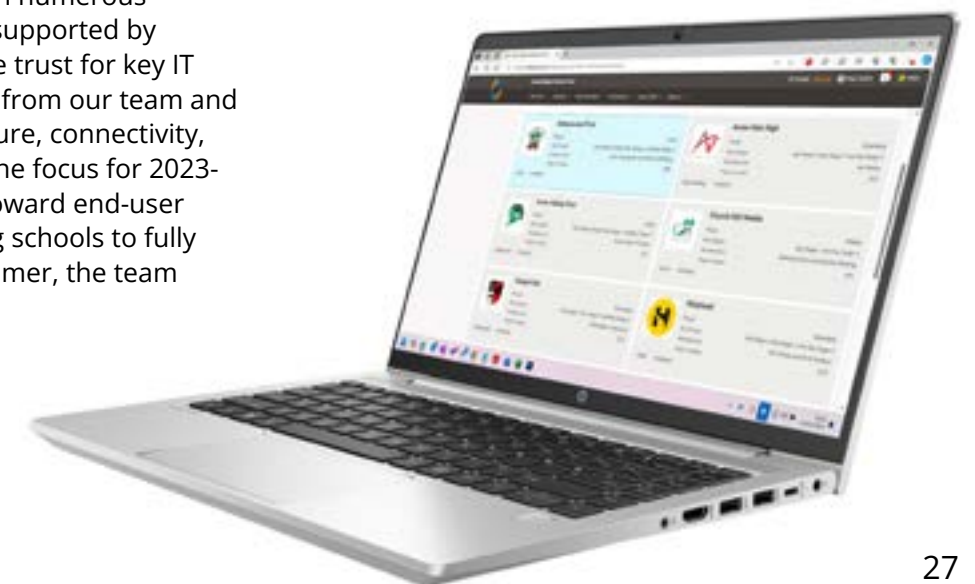
One of the key projects this year has been the migration of eleven schools over to the Arbor MIS platform. We are pleased to report seven schools were successfully migrated by September, and the remaining four schools completed the transition early November. While we're still in the early stages of our Arbor journey, this achievement represents a significant milestone for the Central Region Schools Trust, with all schools now fully utilising the Arbor platform.

The success of the Arbor migration is a result of collaborative support from key stakeholders at our schools and the central team, supported by the positive engagement of our dedicated school staff who played an instrumental role in facilitating this transition on the ground. Aligning the MIS system across our schools allows for many benefits such as enhancing business operations, streamlining administrative tasks, strengthening record management, and increased data security. This integration will also allow us to further enhance our data reporting capabilities, providing a strong foundation for efficient, data-driven decision-making, and collaborative practices, benefiting both individual schools and the trust. As schools become familiar with Arbor, we will also be reviewing our wider MIS integrations this academic year and collaborate closely with schools to ensure we are using the most effective systems and tools available. Alongside the Arbor migration, the Central Region IT Services Team have been actively engaged in numerous other projects this academic year, supported by crucial capital investments from the trust for key IT initiatives. Following the hard work from our team and investments in our core infrastructure, connectivity, and backbone over the past year, the focus for 2023-24 has seen us direct investment toward end-user devices and classroom AV, enabling schools to fully integrate technology. Over the summer, the team

configured and distributed a multitude of end-user devices across our trust, including over 200 brand new HP ProBook laptops for staff and a significant quantity of new Acer laptops and HP Pro desktops for students. Furthermore, our implementation of 37 BenQ 75" interactive touch screen displays across several schools this summer demonstrates our dedication to creating engaging and innovative classroom settings.

These achievements emphasise our commitment to using technology to enrich teaching and learning experiences across our Trust. In line with our mission to become a digitally mature trust, these projects and areas of investment are fundamental in helping us to embed technology to enhance pupil outcomes while empowering our staff to drive technology forward in a safe, secure, and reliable manner.

