

OUR TRUST

CHILDREN FIRST, ASPIRE, CHALLENGE, ACHIEVE



THINKING
SCHOOLS
ACADEMY TRUST

EASTER 2018

| ISSUE 6



**RANKED BEST MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST IN UK
'THINKING SCHOOL' ACCREDITATION
GRAND OPENING AT MOORINGS WAY
DUKE OF EDINBURGH LICENCE AWARDED
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL AWARD
ARTSMARK PLATINUM VICTORY**

TRANSFORMING LIFE CHANCES

WELCOME MESSAGE FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Welcome to Issue 6 of 'Our Trust' magazine. Over the last few months we have had an enormous amount to celebrate across our Trust and I would like to thank all our staff and students for their diligent hard work and commitment.

A few weeks ago Thinking Schools Academy Trust was confirmed as the highest performing Trust at GSCE in the national league tables. This is an amazing achievement. Whilst the Rochester Grammar School has always been one of the highest performing schools in the country, our other secondary schools came in to the Trust as poorly performing schools, or re-brokered to avoid 'Special Measures'. To have turned these schools around and made them places where students achieve much better than similar students across the country is a testament to our focus on transforming life chances and the power of our cognitive approach to education.

I believe that a large part of our success in the national league tables can be attributed to our use of the 'Thinking' approach in our schools and it has been a pleasure to hear about so many of our schools gaining their accreditation as 'Thinking Schools' from Exeter University in the past few months. When I became CEO, in August 2016, we had less than a handful of accredited 'Thinking Schools' in our Trust. By the end of this academic year we are on track to have 10 accredited 'Thinking Schools' in our Trust. This means that schools in our Trust will make up about 20% of schools ever accredited as 'Thinking Schools' by Exeter University and 50% of schools with current accreditation.

We have also been asked by Exeter University to lead research on how to create 'Thinking' organisations and to create a 'Thinking' programme for undergraduates at Kent University.

I am delighted with how embedded the 'Thinking' culture is becoming within our organisation and look forward to seeing students reap the rewards of a cognitive approach to education in the future.

Stuart Gardner

Stuart Gardner, MSc, NPQH, NLE
Chief Executive Officer

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THINKING SCHOOLS ACADEMY TRUST RANKED BEST IN COUNTRY FOR SECONDARY PERFORMANCE

Thinking Schools Academy Trust tops DfE rankings in headline measure. Ranked the best multi-academy trust (MAT) in the country for the performance of its secondary schools.

Students at TSAT secondary schools improved their GCSE grades by more than two-thirds of a grade on average at the end of secondary school – the best progress in the country. The next best trust improved their GCSE grades by just over half a grade. This places TSAT in first place in the performance tables published today by the Department for Education (DfE), under its headline measure of Progress 8.

The four secondary schools are in Medway and Portsmouth – and all achieved brilliant GCSE results. Today's tables take into account the performance of the three schools which have been sponsored by TSAT for three or more years:

- In Portsmouth, The Portsmouth Academy (TPA) also has a compelling success story to tell. It was the second highest performing school across Hampshire and Portsmouth local authorities – a brilliant turnaround from 2013, when TSAT took it on after it fell into 'Special Measures'. It was also recently judged as 'Good' with "Outstanding leadership and management" by Ofsted.
- Similarly impressive were the results of Rochester Grammar School (RGS) and Holcombe Grammar School (HGS), both in Medway – with 100% of RGS students achieving the pass grade of 4 or above in both English and maths, and 96% of students at HGS doing the same.

The Victory Academy in Chatham, TSAT's fourth secondary, is rated the best high school in Medway, with the DfE recognising it as "above average" nationally. It adds more than a third of a GCSE grade per student per subject. Its success story continued when it received a 'Good' rating by Ofsted – only two years after it was taken on by TSAT while in a perilous financial position and underperforming academically, in a dramatic turnaround.

Progress 8 is the DfE's headline measure and tracks how much progress secondary schools help their students make in eight subjects from the end of primary school to the completion of GCSEs, relative to students in schools of a similar ability.



Stuart Gardner, Chief Executive of the Thinking Schools Academy Trust, said:

We work incredibly hard for all our students and are delighted that today's Department for Education's tables have borne out the world-class education we deliver every day. The rankings underline the outstanding progress our students make at our thriving schools, and I would like to thank all our principals and teachers for their expertise.

We have always been firmly committed to giving each and every student the best opportunities to realise their potential, whatever their background, and today's results are a milestone we are extremely proud of."

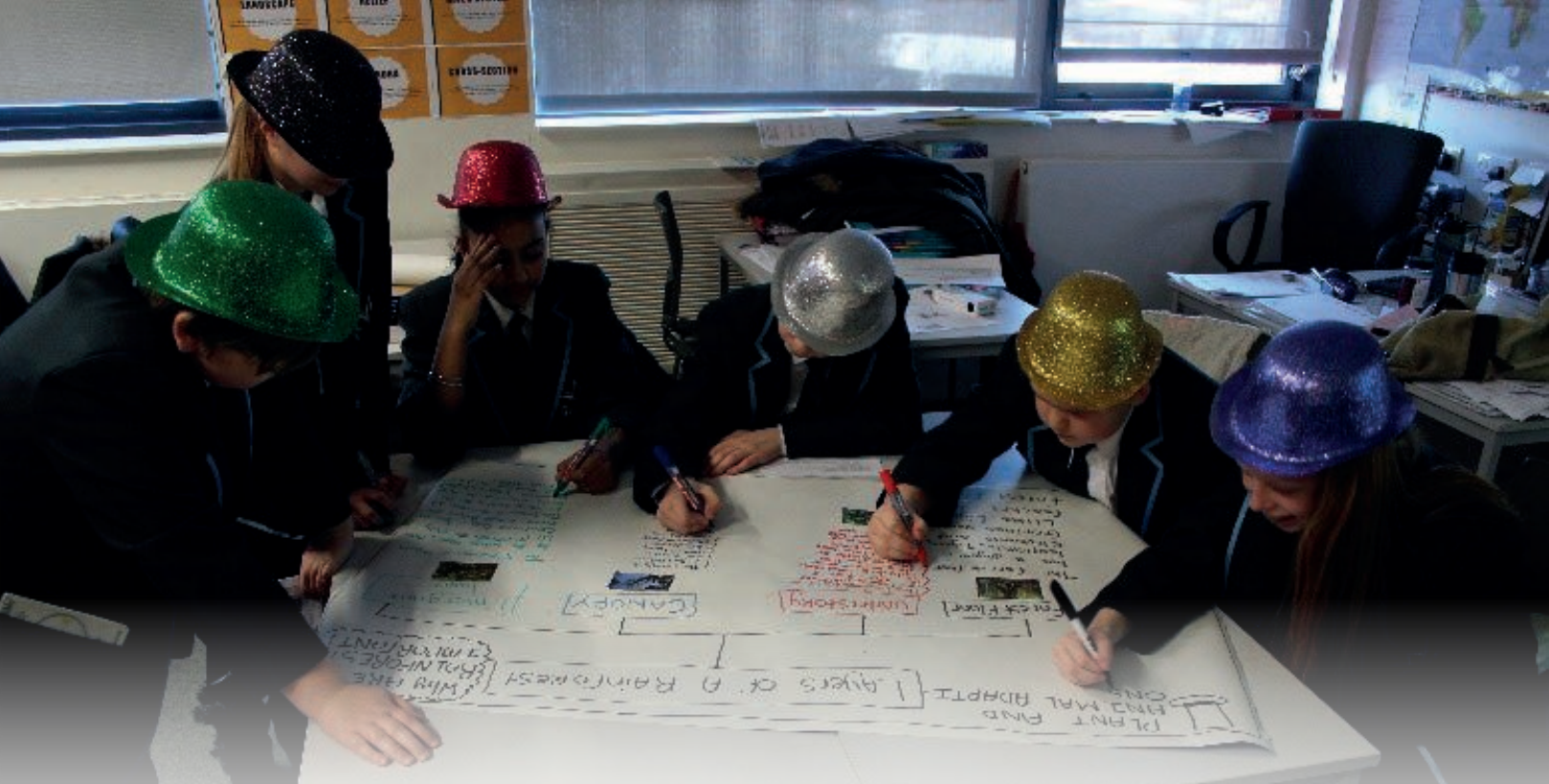


Gwynn Bassan, Director of Secondary Education at the Thinking Schools Academy Trust, said:

These results demonstrate just how powerful an impact our schools have on transforming life chances and enabling students to grow and thrive.

