

Welcome to the new edition of FMAT connect. Within this edition you will see examples of how different areas of our Trust are working together for the benefit of all. Never has it been so important to come together as now. Clearly, with a student and staff community of approximately 5000 people, it is essential to retain good links and a sense of community spirit between us all. As many of you will be aware, I joined FMAT in February this year and had hoped to spend more time visiting each site. Although I have visited each academy several times, I, like everyone else, am largely having to work at home using the online communication mechanisms that

we all seem to have become reliant on in such a short space of time. Whilst it's not the same as face to face discussions, I feel it has for many staff opened up a new world of what is possible online, and we will use this new found knowledge upon our eventual return to make sure we are maximising our use of technology.

Over the last few weeks all staff have been working hard to ensure our students can access both learning and support, and not just on a normal term time work day, as we also extended our provision to cover both weeks at Easter, including the two bank holidays. Our community continues to do all it can to help and ensure our sites remain operational over this vital time, to allow essential workers to carry out their vital role in our society.

During this unusual time, staff have pulled together to not only address the new situations we find ourselves in, but also plan for the future. Academies will eventually reopen to all students and we are working at speed to ensure we are ready for their return. Schemes of work are being redeveloped, new resources are being constructed, work on academy sites is continuing within permitted guidelines, staff contact students on a regular basis to offer advice and to ensure students stay safe, guidance has been sent to parents and students, governors are kept up to date, new government schemes such as Free School Meal online vouchers are implemented, staff are working to collate outcome data for years 11 and 13 students as per Ofqual guidance etc. In other words, whilst the academy sites remain largely closed, staff remain very busy to offer our students that vital link to continuing their education.

I would like to end this introduction by simply thanking our students for engaging with the work that has, and is being set, and our wonderful staff for their dedication both within our educational settings and their wider roles including volunteering to help our wider community.

Stay safe and stay healthy.

**MR SIMON JONES | CEO**



## FEATURED INSIDE

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# CONNECTING WITH FAIRFAX

## HEAD OF ACADEMY UPDATE

We are very mindful that education in these times is challenging and we hope all of our Trust colleagues are keeping safe.

We are conscious that things are very difficult and we have been keen to show our support of NHS workers. Fairfax Academy has been delighted to work with Bishop Vesey Grammar School, Arthur Terry School, John Willmott School, Plantsbrook School, Stockland Green School and the Streetly Academy as part of a programme to develop PPE for local care providers. Rachael Lyn Kew, outgoing Head of DT and new Head of DT Sam Pardoe, have been in school utilising Fairfax Academy's laser cutter to trim pieces of polypropylene for the visor project, before delivering them to Bishop Vesey as part of the programme. Fairfax Academy has also donated some supplies of safety goggles to frontline workers from the local community to help assist where possible with the pandemic.

We are pleased to report that Fairfax Academy staff have been working to support key workers children and have delivered a range of activities over the Easter holidays including drawing, volcano making, motor making, ukulele, camping skills and much more. The students working with Miss Ashton, have also put a rainbow of hope in Fairfax Academy's window. We are most grateful to all staff for the work they have and continue to do in these unprecedented times. Working together we hope to get through these difficult times.

We would like to wish all our Trust colleagues all the best and #staysafe please.

Regards

**MRS D BUNN | HEAD OF ACADEMY**



# CONNECTING WITH ERDINGTON

## HEAD OF ACADEMY UPDATE

During this difficult and testing time we remain determined to continue to enable all EA students to have access to their curriculum and to maintain certain opportunities for learning and exploration.

We may be spending more time at home during these uncertain times but this hasn't stopped the PE department in promoting exercise! Physical activity is a key factor in improving our mental health and well-being and the PE department at Erdington Academy have been setting regular physical exercise for students to do at home as well as Joe Wicks online PE lessons. When the PE staff have been in school during closure, they have encouraged students and staff to participate in the morning exercise programme at 9am with Joe Wicks. I think this was of benefit to staff and students alike in improving their focus and outlook for the day ahead. Watching the news regularly, it amazes me how much the subjects in my faculty of Design and Performance are more relevant than ever during this pandemic; artwork inspired by the NHS heroes, manufacturing industries diversifying to create PPE, food donations and cooking recipes using what's left in your fridge, collaborative music and singing across the globe and the increased number of people walking and exercising. Humans can be incredibly creative in the face of a crisis.

