

CONNECTING WITH CENTRAL OFFICE



Dear colleagues

Firstly, I would like to thank you all for your hard work and dedication this term.

At the start of the term we set out our vision for improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils across the trust. I am pleased to advise that, due to your hard work, compared to the same point last year the absence of disadvantaged pupils across the trust is down and initial prediction indicate that disadvantaged pupils are making better progress.

Our main vehicle for improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils is our approach to teaching 'Teaching for Excellence'. The term I am proud to say that we have had visits from another of neighbouring trusts, including Ninestiles Academy Trust, to look at approach. Thank you for all the colleagues that have represented our trust during the visits. As you aware, this term Mark Rhatigan and I conducted reviews of our teaching approach at each of our academies. The findings for the reviews were overwhelmingly positive. It was rewarding

to see our pupils, including our disadvantaged pupils, benefiting from high-quality teacher explanations. In summary, the most effective explanations were typified by the following features:

- Teachers had carefully considered the most appropriate information ('powerful knowledge') they wished to impart to pupils.
- Teachers carefully planned how to introduce this 'powerful' information to pupils. They broke this powerful information into 'chunks' of explanation.
- Information was well sequenced. Passionate verbal explanations were often supported by props and/or images. This supported a good level of focus and concentration from pupils.
- Teachers made a point of 'emphasising' the key learning points and key vocabulary.

This term many of our colleagues have started external professional development programmes with School Ambition Leadership and the Institute for Teaching. I am pleased to advise that our professional development offer will extend to support staff from January 2019. I look forward to updating you in the New Year.

Finally, as the Christmas Holiday approaches, I hope that you are enjoying the benefits of our rewards programme 'Perkbox'. For those of you who have not yet signed up, the application form is still open for you to join! Please complete it by clicking the link below, and then let your Head of Academy know, so that they can get your details to Rob Fitzgerald, our Perkbox liaison.

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=HnypkIpiskmKnVw6Pae-1KUmhroqrtJhUZBR4zt4wVUQVgxQ0gyNUFPUDVTWk9IRjlaSUNCS0ZUNi4u>

Wishing you all a good holiday and a Merry Christmas.

CHRIS STEVENS | INTERIM CEO

FEATURED
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CONNECTING WITH FAIRFAX

HEAD OF ACADEMY UPDATE

POSITIVE IDENTITY

Next year will be Fairfax's 60th anniversary. Our school was founded in 1959, by Gordon Philpott, grandfather of Neil Philpott, Chair of Fairfax's Academy Association. Gordon Philpott had a vision for the school that we now know as 'social mobility'. His aim was for every child attending his comprehensive school to have the same opportunities as children attending the Grammar school over the road. A vision that we still hold. Next year will see a year of celebrations from reunions to exhibitions, and we really want to hear from ex-students to join our newly established alumni association. We are hoping that memories and keepsakes from all the decades of Fairfax will be shared in advance of our celebration year.

Two weeks ago, Rachel Boyce, met with two ex-pupils from different eras to launch the appeal and urge others to get involved. Lesley Green, 68, attended Fairfax from 1961 to 1968, when she was called Lesley Hughes. Lesley, who lives in Walmley, is one of the Fairfax Chums, a group of former classmates who have already got together three times – but are hoping to hold their next reunion at the school, as part of our anniversary festivities.

"It is great fun to see old school friends, and we have had people come from as far as America," she said. "We are really hoping to be able to get together again to look around the school next year – that would be perfect."

Lesley, whose daughter Alice, also attended Fairfax, says the school was 'competitive but happy' during her time there.

"The first Headteacher, Mr Philpott, was determined that Fairfax, a comprehensive, was going to be as good as John Willmott over the road, which at the time was a grammar school," she remembered.

"We were one of the first schools to do the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, and had our own swimming galas. The parents raised money to build the school's own swimming pool too".

"It was a strict school but very happy. Everyone remembers their time at Fairfax fondly."

Esther Brittan, 41, from Walmley, attended Fairfax from 1988 to 1995, when she was called Esther Finnemore.

"I loved my time at Fairfax, and while the buildings may have changed, the atmosphere is the same. It's still a really positive place, and a school that offers something for everyone," she said.

Esther attended Fairfax with the boy who would grow up to be her husband, Paul, and now the couple's son, 12-year-old Bobby, is a pupil here.

"Since Bobby started I have been involved in the Parents' Association, and there is a real interest in the 60th anniversary. So many people want to get involved, but we want to reach out to as many former pupils as possible," she said.