Across all subjects, our teachers are focused on delivering the highest standards of education and giving every single child the chance to express their talents and flourish.

These results are a great demonstration of the progress our students make, but we are not resting on our laurels and will strive every day to continue our success story."



WORLD THINKING DAY

Our Trust celebrated its first World Thinking Day on Thursday 22 February which was fun filled with activities to celebrate great thinkers, great learning and great collaboration.

The day also provided an opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of 'Thinking' within our learning and embracing our shared ethos which permeates each facet of our Trust.

Students of all ages, staff and stakeholders within our Trust celebrated where they are on their 'Thinking' journey - whether accredited 'Thinking Schools', advanced 'Thinking Schools' or near the beginning of their journey, the schools within our family all benefit from sharing great practice across all schools.

To mark the day, learners enjoyed taking their thinking to new levels and showcasing the various interpretations of what thinking means at their schools. This included challenges to make human 'Thinking Maps', students leading celebratory assemblies and leading their learning in different settings.



ALL FAITHS CHILDREN'S ACADEMY STRIKES PARTNERSHIP WITH UGANDAN SCHOOLS

Pupils at All Faiths Children's Academy have embarked on a journey of discovery by building bridges with schools in Uganda, enhancing their cultural awareness and understanding of Africa.

Pupils have become pen friends with their counterparts at Kirinya Primary School, to discuss the contrasts and similarities in their hobbies, interests, and family life, and the cultural differences between Uganda and the UK.

The partnership was recently strengthened by the visit of Ruth Everingham, Lead Teacher for the Deaf at All Faiths Children's Academy, who is researching ways to teach maths through sign language.

Ruth's flourishing relationship with Kirinya Primary School began three years ago, when she delivered professional development training to staff through Doubleme.org, a charity which takes teachers and physiotherapists to East Africa to empower local schools.

As a result of the partnership, students at All Faiths Children's Academy will gain a vast array of cross-curricular benefits, acquiring a deeper understanding of cultures, poverty, and citizenship, and learning Africa's rich cultural heritage.

Ruth's trip to Uganda, funded by the British Council Connecting Classrooms Partnership programme, involved her participation in a course on critical thinking and problem solving, which epitomised the Thinking Schools Academy Trust's innovative cognitive approach to learning.

She is also playing a key role in 'The Gender Equality Project', which encourages pupils in both countries to think beyond gender binaries.

All Faiths Children's Academy is growing its Ugandan partnerships all the time, and its work with Kirinya Church of Uganda Primary School will enable staff to set up further pupil-to-pupil connections, and promote our Trust's aim to transform life chances.





Ruth Everingham, Lead Teacher for the Deaf at All Faiths Children's Academy, said:

Our partnership with schools in Uganda has so many great benefits for pupils in both countries, raising awareness about different cultures, and broadening pupils' horizons.

My trip to Kirinya Primary School was very special, enabling me to continue my work to promote maths teaching and professional development. I am thankful to everyone at the school for welcoming me so kindly.

We are very excited about developing our partnerships with Ugandan schools in future, and giving pupils in both countries the opportunity to realise their potential and grow as people.”



Cormac Murphy, Headteacher at All Faiths Children's Academy, said:

As part of the Thinking Schools Academy Trust, we were delighted to extend our learning network to the international stage.

We encourage our pupils to think interdependently, working with and learning from their peers to understand different perspectives.

Being part of this project will allow our pupils to broaden their understanding of world cultures.”



SIGN 2 SING

All Faiths Children's Academy help raise essential funds for the Deaf Health Charity SignHealth.

Pupils at All Faiths Children's Academy gathered together recently to take part in the 'Sign2Sing' annual event, organised by the Deaf Health Charity SignHealth.

It was extremely inspiring to see pupils taking part and signing to sing, raising valuable funds for the charity that financially supports projects to improve the lives of vulnerable deaf children and adults.



NUMBERS COUNT

Number Day at Cedar Children's Academy rocks the roof and raises funds for NSPCC.

Cedar Children's Academy has raised £463.90 for the NSPCC as part of the charity's maths inspired 'Number Day'. The academy's maths lead was keen to raise money for the charity while supporting the importance of maths that can be fun to learn.

Like many of the schools in our Trust, Cedar Children's Academy use a programme called 'Times Tables Rockstars', so they themed the day to include dressing up as rock stars and numbers.

'Number Day' was a huge success and the school heard enriching comments such as "When are we going to do maths today?" Highlighting the enjoyment that the children experienced during the day and the stereotypes that were challenged.

The children performed rock songs in their year groups at the end of the day which brought energised entertainment and their enthusiasm was contagious.

The school and children thoroughly enjoyed the day and are inspired to continue to take part next year.



SAFER INTERNET DAY

Children at Cedar Children's Academy took part in Safer Internet Day on 6 February. The children dressed up as emojis and enjoyed learning about the benefits and negatives of the internet as well as how to keep themselves safe whilst being online. During the day they came up with ideas and used their thinking skills to recognise ways in which they may not be safe and how they can be vigilant and protect themselves.

The school ran a competition to design an 'Internet Safety' poster. Entrants were narrowed down and then the top entries were voted on by parents of the school's Facebook page.

By learning about how to use the internet safely, children will be able to access valuable educational content to help them develop their thinking while gaining an understanding of the dangers they may face.

All of our schools take an active responsibility in promoting safer internet experiences by providing workshops for children, parents and carers to attend.

With the internet and social media recognised by many as integral to communicating, sharing experiences and an excellent resource of knowledge, we must all be proactive in safeguarding ourselves and our children at school and home, so that they aren't subjected to bullying or radicalisation and are protected at all times.



THE 6 SEEDS OF CEDAR

The Victory Academy and Cedar Children's Academy have been working in collaboration to produce a beautifully illustrated Dr. Seuss inspired book for the children at Cedar.

Over the past two terms, The Victory Academy and Cedar Children's Academy, both Trust schools, have been working interdependently applying advanced thinking to creatively embed the 'Habits of Mind'. The illustrated book that has been created by both schools will be used to support the understanding and teaching of the habits.

'The 6 Seeds of Cedar' has been invented to support the development of key dispositions at Cedar Children's Academy. The book has been designed to promote the characteristics of what 'thinking' students do when they are confronted with problems to which the resolutions are not immediately known. The seeds represent 6 'Habits of Mind', which have been carefully selected for the students at Cedar to develop efficient and effective thinkers.

