

OUR TRUST

CHILDREN FIRST, ASPIRE, CHALLENGE, ACHIEVE



THINKING
SCHOOLS
ACADEMY TRUST

EASTER 2019 | ISSUE 9

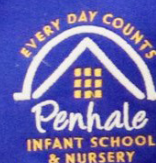


COMIC RELIEF

HOLCOMBE WIDER
SPORTING SUCCESS

THINKING FITNESS AND
YOU CAN PARTNERSHIP

STEPHEN MORGAN MP VISITS
PORTSMOUTH SCHOOLS



TRANSFORMING LIFE CHANCES



WELCOME MESSAGE FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Welcome to our Easter 2019 edition of Our Trust. As you will see in the following pages this term has been full of amazing activities in our schools.

This term I have had the pleasure of spending a lot of time working with Year 6 at Isambard Brunel Junior School supporting them with their Maths. I was delighted to hear that the students have made significant improvements in their Maths assessments at the end of term – well done to the students and the staff for all their hard work.

Spending time with the students has reinvigorated my passion for understanding how students learn and has made me consider the difference between teaching for understanding and teaching for long term knowledge retention. This is a hot topic as we enter into the public examination season next term as well as being a feature of the new Ofsted framework. The opportunity for us to discuss and implement teaching methods to promote knowledge retention is very exciting within a Trust dedicated to the use of metacognition in the classroom. I am looking forward to seeing lessons involving mnemonics, acrostics and memory keys to name but a few of the memory tools that support long term knowledge acquisition in the future.

Finally, I would like to thank Jasmin, John and the marketing team for their help with my new blog and my very first vlog. These can be found by clicking on the CEO blog button on our Trust's homepage.

Stuart Gardner

Stuart Gardner, MSc, NPQH, NLE
Chief Executive Officer

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Thank you to the Portsmouth Music Hub for the use of their photograph on our front cover.



THINKING FITNESS SUPPORTS YOUNG PEOPLE WITH CANCER

Thinking Fitness, a community gym run by our Trust, has launched a new partnership with local cancer charity YouCan.

Thinking Fitness and YouCan have teamed up to offer members of the local community who have been diagnosed with cancer a comprehensive, free-of-charge, four to six-week fitness plan at the community gym.

YouCan offers support and guidance for young people in South East England and London, up to the age of 35, whose lives have been impacted by cancer.

The partnership comes as Thinking Fitness celebrates reaching the 500-member milestone – creating a turnover of nearly £100,000 per year, money that is invested back into the local community through the provision of state-of-the-art equipment and profits reinvested into the Trust's schools, including Holcombe Grammar School, which is where the gym is situated.

The collaboration between Thinking Fitness and YouCan builds on numerous studies which have shown that exercise can be beneficial to the mental and physical wellbeing of people encountering illness or trauma. In line with Thinking Fitness' ethos of providing a friendly and accessible place for all in the community to exercise, the launch day seeks to raise awareness of the offer within the local community.

The Mayor of Medway, Steve Iles, attended the launch day, alongside other guests from the community.



Nick Jobson, Sports Centre Manager and Personal Trainer at Thinking Fitness, said:

“I am delighted that Thinking Fitness is working in partnership with YouCan on this hugely important cause.

“YouCan undertake incredibly valuable work for young people with cancer across the South East, and we want to ensure we are playing our part and reaching as many members of our local community as possible.

“A friendly environment and community focus is integral to our gym, and we are keen to provide a space for all people to feel comfortable and enjoy exercising, whether they've been training for years or are just beginning their journey.

“Working with YouCan fits right into our philosophy, and as we hit the latest member milestone too, we are all very much looking forward to going from being a member of the community to a pillar of the community.”



Stuart Gardner, CEO of the Thinking Schools Academy Trust, said:

“I am very proud of the partnership between Thinking Fitness and YouCan, and know that the team are all very keen to work even more closely with the community, especially on such an important cause.

“I would also like to congratulate the team for their brilliant work in achieving the 500-member milestone, helping to benefit both the users of the gym and our students and staff.”



Natalie Tegg, Head of Fundraising for YouCan, said:

“YouCan are delighted to have the opportunity to work in partnership with Thinking Fitness. The charity supports young people whose lives have been impacted by cancer and provide a bespoke exercise programme as part of cancer rehabilitation.

“Having access to this support and the great facilities at Thinking Fitness will ensure young adults with cancer in the local community can improve their fitness levels and ultimately their wellbeing greatly.”



HOLCOMBE SWIMMING SUCCESS WITH 7 MEDALS

Ethan Willard, Year 7 pupil from Holcombe Grammar School for boys, has competed in the Black Lion Open Development Gala. This was held at Medway Park Leisure Centre on Saturday 2nd March. Swimmers from across Kent swimming clubs participated in events covering all four strokes and distances from 50 metres to the 100 metres, along with the 100 metre Individual Medley. Ethan's fantastic swimming meant he beat his personal best in all nine of the events he entered, and achieved a large array of medals: Three golds, two silvers, two bronze and two fifth places in his age group!