Ed Cooper
Head of IT & Data



Welcome to

OAK HILL

FIRST SCHOOL



We are very excited about Oak Hill First School joining CENTRAL on 1st January 2024. Oak Hill is a large first school located in the Lodge Park area of Redditch. It has 3 forms per year group as well as a morning and afternoon nursery.

The school firmly believe that a child's early experiences in education are vitally important and so place a great deal of importance on the partnership between home and school. Children are seen as individuals at Oak Hill where their special qualities are spotted and nurtured. Giving children confidence and

raising their self-esteem are key priorities but above all the school pride themselves on keeping their pupils happy because happy children make better learners.

Oak Hill is a vibrant and creative school that achieves good outcomes for all its pupils.

Oak Hill have been working with CENTRAL for nearly a year now, they have made so many valuable contributions to our Trust and we look forward to working even more closely with the whole Oak Hill team once they are part of our CENTRAL family.

ENRICHMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

There is a real buzz for all the cross Trust enrichment and engagement opportunities up and coming this year. Each CENTRAL school has a wealth of fun, engaging activities, projects and experiences that encourages all students to get involved and be a part of. The rich offer works to meet the needs of all our young people and the developing provision allows growth across all our phases. As Individual schools we celebrate our differences and bespoke diversity but as a Trust, together we are stronger and are proud of our developing collective identity. Some of the events that we can look forward to include The Morgan Stanley project, which brings Year 7 pupils/students together from all the middle and high schools working with the professionals to devise their own ideas for business and pitch them for investment, this will be the third year CENTRAL have worked with Morgan Stanley and we look forward to the launch after Christmas.

Our Years 4 and 8 pupils/students will embrace the RSA4 and 8 projects which will see a collective approach to tackling a local issue and bring social action to life. The students will work with a range of external agencies and complete their journey at

Worcester University where they will share their experiences with the STEM team.

Charity begins at home and our home is CENTRAL. We are building on the work of our individual schools and have set a Charity Challenge led by our sixth form student leaders. This will take place at the end of the Autumn Term for our middle and high schools and then we go again in the spring for our primary and first schools.

Along side all of these exciting projects we will enjoy several cross Trust sporting events like the Years 8 and 9 football tournament hosted by Arrow Vale, the STEM challenges hosted by Waseley Hills High School, a maths challenge, a spelling Bee, Christmas Card Competition, art challenges and an exciting University Challenge event for our sixth formers.

And, of course we can not forget our World Book Day bonanza which excites and engages all phases of our CENTRAL family of schools, and allows our staff to dress to impress in their favourite character! So many enticing prizes and ways to celebrate the love of a good book and the importance of reading.

Key Stage 3

FOOTBALL

TOURNAMENT

On Monday 13th November 2023, Arrow Vale hosted a Trust wide Key Stage 3 Football Tournament. All our Middle, High and Secondary schools within the Trust competed- Arrow Vale High School, Church Hill Middle School, Gospel Oak School, Holyhead School, Ipsley CE Middle School and Waseley Hill High School. Arrow Vale kindly hosted on their 3G and also provided a selection of Sports Leaders from their Sports Leadership Academy to help with organisation and setting up. The Sports Leaders did a fantastic job of referring and keeping scores to enable the event to run smoothly.

All schools entered one Boys' and one Girls' team, they both played a round robin tournament which consisted of competing in 5 competitive matches and playing against all schools. All schools played some fantastic football, showing great teamwork, resilience, and great determination. Some of the results from the games were very close, with some schools such as Arrow Vale Girls and Waseley Hill Girls drawing their game 2-2.

All students had a fantastic time taking part and enjoyed themselves! Arrow Vale Girls finished the girls' tournament in 1st place and Waseley Hill finished the boys' Tournament in 1st Place!