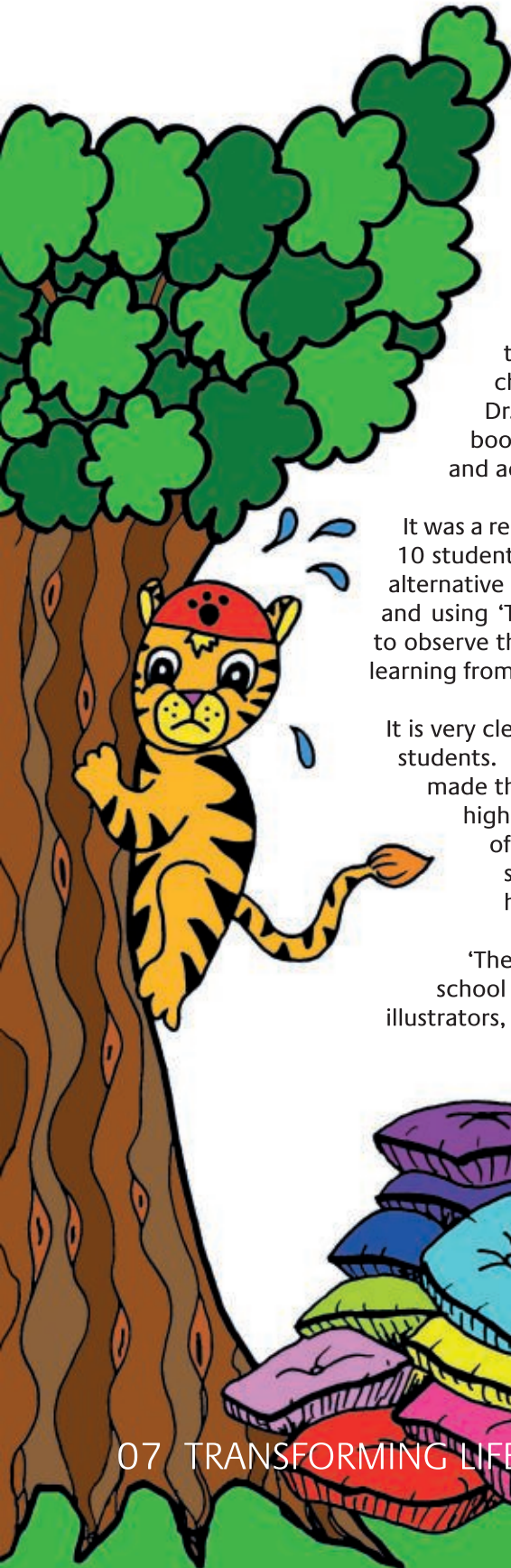
The book has been developed through collaborative work between a group of Year 10 HPA students from The Victory Academy and a group of creative Year 5 students at Cedar Children's Academy who were supported by the Victory students to development their literacy and drawing techniques. Thinking interdependently, the students created characters and storylines to represent each disposition. To support the students' imagination and character development they took inspiration from the famous children's author Dr. Seuss. Students researched the language and bold illustrations of Dr. Seuss' books, which inspired them to transform the 'Habits of Mind' into an engaging and accessible teaching book.

It was a real wonderment and awe inspiring moment sitting back and observing the Year 10 students read to the Year 5 children; explaining the meaning behind words; offering alternative vocabulary; supporting the use of ICT; demonstrating drawing proportions and using 'Thinking Hats' to develop creative design ideas and storylines. Additionally to observe the students excitement as they came together each week, fully engaged and learning from each other.

It is very clear to see the progress and learning that has taken place for the Year 5 Cedar students. Upon reflection it is also clear to see the progress that Victory students have made through the mentoring process. Evaluative discussions with the students have highlighted how the process has developed their confidence and own practice of implementing the 'Habits of Mind'. Furthermore, learning how to apply supportive questioning and ways to develop the younger children's initial ideas has created a real extension to the learning practices of Victory's HPA students.

'The 6 Seeds of Cedar' will be making its learning debut at the exciting whole school book launch day, where students, staff and parents will meet the authors and illustrators, and start the unique thinking and learning journey behind the 'Habits of Mind'.

Ms C Dawkins
Head of Visual Arts at The Victory Academy



CHICKS & DUCKLINGS

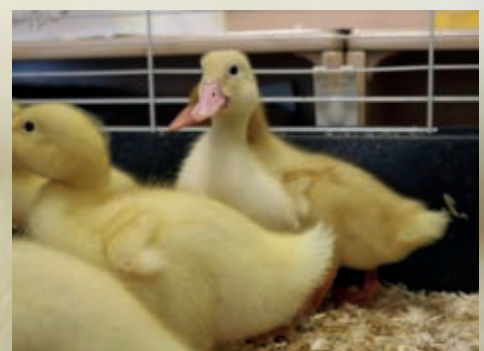
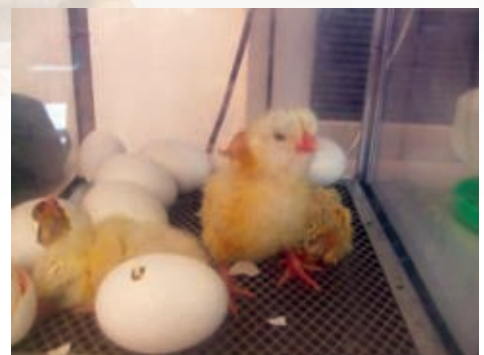
Easter is a wonderful time of year with fresh enticing fragrances that nature provides including seeing newly born chicks and ducklings.

The Gordon Children's Academy and New Horizons Children's Academy have had a very enjoyable time watching their chicks and ducklings hatch to display splendour of yellow cuteness.

Reception and Year 1 children at Gordon's having taken delivery of the chicken eggs, have watched them hatch and grow, while learning how to keep them safe and how to care for them.

New Horizons Children's Academy have been looking after 5 very cheeky and noisy ducklings. Children from all year groups were able to visit the ducklings and have learnt new facts about the ducklings and had first-hand experience of caring for them.

Both the chicks and ducklings that start life wet, have been looked after in incubators to allow them to dry and keep warm. After a short period of time they will return to local farms to grow into adulthood.



WORLD BOOK DAY

The extreme weather conditions, resembling a picturesque scene from *The Chronicles of Narnia* by Clive Staples Lewis, may have hampered 'World Book Day' taking place on its official date in the Medway towns. But schools in Medway and Portsmouth still took part, providing a wonderment of workshops, reading and fun games.

Our primary schools saw their pupils dressing up spectacularly as their favourite book characters with no details being missed. One pupil, dressed as Paddington Bear, had everything including the bag but where was the marmalade sandwich?

Pupils took part in creative arts, quizzes, competitions and listened and read their favourite stories.

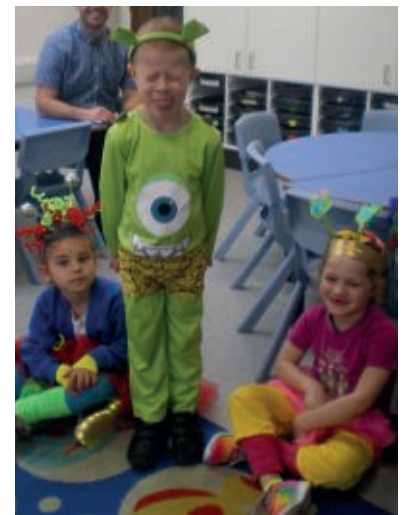
At Moorings Way Infant School, pupils dressed up as aliens to kick-start 'Alien Day' with the classic *Aliens Love Underpants!* By Claire Freedman.

The Portsmouth Academy secondary school found itself transformed into a magical, mythical fairy-tale land for the entire day. Pupils were, quite literally, invited to step through a fairy-tale book of legend and enjoy a fun filled day of mythically inspired lessons and learning adventures, competing in lessons to win gold coins for their houses. The 'World Book Day' champions were bestowed with the prestigious privilege of sitting on the 'Thinkers' Throne'.

Secondary schools within our Trust took part in reading and writing workshops during lessons using 'Thinking Maps'. Pupils also had the chance to design book tokens for the 'Design a National Book Token' competition where one lucky winner's design will be turned into a National Book Token gift card to appear in bookshops nationwide.

'World Book Day', first celebrated in 1995 in the UK, takes place annually in the UK and Ireland on the first Thursday in March. The day is also known as 'International Day of the Book' or 'World Book Days', organised by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to promote reading, publishing and copyright.





AUSCHWITZ

On Monday 12 February at 4am, 33 students and staff from Holcombe Grammar School embarked on a busy three day experience which would be forever engraved in their memories. The cross curricular themes encompassed the historical, psychological and social elements of A-level courses supported by the educational guides throughout.

The students visited the Galicia Museum and listened to the moving account of Monika Goldvasser, a Jewish survivor born in Krakow at the beginning of the war, whose parents gave her away to protect her from danger. Monica's young parents were shot a few days after sending her to safety. At the museum they also saw photographic images of areas and people, depicting the tragic consequences of war and genocide contextualised from the personal perspective. There were poignant images showing how the sites of many unmarked mass graves were now covered by greenery and shrubs, left unattended for nature.