Staff have continued to set appropriate, accessible activities for students to complete utilising our online platform SMHW. In the month of March alone almost 2,000 pieces of work were set for students. Staff have been extremely creative in their approach and are receiving fantastic work back from the students. Isha, a girl in Year 9, is very good at emailing her teachers her completed work and staying really organised with the different tasks set. This will put her in a good position when everyone returns to school. Tutors are also acquiring exemplar work for display and to share experiences with their groups once we return to school.

Some of the many mentionable examples I would like to highlight and thank are:

- Chrissy Roberts has been tirelessly working to ensure the site is accessible to all stakeholders, monitors usage and has created various documents and helpful video tuition weblinks to guide staff with SMHW plans moving forward.
- Drama have been setting creative challenges for classes with a competitive streak to motivate the students further.
- Ruby Davis has ensured that our HPA students continue to receive an additional layer of challenge and support within their learning and has arranged for 1:1 remote mentoring through the CoachBright Scheme.
- The English team have encouraged students to enter Orwell's Prize, an external writing competition to keep the creativity flowing.
- The Pastoral Team have also established a series of House competitions to challenge students further, whilst encouraging some fun and excitement.
- The staff that have contacted me to ask if they can volunteer for the NHS, charities or religious groups and all the staff coming in and going above the expected to keep the student's engagement and wellbeing a priority in these exceptional and challenging times.
- Finally, the Science Department who donated over 200 aprons, 500 Gloves and 17 pairs of Goggles to two of our local care homes who have found it increasingly difficult to access PPE equipment.

It is always a real honour to be part of Erdington Academy.

**MR SIMON MALLET | HEAD OF ACADEMY**



# CONNECTING WITH SMITH'S WOOD

## HEAD OF ACADEMY UPDATE

### STORMS DO END AND THIS WILL PASS

I hope that this edition of FMAT Connect finds you well and also that your friends and families are well also. Just prior to the Easter break I thanked colleagues at Smith's Wood for their support, professionalism and positivity during a situation that was unexpected, unplanned for and certainly not a situation that any of us would wish to be in again. I highlighted to colleagues that they would probably never be fully aware of how much easier they have made this last couple of weeks, simply through their supportive, proactive and pragmatic approach to the constantly changing landscape. I know this has been the same in all of our Trust schools.

When we are busy and focused on our individual settings it is sometimes easy to forget that we are part of a wider family of schools. I have found this to not be the case over recent weeks. In fact, I have been humbled by how colleagues across our four sites have come together for the benefit of all. I have seen true collaboration from a work perspective and real and meaningful support on a more personal level – thank you.

When we closed our doors to most pupils on Friday 20th March we were very much focused on getting ourselves organised; setting work to gain some level of continuity of learning and considering how we were going to safeguard all of the young people for whom we care, were just two of the many pressing priorities. As the situation with COVID-19 intensifies and things feel much closer to home we have to continue to focus on our young people but we must not lose sight of looking after ourselves.

As educationalists we thrive on routine and regularity; we cope well with situations that we can predict and those that are familiar. What we are less certain of is how to deal with uncertainty, especially when that uncertainty brings with it a level of fear. Our educational psychology service provided us with some excellent advice on just that – tolerating uncertainty. I hope you find it as useful as I did.

**MRS KATY CRAIG | HEAD OF ACADEMY**

### TOLERATING UNCERTAINTY

When we are anxious, we tend to over-estimate the danger, and the odds, of bad things happening, and we under-estimate our ability to cope if or when those bad things happen.

Even if the odds are really small that a bad thing will happen, that tiny chance is enough to really upset us. We call it "intolerance of uncertainty". We might think things like "I just can't cope with not knowing", "I have to be 100% certain", "uncertain events are almost always bad", so "I must prepare for each uncertain event".

The thoughts make us feel anxious, so we try to reduce the uncertainty by worrying about it - by planning and preparing for the possible negative future event. However, although we think worry helps us feel better and helps us feel more in control, it doesn't reduce the risk of the possible negative event happening. Sometimes we even think it would be better if the bad thing happened right now, because that would be better than living with the uncertainty.