Boy's Tournament	
Place	School
1 st	Waseley Hill
2 nd	Arrow Vale
3 rd	Gospel Oak

Girl's Tournament	
Place	School
1 st	Arrow Vale
2 nd	Waseley Hill
3 rd	Gospel Oak

Overall, the CENTRAL Tournament was a success! We look forward to the next CENTRAL Tournament in the Spring Term which will also be hosted at Arrow Vale.

Georgia Harris
Teacher of PE



Schools Week
@SchoolsWeek

"We cannot reasonably expect our principals to be experts in IT infrastructure, the intricacies of estates management, procurement, accounting and HR legalities while also being excellent teachers and leaders" - @CRSTrust's Steve Brownlow



Schools Week Opinion
STEVE BROWNLOW
Chief Operating Officer,
Central Region Schools Trust

10:57 pm · 2 Oct 2023 · 3,443 Views

Gospel Oak School
@GospelOak

Y10 and 11 students have had a great afternoon and evening in Stratford watching Macbeth at the RSC 🎭👏 the have been amazing and staff at the Theatre have commented on their exemplary conduct 🌟 #aspire #pride #respect



10:58 pm · 6 Sep 2023 · 3,141 Views

Waseley Hills
@WaseleyHills


Big reward day today! Waseley staff delivered reward treats to all pupils based on their positive points this half term, it was a fantastic way to celebrate our pupils achievements. Well done every one 🌟



10:34 pm · 26 Oct 2023 · 528 Views

Arrow Vale School
@ArrowValeSchool

We are delighted to be recognized as an Official Microsoft Showcase School - 'an elite group of schools that exemplify the best of teaching and learning in the world today', 'Pioneers in education'.
#ShowcaseSchool #MicrosoftEdU @CRSTrust



9:38 am · 12 Sep 2023 · 1,910 Views

Arrow Valley First School
@ArrowValleyFS

Phew 🙌 we made it to half term! Bladders 🚽 (Year 2) also went on their adventure to Gorcott Woods @TheHOF 🌲 and carried out the most wonderful explosive 💣 science investigation!



8:57 pm · 26 Oct 2023 · 48 Views

Holyhead Events
@HolyheadEvents

Fantastic & thought provoking talk about injustice with @dnicheol today with our Sixth Formers
#holyhead_school #teacherhatmatters #injustice @CRSTrust



9:42 am · 24 Oct 2023 · 254 Views

Central Region Schools Trust
@CRSTrust

Great to working with @Ambition1st & @HaybridgeFSH again at the start of the 2023-24 NPQ season. Today's cohort is Leading Teacher Development, focused on implementing lasting professional development to support outcomes for our young people @SocialJustice #exceptionalschools



4:03 pm · 2 Oct 2023 from Kidderminster, England · 313 Views

Gospel Oak School
@GospelOak

Another activity from this week's drop down day. Y10 History students enjoying the Mary Queen of Scot's trial 🎭👑



9:21 pm · 27 Oct 2023 · 524 Views

Arrow Vale School
@ArrowValeSchool

Great open evening last night, so lovely to welcome so many excited families into our school! (Below is our great school leaders which include our fabulous Sixth Form Lead Ambassadors



8:00 pm · 27 Sep 2023 · 1,477 Views

Ipsley C of E Middle School
@IpsleySchool

This is why we do it #TeamIpsley



8:03 pm · 26 Oct 2023 · 297 Views

Ipsley C of E Middle School
@IpsleySchool

Digging for archaeological finds in the Global Learning room
#JoinTeamIpsley



3:24 pm · 26 Oct 2023 · 230 Views

Arrow Valley First School
@ArrowValleyFS

Phew 🙌 we made it to half term! Maillards 🏠 (Year 3) and Herons 🦢 (Year 3/4) have enjoyed a variety of activities. And the Year 4s completed their @BikeabilityUK training 🚲👏



8:58 pm · 29 Oct 2023 · 63 Views

THE CENTRAL SOCIAL FEED HAS BEEN BUSY!