Travelling on a snowy dawn to the bleakness and horror of Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II - Birkenau, a student commented when visiting the cell blocks in Auschwitz I, "I really could not comprehend how bad the living conditions were, it was shocking. The actual extermination and killing of over 1.1 million innocent people including the Jewish, Polish, Gypsies, Soviet Prisoners of war and others, is so saddening". The students were given comprehensive guided tours of each of the concentration camps by the historical experts based at Auschwitz. It was a harrowing day showing the school group the very worst of human behaviour.

In the evening students explored the historical Old Town Square with the traditional cloth market and stunning churches.

On their final day the students visited Ghetto Hero's Square, with the monuments of empty chairs, depicting the lost souls from the thriving community. Later they went to Schindler's Factory Museum, an interactive experience examining the life of Jewish and Polish communities before and during the war.

Throughout the busy three days, the Holcombe students conducted themselves with respect and maturity. They returned back home with the horrifying accounts of genocide tempered by the strength of the human spirit as encapsulated by Oskar Schindler's quote, "Whoever saves one life, saves the world entire".





LITERALLY VICTORIOUS

Meon Junior School children have won the Portsmouth Literature Quiz. The quiz saw 15 schools taking part in the quiz with Meon Junior entered two teams.

The children prepared for the event by reading four books by the authors: Ali Sparks, Jamie Thomson, Amber Lee Dodd and Peter Bunzl. The competition consisted of different rounds in which children were quizzed on general book knowledge; questions relating to the books by the four authors; anagrams of book titles and questions on the websites of the authors.

The atmosphere was intense and the scores were very close, but Meon Junior 'A' team were victorious with 63 points. They were awarded a trophy and each child was given two book vouchers.

Students Take Second and Third Place in Creative Writing Competition

Anna Danso-Amoako and Conni Laura Groves, two students at The Portsmouth Academy, have won second and third place in Highbury College's Sixth Form Academy competition.

The writing competition is aimed at local 14-16 year-olds, challenging them to showcase their creative writing skills by submitting an article, poem or essay of no more than 600 words on the Brexit theme.

The winners were selected by a panel of five judges, with both Anna and Conni winning £50 Amazon vouchers.

Chiara Fraser, Associate Leader for English at The Portsmouth Academy commented:

"We're so proud of Anna and Conni for their achievements. Competitions like this are a great way to encourage writing outside the classroom and build confidence."



TWO TRUST SCHOOLS RECEIVE PRESTIGIOUS “THINKING SCHOOL” AWARDS

Pupils and staff at New Horizons Children’s Academy and The Victory Academy are delighted after their schools became two of only about 100 schools in the country to receive ‘Thinking School’ accreditation from the University of Exeter.

New Horizons Children’s Academy, opened by the Thinking Schools Academy Trust in September 2014 as a primary school, has been praised for its “ethos of excellence” by Exeter University’s Cognitive Education Development Unit, confirming the strong partnership between the school and our Trust, and the “positive attitude to learning” that has been fostered.

The Victory Academy began its journey towards becoming a ‘Thinking School’ in 2015 when it changed its name and became part of our Trust. Exeter University recognised that “it is clear that staff at The Victory Academy are intent upon raising the achievement and aspirations of all. This pervades the school. The thinking approach has engendered a consistent methodology to developing learning and a spirit of cooperation and collaboration”.

The accreditations follows hot on the heels of both schools being rated ‘Good’ by Ofsted last year.

Exeter University’s reports, issued as part of the accreditation process, recognises that the schools have fully embraced the Trust’s innovative cognitive approach, which places a strong emphasis on pupils thinking reflectively, critically, and creatively.

The reports highlight a wide range of other strengths, including:

- Pupils are proud of their school and appreciate its focus on thinking skills
- Pupils are confident in expressing their own views and values
- Pupils are given the skills to “become analytical, flexible, and independent”
- Clear and strong direction to cognitive education
- Teachers place high expectations on pupils. Visitors are aware of the value of the ‘Thinking School’ approach
- Governing Bodies are supportive of the approach to cognitive education and share the vision of the Thinking Schools Academy Trust

Congratulations to both schools for their consistent focus that has led them to achieving their prestigious ‘Thinking School’ awards. The Rochester Grammar School, The Portsmouth Academy, Isambard Brunel Junior School and Newbridge Junior School have also been accredited within our Trust. We look forward to sharing the same successes from other schools in our Trust who are working towards accreditation in the near future.



“

Jody Murphy, Headteacher at New Horizons Children's Academy, said:

We are all very proud to have been awarded 'Thinking School' accreditation by the University of Exeter, demonstrating our commitment to excellence in teaching and learning.

This achievement shows our continued journey to improve the life chances of all our pupils through a rich, varied, and interesting curriculum.

Our accreditation and 'Good' Ofsted rating have been extremely important milestones in our development, and we look forward to building on our success over the coming months and years.”

“

Mandy Gage, Principal at The Victory Academy, said:

The Victory Academy has excelled recently having achieving accolades including an Ofsted 'Good' rating; ranked top as a non-selective school in Medway in the DfE Progress 8 tables; receiving the Artsmark Platinum Award and now being accredited as a 'Thinking School'.

This is a tribute to the commitment and dedication that our staff continually provide to our students, giving them the 'Thinking' tools and cognitive approach to learning to succeed in life.

We will continue to aspire, endeavour and achieve, in our understanding that we can transform life chances every day!”

“

Stuart Gardner, Chief Executive of the Thinking Schools Academy Trust, said:

Achieving accreditation as a 'Thinking School' is hugely important for both New Horizons Children's Academy and The Victory Academy, showcasing the dedication and hard work of pupils and staff to foster an open, critical learning environment.

We have greatly enjoyed working with both schools, and are very excited about continuing our work together as they go from strength to strength.”

1

Providing an educational framework that promotes the development of effective habits and cognitive structures

2

Challenging everyone to aspire to and strive for personal excellence

3

Enabling each individual to realise their potential and achieve mastery of their own destiny

BUILDING BRIDGES ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

Students at Rochester Grammar School have built bridges across the Atlantic – teaming up with their counterparts in Rochester, Michigan, USA, for an international partnership. The students have embarked on an exciting creative project with students from Rochester High School and Oakland University in the US city of Rochester, as part of its bicentennial celebrations.

Students on both sides of the Atlantic worked together to publish a book of poems, short stories, and artwork, to broaden their outlook and showcase their diverse creative talents. The creative project, called 'Imagining Rochester', challenged them to think about life in the 'other' Rochester, and how it compares to their own surroundings.

A US student imagined the English town as a place of literary spark, writing, "There are dozens of different accents of tea to try, a plethora of coffee blends, and best of all, a whole wall filled with books, top to bottom! The shelf ranging from the greatest texts of C.S. Lewis to Huxley's classic *Brave New World*."

Another American student wondered "Is it possible, that there are neighbourhoods that have houses so close together...like in *Harry Potter*?"

The project was conceived by Gwynn Bassan, Director of Secondary Education at the Thinking Schools Academy Trust, which sponsors The Rochester Grammar School, and Professor Graeme Harper, the well-known fiction writer and College Dean at Oakland University. Mr Bassan and Professor Harper first began working together in 2015, when Mr Bassan was Principal at The Rochester Grammar School, and are planning to deepen the links between their students via a range of further collaborative projects.

The partnership builds on the strong international ethos that has been cultivated at The Rochester Grammar, highlighted when the school was presented with a prestigious International School Award by the British Council. This accolade is given to schools which do exceptional work on international education, and give students the cultural understanding and skills to thrive in today's world.

The city of Rochester, Michigan, began its life in 1817, and is well-known for being the first settlement of Oakland County, located in the wider Detroit area.



“

Gwynn Bassan, Director of Secondary Education at the Thinking Schools Academy Trust, said:

We are incredibly excited to have forged such a special bond with Oakland University and Rochester High School, giving our students great opportunities to enhance their global awareness and express their creativity.