Ethan says: "I have been swimming with the club for about 18 months and since we got our new coach, Martin, back in January my swimming has improved a lot. To the extent that I knocked over 11 seconds off my previous 100 metre Individual Medley time, 7 seconds off my 100 metre breaststroke and 5 seconds off my 50 metre backstroke. I train three to four nights a week, doing one and a half hour sessions. I really enjoy training and competing and I am so pleased to have come away with nine medals and nine personal bests. It makes all the hard work worthwhile."



Jack, also in Year 7, recently competed at the Kent Swimming Championships. His front crawl swim time placed him ninth in the country! This achievement is simply spectacular. Here is what Jack said: "This weekend I participated in the Kent Swimming Championships 2019. This is where all of the top swimmers in Kent come together to compete against each other. I made the final for every race — this means that I am in the top eight in Kent for every race I swam at the weekend. In the final of the 50 metre front crawl, I swam a personal best time of 29.94 seconds. This placed me third in Kent. That time puts me ninth in Great Britain."

Jack said his swimming journey "All started two years ago, when I was chosen to represent my primary school at the Mini Youth Games Gala held at Medway Park. Whilst there, just after I had swum, the head coach from Black Lion approached me and asked me to attend a trial the next day. Six weeks after that I competed in my first gala at Mote Park in Maidstone. I joined the Bronze Squad and moved through the squads quickly. I train 5-6 times and twice a week I have gym and strength conditioning too. I compete in 1-2 galas a month, depending on which competitions are happening."

Jack went on to say: "This time last year I qualified to swim at the Kent County Championships 2018 at the London Aquatic Centre and Crystal Palace. I think I had five or so different events. During the last year, I have gone from strength to strength and for the 2019 Kent Championships I have qualified for sixteen events. My ambition is to enter the Olympics and win a gold medal in 2024 or 2028!"

Huge congratulations to both Ethan and Jack!



HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT VISIT FOR HOLCOMBE PUPIL

Tyler Cook, Year 11, was lucky enough to be invited to visit the Houses of Parliament last week. Here is what Tyler said about his day in Westminster.

“As a member of the local Conservative Party, I had the privilege of being invited to a free tour of the Houses of Parliament and a talk with Kelly Tolhurst, MP for Rochester and Strood, Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Corporate Responsibility. I learnt a lot about current affairs on both a party level and the national level during Kelly’s talk and Q&A session, including many things the party are doing but are not typically talked about in the media. I learned a lot about work being done for workers’ rights, small businesses and young people, especially apprenticeships programmes. An issue close to me due to the fact I want to go through the paralegal and solicitor apprenticeships post 16. I got a unique insight into Brexit, directly from a Member of Parliament and Minister who has been on both sides of the Brexit debate and has had a lot of first-hand experience dealing with Europe through her role.

“The tour itself was much less about current affairs and more about the history of Parliament and how it runs. The tour started in Westminster Hall. We learnt about the beginnings of the Houses of Parliament and the different rulers that oversaw the construction of the different buildings. Next, we entered the House of Commons, following the pathway an MP would take if they wanted to vote ‘no’ on a bill. We learnt a lot about the smaller details and traditions that have been going on for centuries and also many other incidents.

“One of the most notable things about the Commons Chamber is it is very small, much smaller than it seems on TV. When the chamber was destroyed in WWII, many architects suggested it should be built bigger but Churchill wanted to keep the dimensions similar. He wanted a rectangular chamber (contrary to most of Europe which had adopted semi-circular parliaments) because he wanted to face his enemy, not see them over his shoulder. He also wanted to keep it small to preserve the intimacy of Commons; he wanted his enemies close. Next, we went to the Queen’s Chambers and followed the route she would take on the state opening of Parliament and finally, we went through the House of Lords. The House of Lords does not typically make it to the news as often but it was still very interesting learning about the differences in the structure, power and politics of the two Chambers.”

Picture: Tyler Cook with Kelly Tolhurst MP in Westminster Hall.



YOUTH SPEAKS SUCCESS

Beatrice Cristovici, Hamsha Safi and Anna Danso-Amoako took part in the Portsmouth & Southsea Rotary Club’s Youth Speaks competition, hosted at Portsmouth High School. The girls did fantastically, delivering their speech on Human Rights in the 21st Century whilst navigating their way through the confusing pomp and ceremony of the occasion.

We are very proud of their achievements, coming second in their age group. Beatrice shone, winning ‘Best Chairperson’ overall out of all the team present. Hamsha showed a great level of resilience to get through her speech.



PORTSMOUTH MUSIC FESTIVAL - INFANT VOICES

Children from our Portsmouth infant schools have been rehearsing for the music festival at the Guildhall, as you can see below, many schools from our Trust attended the rehearsals to sing. Penhale Infant School and Meredith Infant School were selected through an auditioning process to do a sola performance. School pupils dressed up as fairy tale characters and everyone was very excited as they were going to sing on the stage with other choirs from all over Portsmouth.



