

THE VIEW

The official Newsletter from
Mersey View Learning Trust
January 2024



A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

I am delighted to extend a warm welcome to our pupils, families and staff who are part of our new Trust, Mersey View Learning Trust, to our new Trust Newsletter. In December the DfE North West Regional Office Advisory Board accepted our proposal for setting up our new Trust. This exciting news means that we are now working diligently preparing all the schools to be incorporated and the formal creating of the Mersey View Learning Trust.

Across all the schools, the start of this academic year has been filled with energy, enthusiasm, and a great sense of community spirit with the creating of networks across all the schools looking at Early years, Safeguarding, Finance & HR, SEND, Attendance, with Maths and English to come. I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to all those dedicated staff members for their tireless efforts and commitment to sharing their expertise and best practice from their schools. It is through their hard work and passion that we are continuing to create an environment where every child can thrive.

Across the trust, we have witnessed numerous exciting developments that underscore our collective commitment to providing the best possible education for our pupils which you can read about in this newsletter. From innovative teaching approaches to collaborative initiatives, the Autumn term has showcased the strength and effectiveness of our school leaders, students and parents across the trust.

Our Trust Board is meeting monthly to shape how the Trust will develop and to give constructive advice and challenge on the development of our strategic plan for the Trust. We have also had Trust network meetings for key staff involved in that transition and these will continue this term. Our Trust newsletter 'The View' will regularly update you all on what is happening as we move to incorporation and our Trust formally enacting our visions and values.

Also, as part of our communications strategy we have launched our Facebook and Twitter pages which will be other ways to keep in contact with our journey and also to share all the exciting activities you and your school are undertaking. It will also be able to keep you updated from the various network events we will be having. Our new trust website will be up and running by the end of this month and this again will be in place where you can keep up to date with how the Trust is developing and the opportunities that are being created for staff, pupils and parents.

Together, we are shaping the future for the benefit of our children, and I am confident that the coming months will bring even more achievements and successes. Equally important is the partnership we share with parents, a collaboration that plays a pivotal role in making Mersey View Learning MAT a truly exceptional place for our children.

Your support is invaluable, and together, we will continue to create an environment where every child can flourish. Thank you to everyone for your continued dedication and here's to a new year of growth, learning, and collaboration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Sexton'.

K. SEXTON CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



SCHOOL LEADERSHIP EVENT



On November 27th 2023 we held a Leadership conference on the 'development of Trusts'. All leaders both teaching and non-teaching from the Trust schools were invited to this networking event and our guest speaker was John Cornally.

John is a National Leader of Education who has led outstanding schools across the North West. He has an exemplary background in supporting schools and leaders to achieve success for their schools both academically and pastorally. He currently works with the **National Institute of Teaching and Dioceses** across the country in delivering leadership and school improvement programmes.

In his talk he offered insight into how to develop a culture across the trust to be open and transparent to sharing best practice and being supportive across the alliances that will be developed. John also gave examples of how school improvement across the Trust could work and the potentials of certain approaches to school improvement. Our vision is that collaboration across the schools will allow people to explore what works best for them in their setting and this can be used to build expertise across the trust.

It was also an opportunity for the school leaders to meet each other, develop new professional relationships and to share some of the key issues and challenges that they have been working on over the first term. Through our other planned networks, staff are working closely together to see how they can develop support and challenge across the various phases we work with.



We all love reading at Valewood. From Reception, the children learn to read and, as they move into the Juniors, they are reading to learn. Planning opportunities where families can be involved in school initiatives is something we are proud of at Valewood. Our families' engagement in our school improvement priorities is fantastic and our Book & a Brew sessions are always well attended each term.

Every term at Valewood we host a **Families' Book & a Brew**, a chance for families to come into school and read with their children. This half term it was our Christmas special. The School Hall was transformed into a huge reading room, with cosy corners and cushions to sit on and sofas to lounge on whilst mums, dads and grandparents read aloud to their children and grandchildren. Children enjoyed sharing their reading too, whilst families had a brew and a mince pie. Reading texts were chosen to entertain and to inform our readers and they all had a Winter/Christmas theme.

Older siblings were encouraged to support their younger brother and sisters and the atmosphere in the Hall was just delightful. With the lighting set to 'Christmas feels,' the twinkly lights and melodious background music set the scene for a cosy reading time. No one wanted to stop reading and it really encouraged a lot of book sharing and book swapping between the children and also the parents/grandparents. **Keep reading everyone!**

FAMILIES' A BOOK & A BREW CHRISTMAS SPECIAL 2023





ENGINEERING IS FOR EVERYONE!