‘Imagining Rochester’ is a brilliant collaborative project of which all our students can be very proud – bringing together an array of captivating stories, poems, and pieces of art to imagine the lives of others.

We’re looking forward to furthering our links with the university and school over the coming months and years, and expanding our students’ understanding of life across the Atlantic.”

“

Clare Brinklow, Headteacher of Rochester Grammar School, said:

Our partnership with Rochester, USA has given students a wealth of opportunities both to learn about American culture and lifestyle, and develop their many creative talents.

Collaborative projects such as ‘Imagining Rochester’ really showcase the international outlook that we have here at The Rochester Grammar School, and we were delighted to receive an International School Award from the British Council last year.

We cannot wait to see what innovative project our students come up with next, as they continue their development as global citizens.”



BEST CHOREOGRAPHY AWARD GOES TO...

After months of training, 19 Year 5 and 6 children from Newbridge Junior School have taken the opportunity to showcase their dancing skills in the Portsmouth Schools ‘Dance Off 2018’ final at the Kings Theatre in Portsmouth.

A dynamic and fluent performance brought enthusiastic gasps and applause from the crowd as the self-named ‘Savage Squad’ hit the stage with attitude. A clear crowd favourite!

Newbridge’s junior dance squad received applause with their spectacular dancing and were awarded the ‘Best Choreography’ trophy and took centre stage as the overall winners of the junior school competition.

The dance squad were unstoppable and actually scored higher than the secondary schools who had their own competition. An amazing triumph that the children and school are extremely proud of.



KELLY TOLHURST MP WELCOMED AT HIGH-PERFORMING ROCHESTER GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Students and staff at Rochester Grammar School (RGS) welcomed their local MP Kelly Tolhurst on Friday, to learn more about the school's excellent academic performance and talk to students about the world of politics.

Ms Tolhurst, the MP for Rochester and Strood, held a Q&A session with students to discuss some of the most pressing political issues of the day.

A group of keen politics students had the chance to ask Kelly topical questions — ranging from how to get more young people involved in politics, to her opinion on Brexit, and her main priorities for improving Rochester and Strood.

RGS was last year ranked the best school in Medway and in the top 2% of secondary schools in the country for the Department for Education headline “Progress 8” measure, which tracks how much progress schools help their students make, relative to students of a similar ability.

Ms Tolhurst also met with RGS Head of School Clare Brinklow to learn about the new teacher pay structure RGS is implementing alongside other schools in our Trust.

The innovative structure rewards teachers for high performance, and attracts the best teachers to stay in the classroom – giving all students the educational environment to achieve their full potential.

“

Kelly Tolhurst, MP for Rochester and Strood, said:

Visiting Rochester Grammar School gave me a great opportunity to learn more about the school's excellent academic performance, and the innovative new pay structure it has implemented alongside other TSAT schools.

It is testament to the hard work and dedication of students and staff that RGS achieved such brilliant results – huge congratulations to them, and I look forward to seeing what the future holds in store.”

“

Clare Brinklow, Head of School at Rochester Grammar School, said:

We were very pleased to welcome Kelly to our school, to see first-hand the excellent progress students make here, of which we are very proud.

Kelly's visit also gave our students a brilliant opportunity to learn about some of the most pressing political issues of the day, and express their own views on important topics including youth engagement and how to improve our local community.

We would like to extend our sincerest thanks to Kelly for her visit, and look forward to continuing our relationship as RGS goes from strength to strength.”



INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL AWARD

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL AWARD

We are pleased to announce that The Rochester Grammar School has been awarded the British Council's prestigious International School Award in recognition of its work to bring the world into the classroom.

This Award celebrates the achievements of schools that do exceptional work in international education. Fostering an international dimension in the curriculum is at the heart of the British Council's work with schools, so that young people gain the cultural understanding and skills they need for lifework in today's world.

The British Council said that the work carried out at The Rochester Grammar School as part of the International School Award has created a positive ethos linked to developing students' perspectives. A cross-curricular approach has also impacted on implementing a strong MFL element, providing students with challenging learning experiences, many of which are shared projects with international school partners. The commitment of staff teaching at International Baccalaureate level has contributed to delivering a successful learning programme. Enriched opportunities through the international dimension are clearly linked to improving and developing key skills, especially critical thinking, independent learning and collaborative work.

Sir Ciarán Devane, CEO of the British Council, said: "The school's fantastic international work has rightfully earned it this prestigious award. The International School Award is a great chance for schools to demonstrate the important work they're doing to bring the world into their classrooms. Embedding an international dimension in children's education ensures that they are truly global citizens and helps prepare them for successful lives and careers in an increasingly global economy".

The award is now available worldwide in countries such as India, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Lebanon, Cyprus, and Pakistan. Around 5,500 International School Awards have been presented to successful schools in the UK since the scheme began in 1999.

Many congratulations to Mr Willard for his hard work on co-ordinating such an impressive range of work as an International Coordinator.

Mrs Brinklow
Head of School



THE IDES OF MARCH

On Monday 12 March, six students at The Rochester Grammar School took part in a performance of *Julius Caesar: The Ides of March* at The Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury. This performance was in conjunction with The Royal Shakespeare Company's Associate Schools Programme.

Over the past 10 years the Learning and Performance Network at The Royal Shakespeare Company has worked in long term partnership with 507 schools, 11 regional theatres, 1,320 teachers and reached an estimated 690,000 students. The Rochester Grammar School are one of those schools. Working with The Royal Shakespeare Company, and The Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury, gives the school students the opportunity to work with industry experts in a professional theatre environment, gaining detailed knowledge and understanding of some of William Shakespeare's most famous plays.

The Associate Schools Programme builds confidence and skill levels of the teachers in the school through their programme of staff training; establishing teaching pedagogy to embed active approaches in lessons across all key stages; and provides a variety of showcase performance opportunities in the local community, at The Rochester Grammar School, The Marlowe Theatre and The RSC theatres in Stratford Upon Avon.

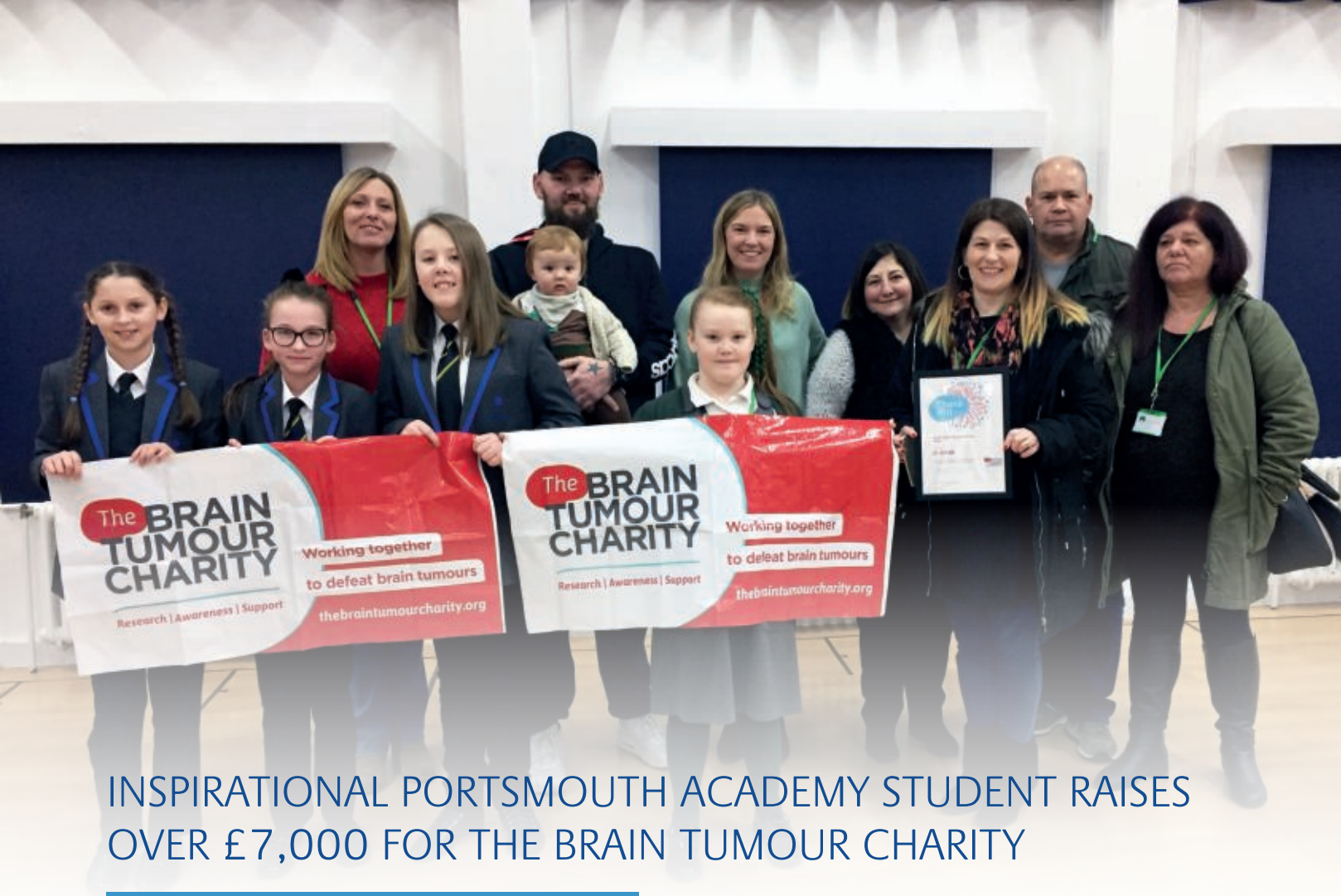
Preparations for this year's performance of *Julius Caesar: The Ides of March* began back in October. Each associate school was allocated a selection of scenes to focus on with key students in their school. Rehearsals took place with both Mr Selby at The Rochester Grammar and The Creative Engagement Manager at The Marlowe Theatre, Paul Ainsworth.