We might try to increase certainty by planning and preparing for each worst case scenario, by seeking reassurance from others, by checking and looking things up on the internet, by avoiding certain things, putting things off or making excuses, or we might try to keep busy so that we don't think about the uncertain future.

However, worrying doesn't affect the future outcome, we cannot prevent all bad things from happening and life remains uncertain. By worrying about what MIGHT happen, how does that affect us right now? Worrying seems like the best thing to do, but it only makes us feel worse and makes us less able to cope with real life.

We can deal with uncertainty in two main ways. We can challenge our need for certainty by looking at the advantages and disadvantages of needing to be certain and how it affects us. We can explore other areas of our lives in which we do tolerate uncertainty, or look at how other people deal with uncertainty, such as friends or characters in television programmes.

# CONNECTING WITH SMITH'S WOOD

## HEAD OF ACADEMY UPDATE

The other way is to learn to tolerate uncertainty – to reduce our need for certainty. And we can do this, using the acronym: **APPLE**



Tolerating Uncertainty with **APPLE**:

### A for AWARE

Notice the need for certainty as it comes up in your mind.

### P for PAUSE

Don't react as you normally do. Don't react at all. Just pause, and breathe.

### P for PULL BACK

Tell yourself this is just the worry talking, and this apparent need for uncertainty is not helpful and not necessary.

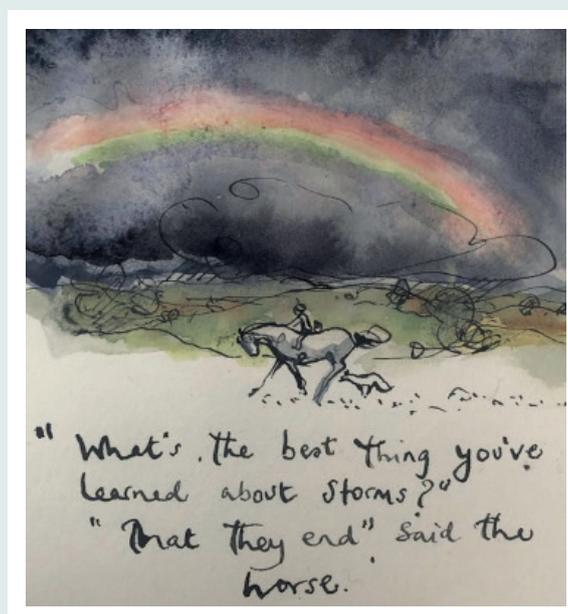
### L for LET GO

Let go of the thought or feeling about needing certainty. Tell yourself it is only a thought or feeling. Don't believe everything you think! Thoughts are not statements of fact. They will pass. You don't have to respond to them. You might imagine them floating away in a bubble or cloud.

### E for EXPLORE

You can explore the present moment, because right now, in this moment, we are ok. Notice your breathing, and the sensations of breathing. Notice the ground beneath you, look around you and notice what you see, what you hear, what you can touch, what you can smell. Right now. Then shift your focus of attention to something else – maybe carry on what you were doing before you noticed the worrying thought, or do something else – mindfully, with your full attention.

SO FOR NOW, DO REMEMBER THAT STORMS  
DO END AND THIS WILL PASS.



# CONNECTING WITH BOURNVILLE

## HEAD OF ACADEMY UPDATE

The response of our staff to the challenges of Coronavirus has been incredible. Despite a number of staff being absent due to illness or through self-isolation we were able to keep school open for almost all year groups right until the government asked us to close. This was only possible because of the team spirit and willingness of staff to be flexible and to step in for their absent colleagues. As well as allowing students to stay learning in school for as long as possible, being able to give Year 11 a proper send-off and a chance to say goodbye to each other was particularly emotional (for us and for them!).

Since the closedown staff have been brilliant both on and off site. We have brought in a rota system to keep both the primary and secondary schools open during the Easter holidays, and again this has only been possible because of staff's willingness to step up and to be flexible, including by taking their Easter holidays up to two weeks after Easter. Flexibility in teaching has also been important – staff in school have been leading a range of activities including sports and arts we have also had secondary trained teachers working with our primary children and various staff stepping in to do admin duties to make sure that we are all in school a fair amount.