Moorings Way Infant School



Meon Infant School



Meredith Infant School

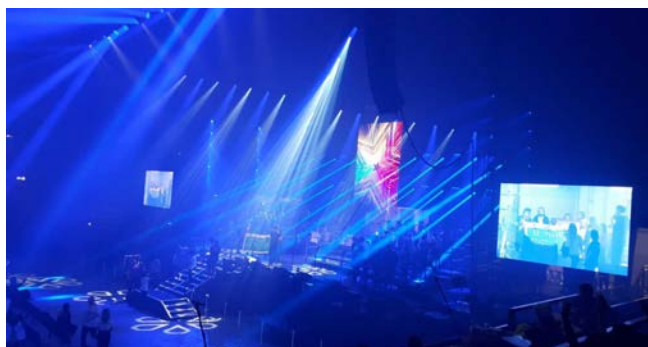


Penhale Infant School

VOICE IN A MILLION

Children from the Victory Academy, Cedar Children's Academy and Gordon Children's Academy took part in the 10th Anniversary of Voice in a Million. This event promotes mass group singing from all over the country and also raises money for Adoption UK.

Pupils from all schools behaved brilliantly and sang beautifully. It was an amazing experience for the children to have performed at such an iconic venue.



Cedar Children's Academy



The Victory Academy



TRUST-WIDE TAG RUGBY

The TSAT tag rugby tournament hosted by The Gordon Children’s Academy went off without a hitch! It was great to see children from across the Trust working collaboratively to learn the game of tag-rugby. With all the schools working hard to win, Gordon’s took first place for both years 5 and 6.

Things are looking very promising for Mr McKinlay’s year 6 team at Gordon’s and we wish them all the best in the upcoming Mini Youth Games, as we do all schools that take part in sporting events.



MEON JUNIOR FOOTBALL CUP WINNERS

Meon Junior Year 5 boys played in the ‘U10 Portsmouth Cup’ at Goals on 5th March and through determination they won the cup.

They went through all their heats and beat Westover in the semi-finals on penalties to go through to the final. They then played the team from Northern Parade and beat them 1:0 in the finals to win the cup.

Meon Junior U11 girls won the Portsmouth Girls U11 Football Cup! They successfully won six straight matches from group stages to the knock out phases, whilst not conceding one goal. They defeated Wimborne Juniors School 2-0 in the final.

Team behaviour, team spirit and togetherness was priceless.

Well done to both teams.



DETERMINED TO BE A 2024 PARALYMPIAN

Goodwin Academy have celebrated one of their Year 7 pupils, an incredible young person who they have featured at their school.

Alexander Moss, better known to peers and staff as 'Alex', is a sociable and affectionate young person who enjoys most activities and is determinedly independent in his outlook.

Alex was born with Spina Bifida, this affects the motor impairment of his legs and lower part of his spinal column. He uses a self-propelling wheelchair independently to cover any distances.

Life for Alex is sometimes tough; having faced many obstacles and difficult challenges, he takes this all in his stride in moving forwards with determination. Alex is an inspiring and determined role model who does not like a fuss and does not allow the restrictions of his physical needs to hold him back. He shows good awareness of himself in the context of his life, family and school. Alex is currently involved in Archery training with the paralympic coaches at the Stoke Mandeville Stadium with high hopes of competing in the 2024 Paralympics.

Alex's family believed they had a perfect candidate after recently contacting a television programme in search of inspirational young people. December 2018 seemed truly amazing when the family received news that Alex had been selected to appear on the TV programme. It was only a matter of time before he was making his way to a surprise location to meet with TV presenter Jeremy Kyle. This fabulous experience offered many other opportunities for Alex such as, Jeremy escorting Alex to the Paralympics Archery Training Centre at Lilleshall where he met two times Olympic Gold Medallist, Jess Stratton. Alex had an amazing time training with Jess and learning new skills.

In January 2019, Alex travelled to the Jeremy Kyle recording Studios where he reflected on his achievements, from the great surprises to the brilliant celebrations. The TV programme scheduled for broadcast later this year is something we all look forward to.

Alex is a true inspiration to everyone and his family, friends, and staff at Goodwin Academy are all so very proud of him.

CYCLING TO SUCCESS

On the 8th February, Goodwin Academy student Lance Childs, travelled to Belgium to cycle with a Dutch youth team, Ridley-Hermans (formally Cervelo-Goodzo).

The weekend was successful and enjoyed by all. Lance commented "Every second of the trip was enjoyable and all the riders made me feel like I'd known them for years."

Since his return, the team have contacted him and asked him to ride for them in Belgium and France this year. He hopes to be able to fit these around the National races he'll be doing here in the UK, as well as studying for his GCSE's.

Further success arrives for Lance as he's also been offered a place at The Oaklands Cycling Academy. With this as an option for him, he's certainly on the right path to make it as a professional rider, something he's set his sights on.