The school's six students taking part in the performance travelled to The Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury, to complete a full technical and dress rehearsal. This saw the students work alongside a variety of industry professionals, including The Marlowe Theatre's costume, stage and technical team. They also performed and worked alongside the other 10 schools in their Associate Schools partnership. They did this, both professionally and confidently.

After the day's rehearsal, the final show took place to an audience of approximately 1,000 people. The Rochester Grammar School achieved strong praise from both staff at The Marlowe Theatre, and from other teachers in The Associate Schools Programme.

The Rochester Grammar school are looking forward to embarking on their next project with the programme, which will see a selection of students perform an abridged version of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* at The Royal Shakespeare Company's theatre in Stratford Upon Avon.





INSPIRATIONAL PORTSMOUTH ACADEMY STUDENT RAISES OVER £7,000 FOR THE BRAIN TUMOUR CHARITY

A Year 7 student at The Portsmouth Academy has won the hearts of students, staff, and members of the local community, after she raised over £7,000 for The Brain Tumour Charity.

Daisy Smith, aged 11, only recently returned to The Portsmouth Academy after winning her own battle against a brain tumour. Resolving to help the charity that helped her, she set out on a 10k sponsored walk in support of its ground-breaking work to defeat brain tumours.

Daisy inspired an incredible 50 of her friends, family, students and staff at the academy to take part in the walk, with others donating generously. She was all smiles as she presented the impressive £7,000 cheque to the charity.

Daisy's sponsored walk started at The Round Tower by Portsmouth Harbour, and finished at the Stacey Community Centre, where participants were treated to a well-deserved spread of tea, coffee and cake.



Natalie Sheppard, Principal of The Portsmouth Academy, said:

Everyone at The Portsmouth Academy is in awe and immensely proud of Daisy for raising such an incredible amount in support of The Brain Tumour Charity's invaluable work.

Daisy has been through a very difficult time, but her unassailable spirit has continued to shine through, and she is a huge inspiration to all of us here at TPA and in the wider community.

I would also like to commend the great generosity of Daisy's friends, family, students and staff at our school, who have once again shown the sense of togetherness and support that defines TPA. ”

ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY

Congratulations to Doug Richards, Gill Deighton and Sam Wingrove for being recognised for their dedication and commitment to the work they do within the Trust and at school level.



TERM 2 WINNER

Doug Richards, Site Manager at Meon Junior School, is recognised for being an incredibly hard working and positive member of the school team.

When asked to deal with an issue, nothing is too much trouble and Doug is always promptly available even when he already has a full work load.

Being given many extensive last minute requests, Doug has never once grumbled and instead he positively actions requests and completes to a high standard.



TERM 3 WINNER

Gill Deighton, HLTA at The Gordon Children's Academy, is recognised for taking on the leadership of lunch duties and organisation of TAs. She has volunteered to be the SLT link between the TAs and SLT.

Gill has led a team of PTFA members in revamping the library and has redesigned and created numerous display boards around the school.

She has taken on all of these extra responsibilities whilst carrying out her main duties as HLTA for Year 2, who have seen significant pupil progress since term 2.

TERM 4 WINNER

Sam Wingrove, NQT at New Horizons Children's Academy, is recognised for demonstrating exceptional drive and commitment to the children in her class.

She has developed key relationships with her children enabling her to ensure that their various needs are consistently met.

She has fully embraced the 'Thinking' tools; skilfully applying them through her practice to develop the children as independent thinkers. She is very reflective; developing and adapting her classroom to create awe and wonder to ignite the children's passion for learning.

Her expectations are very high and as a school we have seen these children go from strength to strength under her direction.



LEGO ROBOTS AT MEON

The children at Meon Junior School have been working with the squad of STEM ambassadors from 170 Naval Air Squadron for the last several months building on a quest to become Britain's robotic champions.

The children at Meon's had already experienced amazing success at the regional First Lego League competition and by doing so, they took a journey to the national finals in Bristol.

Lieutenant Dan Emptage led a team of engineers, based in Portsmouth, to assist the children in developing their Lego robots. The team of children known as the 'Water Warriors' worked on their robots with support from the engineers every Monday evening, building and programming their robots, happily named Boris and Anthea, to tackle a range of tasks including replacing pipes and transporting mock water tanks.

This year's competition theme has been hydrodynamics and the children at Meon's have been learning about water, how it is transported, utilised and disposed of.

This is the third year of winning the regional finals and Jackie Kershaw, IT teacher at Meon Infant School and lead for the 'Water Warriors' said "the Royal Navy's support had given them a real chance of success in Bristol". Although on this occasion winning the national final wasn't to be, they are all proud of the hard work they have put into developing their Lego robots and the successes they have achieved.

“

Lieutenant Dan Emptage RN of 1710 Naval Air Squadron, said:

The kids are absolutely fantastic. I'm so impressed with them. I haven't got children myself but I'm amazed at the level of stuff these guys can achieve. It's been real eye-opening for me.”

“

Victoria Ingles, Meon Junior School Parent, said:

I wanted to express my thanks to all the staff at the school who helped the Meon Junior 'Water Warriors' team compete in the national final of First Lego League.

I know my own daughter enjoyed taking part in the project immensely. It has been great to see her gain confidence in her presentation skills and develop experience of working as part of a team. Most of all, as a direct result of the project, she has developed an interest in engineering and technology which has inspired her to what it might be possible to achieve in the future.”



THINKING SCHOOLS ACADEMY TRUST AWARDED DUKE OF EDINBURGH LICENCE

The Thinking Schools Academy Trust (TSAT) has become one of the first Multi-Academy Trusts in the country to be given a Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) licence – empowering students from its four secondary schools across Medway and Portsmouth to push their personal boundaries, gain new skills, and enhance their CVs.

TSAT was awarded the coveted licence to support the growth of the DofE programme across the whole Trust. It was recognised by the DofE for its ambition to encourage as many students as possible to take part in the world's leading youth achievement award, and for the sense of belonging fostered by the Trust's strong leadership.