#wearefairfax #positiveidentity

MRS DEBORAH BUNN
HEAD OF ACADEMY



DEDICATED TO DEVELOPMENT; TRANSPARENT IN OUR APPROACH

CONNECTING WITH BOURNVILLE

HEAD OF ACADEMY UPDATE

The benefits of Structured Talk

Following last year's successful introduction of the Bournville Teaching for Excellence teaching model we have sought to improve the learning experience of Bournville students yet further by introducing opportunities for them to interact effectively with one another in lessons. Whilst we are fully committed to delivering lessons in a direct instructional style we are also keen for students to have greater participation opportunities in lessons to support them to develop their abstract thinking skills and develop a deeper understanding of the topic or subject being studied.

In September 2018 the Lead Practitioners, led by Charlotte Cross, Assistant Headteacher responsible for Teaching and Learning began working on an approach to introduce "Structured Talk" into lessons across the primary and secondary phases of the school. There are many benefits to this model, not least that students begin to communicate more effectively as they develop their ability to speak confidently and clearly when discussing topics, challenging misconceptions and debating concepts and ideas using Standard English and subject specific terminology.

The group began by conducting research into the benefits of structured talk and identifying the many strategies available to reduce passivity and increase participation in the classroom. They subsequently selected some key strategies which they then trialled in their own lessons, inviting colleagues to observe them in action. These ideas were then disseminated to all colleagues in faculty meetings at the beginning of November and are now being implemented in the teaching of all subjects across the ability and age range.

Students are now familiar with;

- Think, Pair, Share
- Pose, Pause, Bounce, Pounce
- Wait time

and have been assigned Talk Partners with whom they can discuss, explore and challenge.

I had the delightful experience of observing a Year 3 class being taught English and discussing genre with one another using sentence starters like, "I agree to a certain extent, but..." , "Have you also considered..." and, "I think you're mistaken because..."

The children were extremely articulate and took part in a high level discussion in which they challenged one another's thinking and clearly demonstrated the progress they have made in their ability to communicate effectively.

Across the school, we are now seeing more purposeful talk in lessons which is allowing students to talk and think through responses prior to Deliberate Practice.

Although in its infancy, I am very excited to see the next chapter of our Teaching for Excellence journey unfold and have no doubt that this will lead to higher levels of engagement and progress for all children at Bournville School.

MRS JO COTTLE | HEAD OF ACADEMY

CONNECTING WITH BOURNVILLE PRIMARY

INTERIM PRIMARY LEAD UPDATE

Bournville Primary has continued on its journey of improvement and this term has seen some innovative developments that are already having an impact on outcomes for children.

There has been a sharp focus on the teaching of Phonics in years 1 and 2. Pupils have been grouped across the year groups to receive high quality phonics interventions daily, in addition to shared reading sessions in class. Weekly phonics workshops for parents in year 1 throughout the Autumn term have given parents increased confidence to support their child's learning. Resources based on the workshop are shared with parents after each weekly session, which are then used by parents with their child at home. The impact of these interventions has been seen in some very positive results from phonics screening in both year 1 and year 2 this term.

Shared reading was introduced in September across the school following an investment in a new reading scheme for KS2 and carefully selected children's literature for KS1 to support the teaching of reading. Children have daily shared reading lessons during which they explore a key text in depth to develop their comprehension skills. Texts are challenging, offering opportunities to extend vocabulary and develop a love of books in addition to the comprehension skills learnt.

Writing has also been a focus this half term with training for all staff on 'Talk for Writing'. Staff were enthused by what they learnt and have already developed teaching and learning to incorporate key ideas from the training. Further training will be given in the Spring term to ensure the principles of 'Talk For Writing' are embedded in the teaching cycle and improvements are seen in outcomes for pupils. Staff in EYFS have hosted a 'Helicopter Stories' workshop for the parents of children in reception to support the development of writing in EYFS.

Staff recently moderated writing across all key stages during a session organised with the Oaks Collegiate schools. The moderation process was very useful and staff were confident in the accuracy of their judgement following discussions with colleagues from the partner schools. Further moderation sessions have been arranged for the Spring and Summer terms.

NICOLA WARBURTON
INTERIM PRIMARY LEAD



DEDICATED TO DEVELOPMENT; TRANSPARENT IN OUR APPROACH

CONNECTING WITH ERDINGTON

HEAD OF ACADEMY UPDATE

Last half term our students continued to demonstrate a clear commitment to our school values which was recognised in our Rewards Assemblies to mark the end of the half-term. Over 100 certificates were given to students from all curriculum areas to celebrate their Excellence, Ambition, Dedication, Integrity and Tradition. We also celebrated those students who have participated in activities beyond the 8.45 am -3.00 pm school day. So many students have supported our events, competed for our school, tried out new activities in clubs and stayed after-school for extra support in areas they want to improve in. These students are broadening their horizons; these students are knocking down obstacles on their flight path to success.