Follow us on Twitter: @CRSTrust

READING AT ABBEYWOOD FIRST SCHOOL

Here at Abbeywood First School, our pupils are thriving from their Read Write Inc lessons and are becoming positive, confident readers.

- "I love seeing Fred every day in school."
- "I am a good reader."
- "Reading is easy now."

Our dedicated staff have enthusiastically launched Read Write Inc. (to much fanfare!) and are already seeing the benefits. Supported by the Trust and our range of experts, we have managed to embed this new practice and make positive progress. The programme has proven able to motivate and inspire our pupils, some of whom have previously struggled to find the joy in learning.

For us, Read Write Inc. is more than just a phonics programme. It has been a transformational approach to our literacy that is making a difference to every child in our setting. The best part has been seeing staff enjoy in teaching Read Write Inc and talking about pupil progress:

- "Seeing our pupils make rapid progress fills me with happiness every day."
- "I enjoy teaching Read Write Inc and the pupils enthusiastically engage in their phonics sessions."

- "It embeds excellent learning behaviours that I use in all our lessons."

One of the benefits of this approach is that it can adapt to the needs of different learners, including those with English as an additional language plus special educational needs and disabilities. One of our favourite phrases from Read Write Inc is 'keep up not catch up'. We truly believe every child has the potential to keep up – we place the importance on not leaving any child behind. Therefore, this programme enables us to provide these opportunities.

We have found that parents and carers have been keen to learn about the new programme and it has strengthened the links to homes and families. We attribute our successful relationships to the high-quality training, support and home learning links that the programme offers.

Sometimes change is hard, but it also inspires curiosity.

Sometimes change is frightening, but it can also bring joy.

Our pupils are curious to learn more, and reading is bringing joy to their lives. Our staff have been enabling this to happen and we are excited to see where it goes next!

Charlotte Hughes
Vice Principal



ARROW VALE HIGH SCHOOL: MICROSOFT SHOWCASE SCHOOL

Arrow Vale, a Microsoft Showcase School, serves over 850 students in one of the most economically deprived areas of England. In the past, the school struggled with closing the learning gap between students from various socioeconomic backgrounds.

They fostered a spirit of collaboration to improve student performance by leveraging technology to assist with academic achievement. An essential part of the turnaround has been the utilization of Microsoft 365 A5 tools and Insights Premium.

The solutions have accelerated learning, enabled disadvantaged students to gain equitable access to education, even at home, and enabled administrators and educators to track students that need the most help.

Homework is critical to student success

Around the globe, educators have long faced challenges with assigning homework in the right quantities viable for student achievement. While students from middle class and affluent families often have the tools and understand the importance of homework, the contrasting situation with students from economically depressed areas is they often struggle with a greater number of barriers. This in turn can produce long term academic roadblocks, impair educational achievement, and reduce the breadth of career options for rising students.



Ian Mellor, the Principal at Arrow Vale, knows first-hand the challenges with levelling the play field, commenting that, "The biggest academic difference between our student cohorts is how students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds consolidate classroom learning with home learning."

Ian acknowledges that there are lots of variables that contribute to the disparity and many disadvantaged households really do try to support their students. The trick is how to contextualize educational content and motivate students in a way that achieves measurable results.

Traditional pedagogical solutions tend to focus on what can be accomplished in the brick-and-mortar classroom, but the academic leaders of Arrow Vale knew narrowing the achievement gap could also be accomplished by enabling home learning.

According to Niall Brennan, Arrow Vale Assistant Principal, MIEE and Innovation & IT Strategy Lead, there were two research studies which influenced their decision to focus on homework efficacy. First, the Education Endowment Foundation, an independent UK charity dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement, suggested students can improve by an extra five months if they're doing homework. Second, a Stanford University study found 59% of students considered homework the prime resource of stress and anxiety.



Niall Brennan, Arrow Vale Assistant Principal, MIEE and Innovation & IT Strategy Lead

Taken together, Niall says, "We understood if we really enforced homework, it could push kids over the edge and potentially widen the gap. But if we assigned it properly, we knew there was a growth opportunity with our risk students."