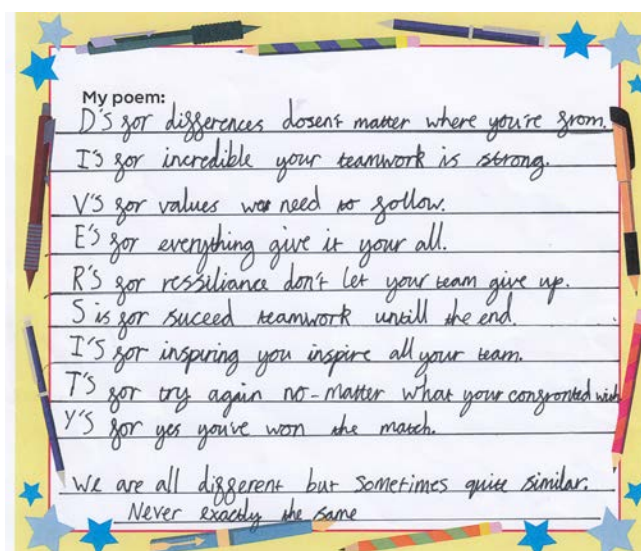
Lance has expressed his gratitude to his family for their continued support and to Goodwin Academy for allowing him to travel over the Friday in order to experience this unique opportunity.





POMPEY IN THE COMMUNITY

A poetry competition organised by 'Pompey in the Community' has been won by Rose Liddicott from Meon Junior School. To celebrate her success, Rose received a medal and a signed book bag with all the Pompey players signatures on it. The book bag was also filled with poetry books for the school. Congratulations to Rose for winning the poetry competition.



WELL DONE TO THE PERFORMERS AND ORGANISERS OF THE FLAIR AT ROCHESTER GRAMMAR SCHOOL FOR RAISING OVER £5795 FOR THE KENT SURREY AND SUSSEX AIR AMBULANCE



CEDAR HELPERS

Cedar Children’s Academy have selected 20 KS2 pupils have been selected to be Cedar Helpers. In the first week of Term 4, a job advert was published around the school outlining the role and pupils were invited to apply through completing an application form. Over 70 pupils applied for what was originally going to be 12 roles. The applications were reviewed and the shortlisted pupils were invited to an interview with Miss McNally to ensure they would be committed to the role.

Pupils complete one of 5 key jobs as part of the lunchtime duties each day and these jobs are rotated weekly. Jobs include helping on the KS1 playground and dining hall and the ‘ Cedar Clean Up Crew’ litter picking and aim to develop children’s understanding of their role in making the school community successful. Their interactions with younger pupils and other adults so far has been excellent and they are taking great pride in their role.

Completing the role well each week means they earn 10 Cedars (the school’s own currency) but they are aware that if they do not do so well their pay may be docked! If they earn 40 Cedars by the end of term, they will be invited to a treat afternoon.



OPEN ARTS

All Faiths Children’s Academy Treetops pupils have taken part in an Open Arts project jointly with the resident artists at Sun Pier House in Chatham. This was the culmination of a weekly project the children have been participating in at school. The focus of the sessions involved our deaf pupils and a hearing friend discussing identity and then representing themselves using a range of media.



HOLCOMBE'S OUTSTANDING SPORTING SUCCESS

Holcombe Grammar School pupils have secured their place at the Handball Southern Regional Finals by triumphing at the U13 Kent schools Handball Tournament.

Year 8 students from the school maintained their outstanding record of being undefeated as they won 2 of the 3 games played, before drawing in their final match.

Leo Nordkvist and Elisha Babayemi displayed their impressive defence skills particularly against the Dover Grammar Schools for Boys team. Brent Varrall and Matthew Olorunlogbun also demonstrated strong goal scoring techniques throughout the matches.

Following the group stages, teams faced the tense knock-out rounds. Holcombe Grammar triumphed against Canterbury High School, proven their ability to work as a team as they progressed into the final with a 2-1 victory!

The team's final opponent was the Harvey Grammar School, with Amon Ra-Mesoirisa's slick dribbling skills opening up opportunities for his team mates to fire many points to secure their place in the Handball Southern Regional Finals!

The Holcombe team displayed great maturity and team spirit throughout the competition.



Mandy Gage, Executive Principal, Holcombe Grammar School, said:

"I am absolutely thrilled with the team's win and progression into the Southern Regional finals. Sport is a huge part of our identity at Holcombe Grammar School. I am so proud to see the school leading the way in the Medway and Kent area."

Andrew Nanson, PE Teacher and Team Coach, said:

"The boys involved have worked hard both in lessons and at clubs to improve their skills. They have represented the school impeccably and deserve every inch of this success. The school and the PE department wish them the best of luck at the Regional Finals in May."

The team's hard work and persistence, has lead the boys to win two handball competitions in a row, to advance to the Southern Region Finals to play on behalf of Kent. The pupils are a great exemplar for the school with both their attitude and skills.

VICTORY BASKETBALL FINAL

The Year 7 boys basketball team at The Victory Academy are through to the Medway Basketball final. Recently beating Rainham Mark 10-9 in the semi-finals. Their journey of success has also included beating Brompton Academy and Greenacre. They have been celebrating as if they had won the World Cup.



WORLD BOOK DAY

International World Book day saw an array of fantastic characters and costumes descend on our schools. One child told our Head of School at Moorings Way that it was the “best day of his life”. It’s so great to hear how much the children enjoyed the day.