This is only the second time that a Multi-Academy Trust has been granted a licence in the South East.

The Trust's four secondary schools in Medway and Portsmouth – The Victory Academy, Rochester Grammar School, Holcombe Grammar School, and The Portsmouth Academy – are all set to benefit from the licence. Philippa Hann, a 15 year-old student at Rochester Grammar School, set an example by going above and beyond the Award requirements – earning an Environmental Champion Award for her efforts.

Other students to gain special praise for their contributions to the community include Isabelle Armstrong, 14, who taught a local Rainbows group about bullying and self-respect, and Esther Harris, 15, who helped at a street dance and musical theatre club.

More than 200 students across the Trust have already enrolled for the three DofE Awards, giving TSAT one of the largest cohorts of DofE participants in Kent.

The awards develop the self-confidence and life skills of students through volunteering, physical activities and expeditions, and one of the challenges sees students completing an 80km expedition over four days, usually held in Dartmoor.



Ben Vickery, DofE Manager for the Thinking Schools Academy Trust, said:

We are absolutely delighted to become one of the first MATs to be awarded a DofE licence, ensuring all of our secondary school students can benefit from the UK's flagship youth achievement programme.

The DofE award is immensely enriching, supporting young people at a formative point in their lives to grow personally and within teams. Crucially, it also offers our young people the opportunity to give back to their communities.

It is fantastic to see such a large number of our students showing enthusiasm for the programme, and I cannot wait to see the wide range of skills and talents that they develop over the coming years.”



Stuart Gardner, Chief Executive of the Thinking Schools Academy Trust, said:

I know from personal experience that the DofE is a fantastic programme for young people and has the power to transform lives.

We are therefore extremely pleased to have been awarded this rare Trust-wide licence, so that all of our secondary school students have the opportunity to participate.

The focus on the development of, and engagement with, essential life skills and habits allows young people to flourish – and we are really excited about seeing our students grow on the programme.”



Alex Wilkes, Operations Officer at The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, said:

We were delighted to award the DofE licence to TSAT, which has stood out for its immense dedication to giving more young people the chance to participate in our world-leading programme. We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with TSAT to extend opportunities for young people.”

THE VICTORY ACADEMY AWARDED ARTSMARK AWARD

The Victory Academy is celebrating becoming one of a select few schools in Medway to win the prestigious Platinum Artsmark Award – held by less than 1% of schools in England.

The Award, given to schools that are “making the arts come alive”, recognises The Victory Academy’s outstanding arts offering. It is awarded by the Government backed Arts Council England, which promotes the performing, visual and literary arts in England.

Arts Council England praised the opportunities available to the academy’s students in the arts, describing the school as an “opinion-former” in arts and culture, leading the way in “making a difference” to its students and stretching them to unlock their creative potential.

It also lauded the school for:

- “Striving for excellence and innovation”
- “Being exciting, inspiring, and engaging”
- And “ensuring a positive and inclusive experience” for its students

The Award gives schools access to “enviable networks of leading cultural organisations”, allowing students at The Victory Academy to enhance their critical and creative thinking, grow in self-confidence, and further their leadership skills. The Artsmark Platinum Award is the highest level of recognition available to schools from Arts Council England.



Mandy Gage, Principal of The Victory Academy, said:

We are delighted to have been awarded the Platinum Artsmark Award by Arts Council England, in recognition of the brilliant opportunities we offer our students in the arts every day.

The arts are part of the very fabric of our school, and we are so proud that our students have the chance to express their creative flair and potential by pursuing their artistic passions at school.

It has been a brilliant few months for us here at The Victory Academy, and we are very excited about our continuing upward journey.”



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The Victory Academy have been extremely lucky to have a number of inspirational speakers visit during International Women's Week, who have discussed their career pathways, shared the secrets of their successes as well as how they have overcome barriers to become the individuals that they are today.

Guests at the academy included:

- Michelle Gregson, Programme Manager, Learning & Participation, Royal Opera House
- Wendy Daws MBE, Artist from Rochester, Awarded BME in the New Year's honours list for her voluntary service to visually impaired people in North Kent
- Winni Jarvis, full time firefighter with the London Fire Brigade and volunteer RNLI since 17 years' old
- Kim White OBE, who works for the Kent Police, was awarded an OBE for work with the gypsy Roma community in Kent. Kim is retiring later this year and is currently in the process of writing her autobiography and brought in a memory board of special events and people that have played a significant part in her career and life.
- Marie Colgan, JCP Schools Advisor for the Department for Work and Pensions, who works closely with schools in Kent and Medway, including The Victory Academy. Marie supports students to make the right decisions with their next steps after leaving school.

The Victory Academy students and staff were inspired by the guest speakers and look forward to working with them all again in the future.



Kim White OBE



Memory Board



From left to right:
Mrs Villalta, Vice Principal at The Victory Academy,
Wendy Daws, Winni Jarvis, Michelle Gregson,
Mrs Hryniewicz, Director of Sixth Form at The Victory Academy

'Tidy Schools' Winners

Congratulations to Meon Junior School who has won the junior category 'Tidy Schools' competition, run by Portsmouth City Council.

They have received a splendid trophy and certificate in a glass mounted casing which was awarded by the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth.





COLLABORATION TO DELIVER NEW STATE-OF-THE-ART PRIMARY SCHOOL FACILITIES

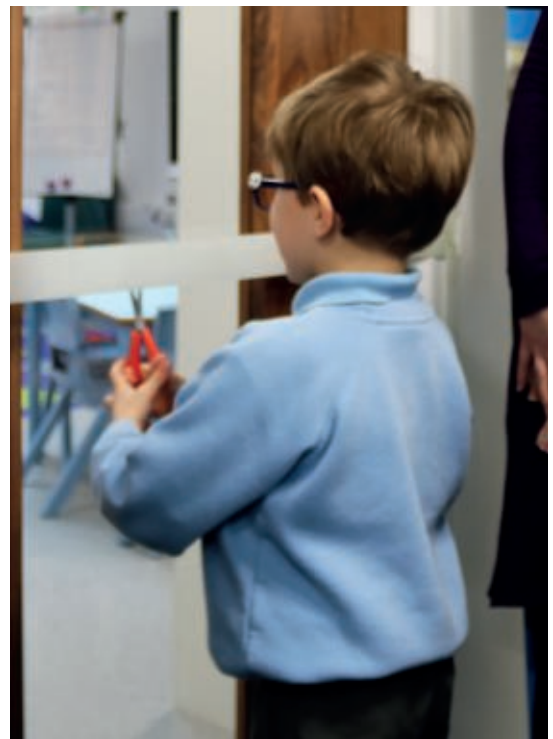
A successful collaboration between our Trust and Portsmouth City Council has culminated in the grand opening of sparkling new facilities at Moorings Way Infant School – part of the popular school’s plans to meet growing demand from parents.

Pupils and staff at the school, in Southsea, celebrated the launch of modernised classrooms and a smart new library in the company of VIP guests, including the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth, Councillor Ken Ellcome.

Moorings Way Infant School has received backing from Portsmouth City Council to become a two-form entry school, which would open up entry to 60 pupils per year, subject to a formal consultation.

At the launch event, pupils cut ribbons in front of each new classroom, and performed a range of songs to guests, who also included former headteachers from the school and Trust.

Working with Portsmouth City Council last year, we also secured £5.3m of funding for The Portsmouth Academy, which will result in a new three storey building featuring new classrooms, music facilities, a drama studio, and a whole floor devoted to Art class.





“

Sonia Nickerson, Headteacher of Moorings Way Infant School, said:

Our grand opening event was a great way to showcase the successful collaboration that has taken place between TSAT and Portsmouth City Council.

We are delighted to have such modern, state-of-the-art facilities at our school, providing our pupils with the best possible environment to learn and achieve their potential.

It is an extremely exciting time for us as we look forward to becoming a larger school able to meet rising demand from parents, and we are looking forward to continuing our upward journey in our new home.”