When working from home staff have managed to juggle their family responsibilities while still taking care of our students both in terms of their education and their wellbeing. Staff have been setting appropriate work for all year groups as well some fun projects particularly for primary children, making sure that children are still challenged but ensuring that the work is still accessible for all our parents to deliver. Form tutors, pastoral, SEND and safeguarding staff have been calling every child every week to check on their welfare - I know that these weekly calls have also been a lifeline for some parents too. A number of staff have also worked hard to make sure that the supermarket vouchers have actually got to all parents, printing and posting vouchers where needed or arranging for food bank deliveries to homes for parents in real need.

Lastly staff have been doing a wonderful job of looking after each other too, with regular welfare checks on each other as well as an isolation busting "Pub Quiz" every week on Zoom. These are challenging times but we are proud to say that Bournville staff have stepped up incredibly and for that we say thank you to all of you.

**MR J DOVEY | DEPUTY HEAD OF ACADEMY**

## 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 websites.



[www.fmat.co.uk/](http://www.fmat.co.uk/)

[www.fairfax.bham.sch.uk](http://www.fairfax.bham.sch.uk)

[www.bournvilleschool.org/](http://www.bournvilleschool.org/)

[www.bournvilleprimaryprovision.org/](http://www.bournvilleprimaryprovision.org/)

[www.erdingtonacademy.bham.sch.uk](http://www.erdingtonacademy.bham.sch.uk)

[www.smithswood.co.uk](http://www.smithswood.co.uk)

# CONNECTING WITH THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

MARK RHATIGAN | DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

Credit to the staff and leadership teams of each academy who, at very short notice since schools have closed, have planned and implemented a range of curricula for their pupils – for those pupils still attending and for the majority now working from home. This is a remarkable feat, as in our Trust, we educate pupils from age 5 to 18.

The extra training day for teachers in January was a great success, with curriculum leaders meeting in their subject groups to share their expertise and begin planning a curriculum that privileges deep and broad knowledge – the planning was already in place to extend this work in subject teams in the April training day – clearly, that did not happen in person but the collaboration has continued.

Collaboration is the cornerstone of the current and future phases of school improvement; the talent and knowledge is within the Trust, so it makes sense to share and celebrate best practice. Also, reducing teacher workload is a priority for the Trust, so sharing the load benefits all. There have been a range of excellent resources shared over the past few weeks and I know that pupils and parents are grateful for the expertise.

I want to thank all the teaching and support staff who have showed so much energy and flexibility over the past four weeks. New guidance has been coming out daily from the government and we have had to respond quickly to so many new challenges and circumstances. Yet, we have done; the safeguarding teams, for example, have ensured all pupils (and their parents) know how to stay safe online and receiving support when they need it and safeguarding policies have been updated. The SEND teams have been working closely with other agencies also to ensure SEND pupils are cared for.

Credit to all involved ensuring that all of the Trust academies opened every day over the Easter holidays, including on the public holidays. This provision enabled vulnerable children to be safe and the children of key workers to be educated, so their parents could continue their vital work.

Thank you all.

MR M RHATIGAN | DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

# CONNECTING WITH THE DIRECTOR OF HR

DANIELLE BILLINGTON | DIRECTOR OF HR



On 1 April 2020, the newly created, centralised HR Department took up its service. Please use the following inbox for any HR and Payroll related information/documents or queries: [hr@fmat.co.uk](mailto:hr@fmat.co.uk).

**Alison Jones, HR Advisor**, will be joining the team from 1 June 2020. There are still vacancies in the department for which recruitment will be resumed in due course.

At present, the team is working remotely from home due to the on-going Covid-19 crisis, and any queries will be responded to in due course in order of priority. We would appreciate your support during this challenging time. In future, HR will be based at Smith's Wood Academy.

If you have any queries or concerns with the service, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Please remember to contact the HR Department e-mail [hr@fmat.co.uk](mailto:hr@fmat.co.uk). Stay safe and well.