What Arrow Vale leadership needed was a unified method to track student progress AND provide them with leading indicators if students were engaging, or not. Rather than piecemeal a collection of cloud-based learning platforms with separate logins and different access points, Arrow Vale embraced the Microsoft 365 A5 solution.



As Michaela Yeomans, Assistant Principal, Teaching and Learning, explains “Once we discovered the students who did not have access to a laptop, we gave them one and showed them how to use Microsoft tools in the classroom and at home, and that has made a huge difference in equitable access to education for those at-risk students.”

They connected their internal Edulink system to Insights Premium and embraced Microsoft Teams to extend their traditional classrooms into every student’s home.

Using Microsoft 365 A5 and Insights to transform pedagogy

In hindsight, the platform standardization and real time insights has revolutionized home learning for Arrow Vale. The learning system gives educators and students access to lessons; educators and administrators get a holistic view into student progress and actionable insights on students who need help.

Niall explains it this way, “Because everyone is using Microsoft Teams and cloud-based access to Microsoft 365, for the first time in our school’s history we can see every single student, every single piece of work that they’ve done for every single subject, and we are able to see if it was complete or not. That empowers Arrow Vale tutors, educators, heads of year, heads of department, and senior management to intervene where appropriate.”

The combination of Insights and Microsoft 365 has helped Arrow Vale to optimize the length of homework assignments, embrace flipped classrooms, and generate interactive assignments that foster collaboration among students.

With access to real time data, Arrow Vale has developed targeted homework clubs designed to help when students need tutoring or other resources, when otherwise they might be hesitant to ask on their own. Educators and administrators can assess data and deploy an educational support team if students’ performances start to drop off at home.

“We also use the information we gather from Insights to guide us when to contact parents for support. We invite their student in an invite/compulsory way to discuss the importance of home learning and how they can get back on track,” says Ian.

The result is a system of accountability that is proving essential for helping reduce the gap between students from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

Some of the students of Arrow Vale may come from disadvantaged backgrounds, but their academic achievement reveals that with the right educational support they can succeed. Even more revealing: the 2022 gap between students from different socioeconomic backgrounds has narrowed to .06 compared to the national average in England which is .43 for the same types of students.

“WHEN STUDENTS EXPERIENCE ACHIEVEMENT AND WE ACKNOWLEDGE THEM FOR DOING THE WORK, IT SNOWBALLS. THERE IS AN UPWARD SPIRAL OF ASPIRATION AND INTENTION—THEY FEEL THEY CAN DO EVEN BETTER,” SAYS MICHAELA. “WE HAVE FOUND FROM DATA THAT HOME LEARNING IS KEY TO SUCCESS. IF STUDENTS GO HOME AND CONSOLIDATE THEIR LEARNING, THEN THEY SUCCEED IN THE CLASSROOM.”

Because the leaders of Arrow Vale implemented multi-modal learning to close the learning gap, they have had success across all their student cohorts. Microsoft Education solutions have created accountability, enhanced student support, and fostered collaboration. Insights Premium tracks the success of Arrow Vale’s technology and pedagogical improvements and creates a real-time view on what to focus on. Today, Arrow Vale is now a model for anyone invested in supporting greater equity in education across the United Kingdom, and abroad.



CREATING A CULTURE OF SUCCESS

In July 2023, we had the honour of having a CENTRAL peer review with John Thompsett at the helm. With the following criteria the team carried out learning walks, book looks and conversations with pupils and staff to unpick the school's culture.