“

Stuart Gardner, Chief Executive of the Thinking Schools Academy Trust, said:

We have really enjoyed working with Portsmouth City Council on another exciting project, to build these very impressive facilities at the popular Moorings Way Infant School.

The redevelopment will have tremendous benefits for pupils throughout the school as it looks to expand, enabling access to the finest classrooms and extra-curricular facilities.

We are looking forward to building on our great relationship with Portsmouth City Council over the coming months and years, at what is a time of great optimism for the Trust.”

“

Councillor Hannah Hockaday, Portsmouth City Council's cabinet member for education, said:

Education is one of the council's main priorities, and our work with TSAT to build brand new facilities at Moorings Way Infant School shows our commitment to make sure every child receives a high quality education.

We are delighted to have worked with TSAT again to further this aim and we look forward to seeing Moorings Way Infant School go from strength to strength in its new home.”



REGIONAL SCHOOLS COMMISSIONER VISITS “TRANSFORMED” VICTORY ACADEMY

Students and staff at The Victory Academy welcomed their Regional Schools Commissioner Dominic Herrington, to witness the school’s brilliant transformation under the Thinking Schools Academy Trust.

The Academy recently celebrated a brilliant hat-trick of achievements – after it achieved record GCSE results, was ranked the top non-selective school in Medway by the Department for Education (DfE), and was rated Good by Ofsted within a few months.

Mr Herrington, who oversees academies in South-East England and South London, hailed the “tremendous progress” at the school after touring its impressive facilities, taking part in an interactive Q&A session with students, and meeting with senior leaders from the school and Trust.

The visit comes shortly after our Trust was last month ranked the best multi-academy trust (MAT) in the country for the performance of its secondary schools.

The Academy has made a remarkable turnaround since we became its sponsor and Mandy Gage became Principal just over two years ago. At the time the school, then called Bishop of Rochester Academy, had disappointing results and was rated ‘Requires Improvement’ by Ofsted.

The DfE now recognises the school as “above average” nationally, for adding on average almost a third of a GCSE grade per student.



Mandy Gage, Principal of The Victory Academy, said:

It was a pleasure to welcome Regional Schools Commissioner Dominic Herrington to our school, to showcase the excellent teaching and vibrant atmosphere in our classrooms which have propelled our rapid transformation.

We were proud to host Mr Herrington just after TSAT was ranked best in the country for the performance of its secondary schools, demonstrating the effectiveness of the Thinking Schools approach which underlies our recent successes.

We are on a really exciting journey, and look forward to continuing to go from strength to strength over the coming months and years.”



Dominic Herrington, Regional Schools Commissioner for South-East England and South London, said:

I very much enjoyed visiting The Victory Academy in Chatham, and the opportunity to witness first-hand the transformation that the school has achieved since it joined the Thinking Schools Academy Trust.

It was fantastic to see the tremendous progress made, and meet the school’s articulate and ambitious students. I look forward to working with The Victory Academy over the coming years, as it continues to build on its success.”

THRILLER CHOREOGRAPHER SEES GREAT POTENTIAL

The Victory Academy continue to demonstrate their dancing prowess as a group of students have taken on dance troupes to become winners of this years 'Shakeaway Dance Troupe Competition'.

The students performed and recorded their eerie music video at The Chatham Dockyard, that has been used in many films and series including *Call The Midwife*, *Victoria and Abdul*, *The Crown* and *Les Misérables*.

The students worked incredibly hard on creating an intense performance, by taking on board the characterisation and visual appearance of 'zombie pirates'.

Shakeaway thanked the dance troupe for their entry and involvement in the competition which had 200 schools and colleges taking part. Gary Lloyd, Director of Choreography of Thriller said "their production and execution impressed".

The winning dance troupe will receive a workshop with the 'Thriller' cast and tickets to see the show; £500 donation from Shakeaway awarded to the dance department and Shakedown will donate £1 per dance troupe (100% fat free frozen yoghurt) milkshake sold in their Rochester store.

“

Gary Lloyd, Director and Choreographer of Thriller, said:

Though it was a pleasure to judge each of the four finalists, I have selected The Victory Academy as winner of the Shakeaway Dance Troupe competition. Their production and execution impressed me – they've great potential!”

“

Sasha Sherwood, Head of Year 8 and Teacher of Dance, said:

I am so incredibly proud of the students, having seen them grow into brilliant performers and whatever the challenge, they always throw themselves into it fully.

We have been very lucky to have the support of The Historic Dockyard to film their performance. I have tutored many of the students since 2013 and some have only been dancing for 18 months.

It's amazing to see the smiles on their faces and for them to finally believe in themselves and that they really can achieve anything they put their minds to.”

“

Mandy Gage, Principal at The Victory Academy, said:

Having recently been awarded Artsmark Platinum for our commitment to cultural entitlement, I am delighted and immensely proud that the staff and students have achieved this victory.

This is testament to the dedications, talents and creativity of our performers and their choreographer, Miss Sherwood.

Arts participation continues to be of key importance at the academy, and I am excited for our further successes.”



SPORT RELIEF CYCLE-MANIA

Cycleathon team triumph in their mission to complete a staggering 102 miles, raising over £400 for Sport Relief.

Staff from the Thinking Schools Academy Trust and surrounding Trust schools took part in a gruelling '8 Hour Cycleathon' on two gym bikes recently, to raise funds for the deserving Sport Relief charity.

The passionate team of 20, having waited weeks in anticipation of the event, took their places on two Thinking Fitness gym bikes that were positioned in the breath-taking views of the Trust's finance office in Medway. Each putting in an Olympian performance for 20 minutes, followed by a second bout for several to make up the time difference over the 8 hours.

Jelly legs, sweat and peculiar facial expressions took shape during the charity event, but not one person groaned and applause filled the room every time a team member approached their final seconds.

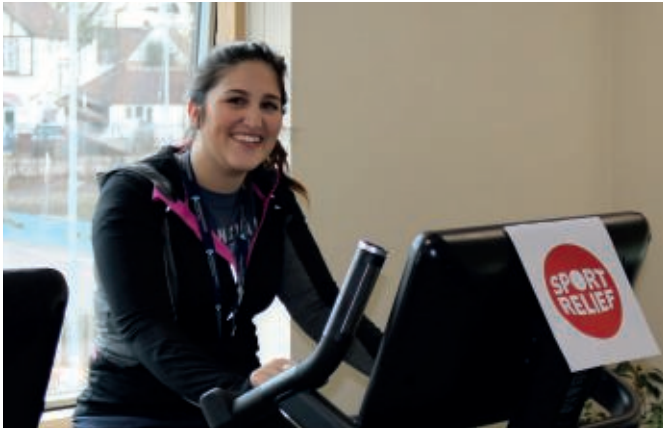
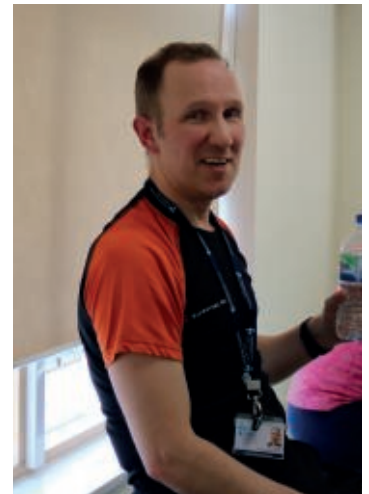
Racing through the miles, the Portsmouth hub colleagues praised the Medway team for their achievements. Nick O'Donoghue, one of the dedicated cycling team, announced that they were actually on their way to Meon Junior School and so instead of a target of 100 miles, they dug deep to make it 102 miles.

Little did the team know that the one they gave the title of 'Mr Motivator' to, would in fact become overall champion and rightful title holder of 'The Longest Distance Cycled'.

The buzz of excitement during the day, comradery and team support, shone brightly and although many were saddle sore, the day was a great success and many more like it will be planned for the future.

The 'Cycleathon' team and Trust would like to thank everyone who donated to Sport Relief and if you would like to show your support, you can still donate at <https://www.justgiving.com/TSAT>







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