## The team in situ is:

**Danielle Billington**

HR Director

**Ann Pendrey**

HR Business Partner

**Menaz Akhtar**

Payroll & Systems Manger

**Shakeela Ali**

HR Assistant

**Dawn Hadley-Smith**

HR Assistant.

 [hr@fmat.co.uk](mailto:hr@fmat.co.uk)

# CONNECTING WITH THE CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

JOHN FITZGERALD | COO

The operations of the Trust have been tested over the past four weeks with the short notice to close all academies/schools by the Government, due to COVID-19.

With the support and collaborative work of colleagues, the Trust has continued to deliver the core operations accessed by staff and pupils in these challenging times and support with the provision of education to our pupils.

Below is examples of these operations and how they have supported staff and pupils.

## FREE SCHOOL MEALS

Academies are providing every eligible child with a weekly shopping voucher worth £15 to spend at supermarkets whilst academies are closed due to COVID-19. This has been provided via the Government national free school meal voucher scheme.

The national voucher scheme is playing a significant role in ensuring that eligible pupils can still receive free school meals while they are staying at home during the school closures.

The vouchers can be spent on food at a range of shops including Sainsbury's, Tesco, Asda, Morrisons, Waitrose and M&S.

Thank you for the support of all SLT's and data leads with the implementation of this scheme.



## FINANCE DEPARTMENT

The department has adapted extremely well to the academy closures, with all team members working remotely and continuing to provide financial service and administration to each academy.

Procurement processes have continued with the department ensuring that efficient and robust controls remain in place during this time.

To support the department in continuing to provide this service, please can all finance communications and documentation be sent to the finance@ email address, this includes any orders/invoices/queries. This will help support with visibility and provide contingencies should there be any illness in the Department.

Payments have continued to be paid to suppliers, as per the supplier terms and conditions and in line with Government guidance.

Cancelled educational activities have been reviewed with academy SLT's and agreed refunds will be paid to parents in the summer term.



## ACADEMY FINANCE EMAIL ADDRESSES

- ▶ [F@bournville.bham.sch.uk](mailto:F@bournville.bham.sch.uk)
- ▶ [financeteam@erdington.bham.sch.uk](mailto:financeteam@erdington.bham.sch.uk)
- ▶ [finance@fairfax.bham.sch.uk](mailto:finance@fairfax.bham.sch.uk)
- ▶ [s215finance@smiths-wood.solihull.sch.uk](mailto:s215finance@smiths-wood.solihull.sch.uk)

# CONNECTING WITH THE CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

JOHN FITZGERALD | COO



## ESTATES DEPARTMENT

The department's commitment and support has ensured academies can continue to be open to vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers by implementing a rota to meet the academies and community's needs.

There is a consistent approach that all academies are following, to ensure that the premises remain safe during this period of reduced usage

Currently, the Government advice is that construction industry is to continue working. In order to keep sites as compliant as possible, all statutory and essential works will be carried out whilst contractors are available to complete these works.

This decision will be reviewed in line with any government advice or direction.

Prior to any contractor attending sites, an assessment will be made to ensure that:

- Government guidance is followed
- Appropriate social distancing is maintained
- PPE worn, as required
- Agreed locations for contractor working to minimise disruption and contact with staff and students.



## IT UPDATE

The Central Team and CSE have implemented solutions to provide staff the ability to work remotely.

The solutions that have been implemented are:

- Magellan (allows staff to access their files on the school network via web)
- Microsoft Teams (share files, chat via a text messenger system and host web-based meetings, either through audio or video)

The Central Team is currently completing the centralisation of MS Office 365 tenancy with CSE Engineering Team. The project will be completed in the summer 2020 term and launched in the autumn 2020 term. The outcome will be the development of a central tenancy which encompasses all 5 FMAT sites (Bournville, Erdington, Fairfax, Smith's Wood and the Central Team).

The advantages of this project will provide:

- Improved collaborative working, as all users will be housed in the same system
- Devices across the Trust will be up to date with the latest version of MS Office 365
- Standardisation of software used within the Trust
- Enabling seamless file saving on OneDrive for all staff & enabling CSE to more efficiently support users from multiple sites.



**EXCELLENCE.**

DEDICATION.

**AMBITION.**

INTEGRITY.

**TRADITION.**