The love of books and literary characters is something we encourage our pupils to grasp a wider understanding of. It’s always good to see the popularity of the day and effort that pupils and parents make, which you’ll see from the photos below.

At Gordon’s a Victorian theme was pursued and it was particularly impressive that the Year 6 children came to school as suffragettes, using their learning from a topic earlier in the year. Holcombe Grammar School visited their local library and listened to extracts from Young Adult novels, including ‘Young Sherlock’, funny poems and some disgusting facts that the boys loved. They also took the opportunity to browse the shelves and taking time out to have a read.



The Gordon Children’s Academy



The Gordon Children’s Academy



All Faiths Children’s Academy



All Faiths Children’s Academy



Cedar Children’s Academy



Cedar Children’s Academy



Meon Infant School



Moorings Way Infant School



New Horizons Children's Academy



Moorings Way infant School



New Horizons Children's Academy



Rochester Grammar School



Newbridge Junior School



Penhale Infant School

AUTHORS INSPIRE PUPILS

Alex Bell has visited children in Year 5/6 at Meon Junior today. The children enjoyed a presentation by Alex Bell, where she discussed how she writes and where she gets her inspiration for her books from. The children were able to ask her questions and also had an opportunity to purchase one of her books which she personally signed for them.

“As part of All Faiths Children’s Academy Reading week, they invited the Author Ian MacDonald in to hold writing workshops with Years R-6 on Monday 14 January. Each phase focused on one of three of his best sellers: Mrs Wrelton’s Dinosaur (Yr1&2), Magut the Alien (Yr3&4) and The Mummy’s Finger (Yr5&6).

Ian helped the children to draw images in their mind to plan their own stories and used visual mapping to record their ideas. The children learnt about a variety of devices to engage the reader including ‘keeping the reader guessing by withholding information’ and using ‘short, sharp sentences to create pace and tension’.



Alex Bell with Meon Junior pupils



Ian MacDonald with All Faiths pupils

MEON JUNIOR SCHOOL SAY BONJOUR TO THE PORTSMOUTH ACADEMY

Year 10 students recently went to Meon Junior School to support them with their French day. The girls taught French to 4 Year 6 classes for 2 hours. They were amazing and real ambassadors to our school.

Staff at Meon Junior School said:

“I just wanted to email and say thank you to you and your girls again. The lesson they prepared and delivered was excellent, well thought out and engaging. It was pitched perfectly and I can’t wait to try out some of the ideas you’ve left with us.

“The children said the lessons were amazing, that they hadn’t realised French could be so fun and asked when you would be back again!”



WELLBEING

During the last two terms we have continued to see our wellbeing initiative being implemented in our schools. Term 3 was the 'Being Active' initiative and it was great to hear about how our schools are getting involved.

- All Faiths have started a staff running club and signed up to yoga sessions together.
- Cedar have been tracking their average steps. This term they have walked the length of the river Nile (6,649km), 10 times! They have introduced the Cedar mile where children and staff run a mile three times a week.
- Gordons have been using their keep fit and 'Be Active' videos to dance and exercise with the pupils.
- Holcombe have produced a wellbeing pamphlet, introduced a step challenge and launched a pre-order lunch service to allow staff to ensure that they can easily grab their healthy options on the go.
- Newbridge have set up a dog walking/walking for pleasure weekend club.
- The Central Team have started a weekly badminton club.
- The Portsmouth Academy are continuing their successful 'Wellbeing Wednesdays.'

Our current wellbeing initiative is 'Take Notice' and this time of year is a great opportunity to notice all of the changes going on around us as the seasons change.

THINKING YOU

Wheel of Well-being



NEWBRIDGE WELCOMES LORD MAYOR

Year 3 children at Newbridge Junior School welcomed the Lord Mayor to their school, where they presented all of their home learning projects on their topic 'Presenting Portsmouth'. The Lord Mayor visited each class and answered their questions which ranged in everything from "Are you rich?" to "How old are you?".



MULTI-SKILLS COMPETITION

The Gordon Children’s Academy played host to the best athletes from Years 3 and 4 across the Trust’s Medway Primary schools this January, for the annual ‘TSAT Multi-skills’ competition. Pupils from Cedar Children’s Academy, New Horizons Children’s Academy, All Faiths Children’s Academy and Gordon Children’s Academy took part in the competitive but fun afternoon.

The afternoon was a huge success, with all children participating demonstrating a multitude of ‘Thinking Habits’; particularly persistence and cooperation. Year 5 pupils at Gordon Children’s Academy managed the scoring for each event and were all outstanding examples for the Academy. The skills testing included throwing, running and jumping with obstacles.

Kim Bolden, Teacher at All Faiths Children’s Academy and organiser of the annual event said: “All children showed incredible sportsmanship and worked interdependently to ensure they collaborated well for each task”.

Each school succeeded in their own right throughout the afternoon and all came extremely close to winning. The final saw Gordon Children’s Academy win in both the Year 3 and Year 4 champions.

Congratulations to all of the pupils who took part in the event and huge congratulations to Gordon who hold the title for 2019!