Waterloo Primary School continues the links with Liverpool John Moores University...

Twenty girls from Waterloo Primary School were very lucky to be invited to an 'Engineering is for Everyone' event at Liverpool John Moores University. This is the second time we have attended this event which aims to encourage girls to study STEM subjects beyond the primary classroom.

Our pupils completed four different workshops which included topics such as astrophysics, music production, mathematics and civil engineering. The girls really enjoyed their day as a university student and were inspired by the variety of activities and passionate lecturers they encountered. They were extremely excited to meet the Boston Dynamics Robotic Dog at lunchtime and even had a go at controlling it!

The team at Liverpool John Moores were so impressed with our pupils on the day that they have invited us back to experience making a live TV show in their TV studio AND / OR the opportunity to record some music in their sound booth.

This experience for our pupils builds on our links with the University. Mrs Sarah Maciver, Deputy head of the school sits on the strategic board for the School of Education (ITT) and is also part of the Primary Steering Group. We currently have 4 LJMU students training at our school. 3 of these are undertaking the PGDE route into primary teaching and 1 is a third year undergraduate.

The school is also part of the LJMU Lesson Study group, having worked with the University on the initial pilot. We use this to support CPD for staff in order to implement the School Improvement Plan.

We are delighted to work in partnership with this local university.

We are very proud at Forefield Infants to have been awarded the Attachment and Trauma Sensitive Schools Award (ATSSA) Bronze level. The rigorous assessment carried out in November recognised the 'culture of compassion and nurture' within our school enabling pupils 'learning readiness'.

The assessment and award captured the ethos of our school and a culture we have dedicated much CPD and time and effort to creating for the pupils and staff attending Forefield Infants. We are extremely proud that this has been recognised in the achievement of this award.

The award recognised key strengths, these being, the quality staff care and emotional support to protect mental health and well-being at many levels, the range of strategies in place to support parents and carers in understanding child development and attachment, staff knowledge in monitoring excitement and anxiety, and the broad range of strategies to support executive function throughout the school. Dr Jennifer Nock said she felt privileged to share our journey and invited us to immediately register for the Silver Award assessment.



FOREFIELD INFANTS ACHIEVES AN IMPORTANT AWARD





WELLBEING AT FOREFIELD JUNIORS



At the time of our last inspection (July 2021) as the country was returning to 'normal,' all schools were quick to respond to the growing number of children presenting with anxiety and poor mental health. The effects of the pandemic were wide reaching and we wanted to ensure that our pupils felt safe in school and had a trusted adult to speak to.

Inspectors reported:

"Pupils who feel anxious visit the school's 'Care and Advice for Everyone' room, known fondly as the CAFÉ. Pupils feel listened to. They know that staff will help to sort any problems out quickly. They trust the adults in school to quickly deal with any behaviour or bullying incidents. Pupils feel safe and well supported by the adults in school."

Although we were very pleased with the report, we felt that we could be doing even more. As a result, over the last two years we have worked incredibly hard to build on the work we had started to support the well-being of pupils, families and staff. The CAFÉ, home to our ELSAs and counsellor could not keep up with demand, so we converted a computer suite into a nurture base and recruited a Learning Mentor.

The 'Happy Hub' (named by our pupils) was set up to tackle the everyday worries and meant that we could have a tiered approach to support children. It quickly became a very popular space and we realised how vital it was for children to have an outlet for their worries and concerns before they escalated to ELSAs or outside agencies. The Happy Hub is a magical space – it never looks the same! Visitors to the school are amazed to see a pool table, air hockey, Lego therapy, arts and crafts and even Santa's Grotto!

We then turned our attention to the classrooms. Following the 'therapeutic classroom' principles of Shahana Knight (as featured in the Headteacher Update magazine) we set about decluttering and toning down our learning spaces, reintroducing comfortable seating areas, blankets and cushions and swapping overhead lighting for table lamps and fairy lights. With the addition of plants and photo walls the rooms became more homely and cosy and pupils immediately reported feeling calmer. Visitors to our school are struck by the calm, purposeful feeling and we have even extended this into our once cluttered and unloved staffroom.

All of these changes have had very little impact on our budget as we have worked together to paint, decorate and assemble the flat-pack furniture. Staff are very canny in sourcing sofas, toys and games for free and working together to create these new spaces.