Some of our students had the excellent opportunity to attend the Houses of Parliament as part of the Youth Parliament debate with our local MP Jack Dromey. The students really valued the experience, which gave them the opportunity to see first-hand how many of our British Values are nurtured; as well as how through debate and discussion, we bring those values to life. The students even made the news, with journalists keen to speak to them about how fantastic they were.

It was a particularly memorable November here at Erdington Academy. We've had days of reflection and tradition, and days of enrichment and excitement, all contributing to our 'Erdington Way': dedication, tradition, integrity, ambition, excellence.

On a bleak November morning, all our pupils gathered in silence to remember the fallen for Remembrance Day. The 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War made this all the more poignant, and the pupils had spent the week reflecting on those who had died for our country in assemblies led by Miss Cook. The pupils gathered in the playground in complete silence, and the remembrance service was led by Mr Mallett and pupils in the Army Cadets, who wore full army uniform. The Last Post was sounded, and our pupils reflected and remembered, all wearing poppies: a poignant and memorable morning.

Later in November, all our pupils participated in Enrichment Day, brilliantly organised by Miss Thom. Year 11 were involved in an excellent careers day, involving interviews and presentations, and different year groups visited various locations: from the Skills Show to the Electric Cinema. Year 8 were fantastic in particular at the

Skills Show; we'd like to thank them for representing the Academy, and our values, so well.

We've also had a wonderful focus on anti-bullying week, thinking about how we support our friends and family who identify as LGBT. Miss Kavanagh already has some fantastic plans in place for LGBT History Month in February: watch this space!

I would like to thank all involved in our year 11 parent support evening. It was excellent to see so many parents there focused on finding out how to support students in the lead in to Mock exams and the real exams that will very quickly be upon us in May. The evening consisted of sessions on a range of subjects with staff giving advice and demonstrations on how to be successful in the up and coming exams. The feedback from parents was really positive and we know that parents feel better placed to support students and students now feel more able to approach the exams with key strategies and techniques to enable success.

We look forward to their "mock" results and helping them progress even further over the coming months.

December involves Culture Fest, and we can't wait to see everyone there!

MR SIMON MALLET | HEAD OF ACADEMY



CONNECTING WITH ERDINGTON

SCHOOL OF SANCTUARY

The City of Sanctuary movement is across the country and aims to build a culture of welcome for people seeking sanctuary in the UK. Through the Syrian resettlement programme, a number of key cities became "Cities of Sanctuary", pledging to house and support families in crisis. Birmingham is a "City of Sanctuary".

More than half of the students at Erdington Academy speak more than one language, with a growing number of these seeking sanctuary in Birmingham from war-torn countries, such as Syria and Afghanistan. For these students, the daily routine of school enables them to escape from memories of what they have seen and experienced and the emotions of losing a loved one. Some will return to their home country when the fighting is resolved, whilst others have no choice but to stay in the safety the UK provides for them and their families.

The City of Sanctuary movement developed criteria for schools to become "Schools of Sanctuary" and Erdington Academy began the process over a year and a half ago.

Francis Johnson has developed the provision for EAL students in our Academy through a range of targeted interventions such as the development of the Young Interpreters Programme and the development of the parallel curriculum in the Skills School. These interventions provide students with meaningful qualifications and strategies we have introduced to support students to have the best opportunities to be successful.

By becoming recognised as a "School of Sanctuary" we have been able to publicise the dedication of teachers throughout our Academy, who have created warm welcoming environments and enable students to access a curriculum that is appropriate, rewarding and remains challenging.

MISS A TURNBULL

**ASSISTANT HEAD TEACHER OF
BEHAVIOUR AND INCLUSION**

SOCIAL MEDIA

In order to improve our communication links and promote our Academies and the Trust as a whole, we would like to encourage all of our employees, Directors, Associates and parents to follow our social media sites. Links to social media can be found on our new websites.

Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust | www.fmat.co.uk/

Fairfax | www.fairfax.bham.sch.uk/

Bournville School | www.bournvilleschool.org/

Bournville Primary Provision
www.bournvilleprimaryprovision.org/

Erdington Academy | www.erdingtonacademy.bham.sch.uk/

Smith's Wood Academy | www.smithswood.co.uk/

CONNECTING WITH SMITH'S WOOD

HEAD OF ACADEMY UPDATE

"The function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers" Ralph Nader

Over recent years, I have been introduced to a number of leadership books, reading materials and training courses – some more interesting than others I have to say!