READY STEADY COOK ROADSHOW

New Horizons Children’s Academy children have been learning about food recently when the Chartwells team visited and set up two team stations, so students and staff could compete against each other to cook a meal each ‘live’ in front of a live audience.

The workshop taught the children about healthy eating and how to make healthy meals from scratch at home in less than 15 minutes.





THE CARBON FOOTPRINT

The Victory Academy Year 7s have been working on projects to reduce their carbon footprint. As part of this, some students created models to showcase the issues of climate change and how we can reduce our carbon footprint.

One student, for example, donated clothes to a children’s home and women’s refuge to reduce the impact of clothing manufacturing. Another student recycled a glass bulb and created a solar panel light to demonstrate how alternative energy can be used on a small scale. When summarising her project, the Year 7 wrote “When doing this project, I have come to realise that reducing our carbon footprint is important for the future of mankind”. Many students have spoken about changes they have made to their lifestyles to mitigate climate change on an independent level.



PCC RECYCLING SUPERSTARS

Meon Junior School entered Portsmouth City Council’s ‘Recycling Superstars’ competition in 2018 and have received a certificate for their submission. The school submitted their recycling project and the council were very impressed. The school received a ‘Highly Commended’ certificate.



STEPHEN MORGAN MP VISITS MEON JUNIOR SCHOOL

Meon Junior School were thrilled to welcome Portsmouth South MP, Stephen Morgan, last week when he visited the school in Shelford Road, Southsea.

Stephen was given an informative tour of the school by the House Captains, taking in all the facilities and gaining an understanding of the schools cognitive thinking approach. As part of The Thinking Schools Academy Trust pupils are supported to develop 'thinking skills', which help them shape their own cognitive habits to improve learning.

After the tour Stephen spoke to the school in an assembly, giving the children an excellent opportunity to discover what MP's do in parliament and how they represent their community. The children were then given a chance to ask Stephen questions where he faced a variety of topics including Brexit.



Stephen Morgan MP, said:

"It was a pleasure to visit Meon Junior School and join their assembly, meet teachers and pupils and hear about some of the issues that are important to them.

"Going into local schools is really important to me and with our city's schools set to lose £3.7 million under this government, my 'Portsmouth Against School Cuts' campaign continues to be a priority.

"I'd like to thank Mrs Paine and the team for inviting me in, it was great to see so many pupils passionate about politics and I definitely met a few potential future MP's!"

Sara Paine, Principle of Meon Junior School, said:

"The visit inspired lots of children to voice that they would like to be Prime Minister in the future."



A GOLDEN TRIUMPH AT THE VICTORY ACADEMY

The department of mathematics at The Victory Academy are very proud of their pupils who have performed very well in the National Level Mathematics Competition.

Leighlou Palmer, a Year 9 pupil, picked up a Silver medal for the title of 'Best in Year'. Year 10 and 11 pupils held their own with Mollie Treebywheeler, Riley Nicholls and Carrie Revell earning gold and also qualified for the next level national competition Intermediate Mathematics Olympiad, with Reshone Mason Folkes taking Bronze.

David Hoxhaj, a Year 11 pupil, won 'Best in Year', holding the same triumphant title with Leighlou and Mollie. He has also qualified for the next level intermediate competition. Other Year 11 pupils gaining recognition for their achievements and awarded Bronze were Harry Bunyan, Rachel Gabriel and Caitlin Hope. Silver was awarded to Lucy Martin and Arina Grosu with Sinthuya Theivasothy taking Gold.

Over 80,000 pupils from across the UK returned scripts for the Intermediate Maths Challenge with the top 10% receiving a gold certificate, the next 20% silver and the next 30% bronze.

The Intermediate Mathematics Challenge is run by the United Kingdom Mathematics Trust and is supported by the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries. It is aimed at those in Years 9, 10 and 11.

NEWBRIDGE JUNIOR WELCOME BACK THEIR LOCAL MP, A FORMER PUPIL

Newbridge Junior School had a fantastic end to their half term when former pupil of the school Portsmouth South MP, Stephen Morgan, visited.

Stephen joined the school assembly where he spoke to the children about his role as an MP, what he does in parliament and the work he is able to do for the community where he grew up. The school council members then gave Stephen a tour of his old school allowing him to see how it has changed over the years, including becoming part of the Thinking Schools Academy Trust and how their approach to the teaching and learning of Thinking Skills has been incorporated in to the school day.

The tour was followed by a Q&A session, with children were able to ask a range of questions.



Stephen Morgan MP, said:

“It was a real pleasure to visit Newbridge Junior School recently. I always enjoy spending time in schools in my constituency, but a visit to Newbridge was extra special being my former junior school!

“It was fantastic to see pupils so engaged in learning, and hear from the dedicated head and team how they are supporting young people in this successful school in the heart of Portsmouth.

“It was a real privilege as a former pupil to share at assembly how the school encouraged me to aim high, gave me a helping hand and helped me achieve my dream to represent the city where I’ve always lived in Parliament. I hope it was a message everyone in the school will take away so they too aim high in life and succeed.”