Whilst it is always difficult to measure the impact, pupils have definitely appreciated the changes and staff have remarked:

"What a change: a calm, relaxing place to sit with lots of valuable storage space and clear surfaces."

At the end of the day, we spend a vast amount of time in school and if we can make the environment feel more like home and boost people's happiness, we in turn boost everyone's well-being!



REMEMBRANCE DAY 2023



Chesterfield High School was bursting with pride this term as it unveiled its brand new cadet unit, marking a significant milestone in its commitment to fostering discipline, leadership, and a sense of duty among its students.

In a poignant display of remembrance, the school laid its wreath at the flagpole and adorned it with vibrant red poppies created by the art department, symbolising respect for those who have served and sacrificed for their country. This gesture serves as a powerful reminder of the cadet unit's connection to a rich military history and the importance of upholding values of courage and sacrifice. The crowning moment came with the raising of the unit flag for the first time. The flag represents not only the physical embodiment of the cadet unit but also a rallying point for students to rally behind a shared purpose. This symbolic act reinforces the school's dedication to instilling a strong sense of identity, unity, and responsibility among its students.

As the school celebrates this new chapter, the cadet unit stands as a testament to the school's commitment to nurturing well-rounded individuals with a deep appreciation for service, camaraderie, and the enduring legacy of those who have served before them. **The memory of this milestone, marked by poppies and the proudly raised unit flag, will undoubtedly leave a lasting impression on the school's culture.**

One of the useful tools we use at Rowan Park and The Rowan Tree is Attention Autism, this was designed to develop children's attention and listening skills and has had an amazing impact throughout our schools in the past few years.

What is it? Attention Autism is an intervention approach by Speech and Language Therapist Gina Davies which aims to work on the early fundamentals of language including awareness of others, attention, listening, shared attention, switching attention and turn-taking. This approach by Gina Davis includes activities which are motivating, a shared experience and worth communicating about. The approach helps children to understand and respond to a structured, adult directed routine. It gives children an irresistible invitation to engage in an adult directed activity. **Attention Autism** will help support and build attention and listening skills at an appropriate developmental level. It will also support and develop the child's social communication skills, such as taking turns or using vocalisations.

The approach works because it draws on the child's strengths:

- Stronger visual skills than auditory skills
- Remembering experiences with emotional impact (activities aim to be memorable and enjoyable)
- Ability to follow logic and structure (e.g. following a predictable pattern, use of simple, repetitive language)

Working through the 4 stages of Attention Autism has improved the children's listening and attention skills, patience and turn taking and ability to complete an independent task.

Using the same song and only key words has helped to improve the children's communication, using a variety of communication tools the children will ask for more or finish a Ready, Steady, Go sequence.

ATTENTION AUTISM AT ROWAN PARK



TRUST DEVELOPMENT PLAN



CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



As a Trust, our Development Plan ensures we have a clearly defined strategic plan which sets out how we will guide, support and improve our schools.

This year, our plan is made up of four key objectives.

This includes: integrating technology into the curriculum, improving academic data across the trust and providing CPD for staff to close the gaps and mitigate barriers, to centralise and codify procedures to standardise best practice and to strengthen our school-to-school offer.

We take pride in recognising that each school is unique, but understanding that by collaborating we can raise standards for pupils, parents and staff.

Continuous professional development (CPD) is the cornerstone of the core delivery of the Learning Trust. The core team is working together to explore our CPD offer and develop close links with external providers who carry expertise in the delivery of NPQ's and Early Carer Framework.

This will provide all our staff with an invaluable opportunity for ongoing evolution, learning, and skill refinement. Currently, many of our staff are engaged in NPQ studies and have accessed CPD during the Autumn term. Many of our ECT's are already working together across the Trust and receiving their ECF training led by Kevin Sexton our CEO.

Later this year, subject networks will be created to join our existing staff networks to design the CPD offer for next year and to build on the vision and values of collaborative school improvement.

We will be able to share that with all schools over the coming months.

OUR VISION STATEMENT

- **MERSEY VIEW LEARNING TRUST DELIVERS LEADING QUALITY LEARNING IN A SAFE AND NURTURING ENVIRONMENT.**
- **WE EMPOWER PEOPLE TO BE READY FOR THE FUTURE, MEETING NEEDS AND RAISING ASPIRATIONS.**
- **WE ARE VISIBLE, ACCOUNTABLE AND TRUSTED.**
- **WE COLLABORATE, CARE AND INSPIRE TO ENRICH LIFE FOR ALL.**