A TRULY GREAT CULTURE ENABLES HIGH QUALITY TEACHING WHICH MAKES A RICH, CHALLENGING, AMBITIOUS, RELEVANT CURRICULUM IRRESISTIBLE TO STUDENTS, PEPPERED WITH WONDERFUL EXPERIENCES BEYOND THE SCHOOL. THIS LEADS TO STUDENTS MAKING GREAT PROGRESS IN THEIR LEARNING, ALL EXPERIENCED IN CLASSROOMS AND BUILDINGS WHICH ARE BOTH CALM AND BEAUTIFUL, AND WHERE EVERY SINGLE COLLEAGUE WANTS TO COME TO WORK EVERY DAY. THE "PEOPLE; PROCESSES; PLACES" CONCEPT SUPPORTS AND ENABLES THIS ENDEAVOUR.

Relationships at all levels & lived values

The interactions between pupils and staff, between colleagues, and between staff and parents were uniformly positive. The school's values are the behaviours that they demonstrate to support their aspirations: "Kind, Safe, Hardworking, Listen, Honest, Resilience". The environment that has been nurtured over the past two years by the Principal was lauded by the parents we spoke to, all of whom felt recognised and listened to. The foundations are now in place to make Arrow Valley an extraordinary place to learn.

Behaviour for learning

Pupils know how to behave for learning. They are incredibly compliant without being passive. Indeed, we all felt that they could learn anything offered up to them. Their academic potential is unlimited, and the school staff team now need to have the resolve to push the children academically, way beyond what the pupils themselves, their parents and staff think they can achieve.

Behaviour around school

'Pupils conducted themselves faultlessly around school.' - John Tomsett 17TH July 2023

After any review, you often focus on the areas of development which there were several but not always reflect on the positives. So, when asked to write an article I took another look at the feedback and began to ask the question 'how have we built this culture' as we have done something right.

To answer this question, I asked the question to the pupils... 'why is Arrow Valley considered successful'. And this is what they said

'The Valley Values. We have logos all around the school so we will not forget' when I asked for clarification he said 'you know the kingfisher, it's on the computers and on our uniform'

'Reading, we read words automatically then we are fluent. Did you know that we don't just read in reading lessons we read in maths, history, and geography'

'We treat everyone the same' I challenged this 'no I mean we all do the values, but we do it in a way that is right for us.'

'We learn new words; we will be proud of these words because we will remember them when we go to middle school'.

'We put our work up on the wall, I love it when you show our work.'

So, there you have it, out of the mouth of 'great children'.

If you have a review, deep dive, or inspection I strongly recommend going back to the feedback and reflect on the strengths and ask the children as they are the beneficiaries of building a successful culture.

Sarah Allen
Principal



These photos are taken 2 years apart!

THE BIG WHALE

A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT BETWEEN SUTTON PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL AND CHURCH HILL MIDDLE SCHOOL

Influenced by the work of Irish artist, John Kindness, Year 2 pupils from Sutton Park Primary School were joined by pupils from Church Hill Middle school to design and create a large-scale sculpture of a whale. The 3D sculpture was skilfully created from chicken wire and newspaper and is now proudly displayed in school.

By working together on this project, pupils displayed their commitment to the values held by CENTRAL through showcasing their creativity and bringing two school communities together.



Diversity Mark

In 2022, Sutton Park embarked on the Diversity Mark programme, a programme that is used throughout educational settings, signifying a network of members who are committed to inclusion, share best practice, and collaborate across sectors. The Diversity Mark is used to develop better diversity practice and improved educational outcomes.

Through building a portfolio showcasing our commitment to diversity and inclusion at Sutton Park, we are pleased to share that we achieved the Bronze Diversity Mark Award earlier this year.

More recently, Miss Crawley (Executive Principal) and Miss Aston (Achievement Assistant) attended the 'Diversity Mark Diversity Awards for Education'. The awards celebrate inclusion and outstanding educational practice, focusing on the achievements of teachers, students, parents, and non-teaching staff. We are extremely proud to share that Miss Aston was awarded the Teacher of the Year award, recognising Miss Aston's commitment to inclusivity, and the dedication she shows to each and every one of our pupils at Sutton Park.





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