Anna Webb, Headteacher of Newbridge Junior School, said:

“Mr Morgan did a great job explaining to the children how he became an MP and what he does within his role. It was very inspiring for the children and definitely gave them something to think about. It is great to have a representative who is so invested in the Portsmouth community and we look forward to welcoming Mr Morgan back for future school events.”



AN AMAZING TRANSFORMATION

Meon Infant School has had a make over in their garden. £9,725 was raised through activities organised by Friends of Meon Infant School (FOMS) and £5,275 through grants awarded which were initiated by FOMS.



Before the make-over



UP FOR IT JUNIORS PROGRAMME

The University of Portsmouth visited Year 5 at Newbridge Junior School for an interactive session where the children learned all about university and the career opportunities it could provide as part of their 'Up For It Juniors' programme. Apart from playing some fun games, the children were also challenged to really think about what they might want to be when they are older and the educational path they would need to follow to get there. It's never too early to start planning.



THINKING SCHOOLS ACADEMY TRUST IN TOP 10 NATIONALLY FOR GCSES

The Thinking Schools Academy Trust is ranked in the top ten multi-academy trusts (MATs) in the country for the GCSE performance of its secondary schools – and the best in Medway and the South East.

Students at Thinking Schools secondary schools, which include The Victory Academy, Rochester Grammar School and Holcombe Grammar School, improved their GCSE grades by almost a third of a grade on average at the end of secondary school – showing strong progress made throughout their time at the Trust.

This places Thinking Schools 9th in the country in the performance tables published by the Department for Education (DfE) under its headline measure of Progress 8. It is also ranked top multi-academy trust in Medway and across the South East.

Students also achieved particularly well on the EBacc measure – with Thinking Schools ranking 8th in the country for the EBacc both at grade 5 and above and grade 4 and above.

Rochester Grammar School was ranked best school in Medway in the Progress 8 measure. Its score of 0.63 means it is 'well above average', according to the Department for Education, with its students achieving nearly two thirds of a GCSE grade better per subject than students of a similar ability nationally.

The Progress 8 measure tracks how much progress schools help their students make in eight subjects, relative to students in schools of a similar ability. It measures achievement from the end of primary school to the completion of GCSEs.

In Portsmouth, The Portsmouth Academy (TPA) was the second highest performing school in the city – a brilliant turnaround from 2013, when Thinking Schools took it on after it fell into Special Measures.

“

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

“At Thinking Schools we pride ourselves on offering an education of the highest quality to all our students – whatever their background. We are delighted that this is reflected in the Department for Education’s performance tables, placing us in the top ten trusts in the country.

“The rankings underline the outstanding progress our students make at our thriving schools, and I would like to thank all our principals, teachers, and the entire Thinking Schools family for their dedication and commitment.

“We have always been firmly committed to giving each and every student the best opportunities to realise their potential, and are exceptionally pleased with the results.”

“

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

“These results demonstrate the powerful impact our schools have on transforming life chances and enabling students to grow and thrive.

“Our teachers are focused on delivering education at the highest standards across every subject, 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, and we will continue to strive every day to perform even better for our students.”



INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING

On Thursday 14th March, Cedar Children's Academy welcomed 8 residents from Watling Court in Gravesend for their first intergenerational learning session. The school is aiming to have the same residents return to the school each week to visit the same classrooms so that relationships can be fostered between the generations. Reception classes have been invited to Watling Court to visit them later this academic year too.

The children represented the school incredibly, introducing themselves and being more considerate to the eldest visitors who were in their 90's. They happily worked alongside each other at a variety of activities which included puzzles, board games, craft, colouring and playdough. The interaction and conversation flowed between the youngest children and the older generation. The Reception children listened intently, asked and answered questions and used their communication skills in a rather different way to what the teacher have seen in the classroom previously.

At the end of the day, the children were commenting about how they had made new friends. The residents left with smiles on their faces and a spring in their step! The school has received many compliments about their children including how polite, eloquent, caring and helpful they were.

One resident commented to one of the teachers: "They are a credit to you, such lovely children!"

Cedar Children's Academy are very excited for the next time additional residents will be visiting them.



COMIC RELIEF

There has been so much support from our schools who have been involved in raising funds for the Comic Relief charity, with lots of giggles and smiles from children.

It's great to hear of so many parents and staff getting involved including face painting, raffles, cake stalls, toy shop stalls and baking. As well as dressing up, New Horizons Children's Academy put on a talent show where children performed, showing their varying talents.

Among our schools, Gordon's Children's Academy raised over £400, Meon Junior School raised £241 and New Horizon Children's Academy raised a staggering £1083. Very impressive by all involved.



Meon Junior School



The Gordon Children's Academy



The Gordon Children's Academy



New Horizons Children's Academy



The Gordon Children's Academy



New Horizons Children's Academy



Newbridge Junior School



Penhale Infant School

CHILDREN IN NEED

Sometimes it can be easy to forget how fortunate some of us are in comparison to others, Children in Need helps put things in to perspective for us.

One student who felt the need to help those children who face difficult situations was Isaac Bradford, a year 7 student at Goodwin Academy. While some were travelling to school on a bus or in a warm car in the autumnal months, Isaac chose to cycle a 24 mile round trip to and from the school in order raise funds for Children in Need. In total Isaac cycled 66 miles and raised £150 in the process. An inspiration to all of us.