The best training and development, I have found, is to be gained from working with and observing, sometimes from afar, inspirational leadership. I admire a number of key leaders both in the educational sector and beyond. Importantly, many leaders that I admire are not necessarily at the peak of an organisational hierarchy and many are very close to home.

Some of the most inspirational leaders to me are those that lead in a classroom setting; I am fortunate to be able to work alongside leaders at all levels that inspire me, motivate me and remind me, on a daily basis, of why I do what I do. Aside from being hugely knowledgeable about their subject or area of responsibility, what is it that these people all have in common?

Firstly, they are truly genuine people; this comes across to all of those that they meet and in every interaction. They care deeply and work hard to build relationships; sometimes in the face of adversity. They work hard to develop and hone their leadership skills and never leave this to chance. They always lead by example – a standard interview response – but one that is often not achieved so easily!

So what makes a great leader?

Be genuine and build relationship - know and genuinely care about what you want for your colleagues, your students and your organisation. Build genuine relationships that empower and enthuse colleagues and students to achieve their very best. Be genuine about

building a team and creating more leaders. As Ralph Nader said, "The function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers". We need more leaders in the classroom – both in the context of the experts at the front but also, and very importantly, leadership in the children that we teach.

Lead consciously – think about your intended impact and the impact of what you say and do on others. Think about the light you cast and the shadow you make. We often think that we learn by experience – we do to a point but really, we ought to recognise that we learn by consciously reflecting on our experiences and our interactions. Consciously practice being the best that you can be in all manner of situations; consciously encourage students to practice being the best that they can be.

Lead by example – these are the outstanding leaders; those who know the way and show the way. They include us; they listen to us; they value our opinion; they challenge us; they support us; they are forgiving; they build positive relationships and are relentless in their pursuit of excellence for all. These leaders inspire us to be the best versions of ourselves each and every day. They 'talk the talk' and 'walk the walk' and for that they have our ultimate respect and gratitude.

We are all leaders, whatever our role in school and whatever our lines of responsibility. If we are genuine, lead consciously and lead by example, we will make a difference to our colleagues and our students.

KATY CRAIG | HEAD OF ACADEMY

CONNECTING WITH SMITH'S WOOD

CENTENARY BATTLEFIELDS PROJECT

On Sunday 7th October, Ella Thomas and Lisa Evans headed on an unforgettable trip to the battlefields of Belgium and France. This trip, fully funded by the Centenary Battlefields Project, gave the two pupils an opportunity to explore both the history and the literature of World War One.

Following a specially designed programme, we heard readings from different novels, plays and poems to help us understand the impact of war and explore the theme of division and comradeship. Especially moving was the opportunity to stand in a natural trench which was used by the Lancaster fusiliers on the first day of the Somme; who an hour before their advance were captured waiting on camera. Additionally, the opportunity to explore a poem from the GCSE English literature anthology was extremely captivating. On the top of an exposed ridge, which was held by Wilfred Owen and his battalion, the poem Expose was read and analysed. The weather as a harsh and unforgivable enemy came to life before us.

On our final day the two planned activities gave us the perfect opportunity to reflect and remember. Firstly, visiting Tynecot cemetery, the biggest commonwealth cemetery in the world. As the sun rose across the cemetery, we visited the memorial of a soldier who had lived on the high street in Coleshill and laid a poppy in

memory of the sacrifice he gave. Following a group ceremony, where a wreath was laid on behalf of our group, we silently moved off to a production of Journey's End. The production, staged in an old munitions store, was extremely moving in light of the things we had seen over the three days. A fitting conclusion to a memorable tour of the battlefields in France and Belgium.

Returning to Smith's Wood we wanted to have an impact on our community and help them to remember the sacrifices given. Inspired by the battlefields trip the pupils have delivered an assembly to every year group based on the British Legion Centenary Campaign, Thank You. During this assembly, all 1,000 pupils across the school have written a message to the WW1 generation thanking them for their contribution and sacrifice. These 'personalised poppies' have been collated to form a memorial and 'poppy wall'; reminding us all that although this generation may have gone, they will never be forgotten.

EMILY MEACHIN | TEACHER OF ENGLISH



EXCELLENCE.

DEDICATION.

AMBITION.

INTEGRITY.

TRADITION.