SISTER ACT

The Rochester Grammar School musical Sister Act has received excellent feedback from staff, students and external representatives; with one alumni emailing the school to say how impressed she was with the show.



BIKEABILITY & SCOOTABILITY

Portsmouth schools have been participating in 'bikeability' and 'scootability' recently. The children at Penhale Infant School and Newbridge Junior School have been learning how to safely ride their bikes and scooters. An excellent way to build on their knowledge of road safety from their PSHE lessons.



THE DUCKLINGS HAVE ARRIVED

This is a wonderful time of year when we see fluffy little animals being born and as always New Horizons Children's Academy welcomed their own little ducklings to the school.



PAWS, CLAWS & WHISKERS

Moorings Way Infant School children have been working on their 'Pets for our paws, claws and whiskers' topic, and took a real liking to Mr Green and Joey, two tortoises, that visited the school.



LITTLE HEROES

One of the many topics that our schools look at is the 'Superheroes' topic. Penhale Infant School had the pleasure of a visit from Florence Nightingale and other schools dressed up and discussed their heroes, including those from the wider community who help us. The Gordon Children's Academy were lucky enough to have two paramedics visit the school.



The Gordon Children's Academy



Penhale Infant School



Penhale Infant School



ABCD AWARDS

STAFF THAT GO ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY



School Name: TSAT Central
Term 2 Winner: Adam Sleiman

Thinking Fitness was really stretched with staffing this term. Adam, to help keep the business open, worked many additional hours. He has also done a sterling job on ensuring the pitch maintenance has been high since it was built, especially with the Autumn leaf fall.



School Name: Cedar Children's Academy
Term 2 Winner: Maria Whatling

Maria works tirelessly to help make the environment at Cedar the best it possibly can be. She is very creative and loves getting stuck into new projects. Maria is a vital member of the team at Cedar and goes out of her way to help everyone, staff and pupils alike. Even though there are multiple demands on her time, Maria ensures that everybody who needs help gets it, prioritising the greatest need and organising her time well. The school say they are incredibly fortunate to have such a great person on their team and could not manage without her.



School Name: The Portsmouth Academy
Term 3 Winner: Jane Backhouse

Jane has stepped in to support a void in Food and Nutrition over the course of the past year whilst the school have had no Curriculum Leader in Design and Technology. She has taken it upon herself to lead on planning for the KS3 groups and to really take ownership of this area, despite this not being her subject specialism (she's a Geographer). Jane has enhanced her subject knowledge immensely and has done so in her own time. She is now supporting with GCSE Food and Nutrition and is monitoring the completion of NEAs for Y11 – ensuring all tracking documents are up to date. The capacity and stability she has added in this area has been extremely strong.



School Name: Isambard Brunel Junior School
Term 3 Winner: Megan Chapman

Megan is new to the role of Early Help Officer at Isambard. Having had no experience of this role, Megan has worked tirelessly to develop the skills and knowledge required to fulfil her responsibilities. She has established excellent relationships with parents as well as outside agencies. She is brave enough to challenge as well as support parents and models daily. Megan demonstrates all the values of the schools, she is empathetic and supportive to her colleagues, even adapting to teach in Year 6 every afternoon in the run up to SATs. The children turn to her for support as she reassures them through their challenging journeys.

THE APPLIANCE OF SCIENCE

Rochester Grammar recently celebrated National Science Education Week (11th-15th March). This year the theme of 'journeys' was woven into a wide range of activities where students participated in houses competition to earn points towards the Golden Bunsen Burner Award.

Key Stage 3 classes had special practical based lessons during the week. The Year 7 students designed and built a boat to test and see how much mass it could hold before sinking. They also had a great time making slime and building mini rockets where they had to calculate the right amount of reactant to have it launch after a set period of time. Year 8 classes designed and built bridges out of paper and wooden splints and they tested them to see how much mass they could hold before collapsing. DNA was extracted from strawberries and the journey of the discovery of the structure of DNA was explored. They also worked to create posters on the theme of 'journeys' that will be sent to a national competition.

Year 9 classes competed to design and build a windmill that could lift the most mass. They also participated in a careers-based activity called 'People Like Me' that sought to link their personality traits to those needed in various STEM careers. Year 10 classes tried to build the tallest light house using only a limited set of resources.

Students had the chance to watch the film 'Hidden Figures' that shows how women were some of the critical workers that computed the numbers necessary to enable humans to fly to space.

Friday was the culmination of the festivities for Science Week. Students were able to see a vast array of amazing chemistry demonstrations whilst others participated in a contest to see who could remember the elements of the periodic table. Two students were able to memorise all 118, in order! The science teachers got into the spirit of the week by creatively dressing up in costumes related to the theme of 'journeys'.

Rochester also sent teams to the Rotary Club Technology Tournament held at the Royal Engineers' Museum. They competed in a STEM challenge against other local schools. Key Stage 3 and 4 teams both won first place in their divisions.



LIFE AS WE KNOW IT

Pupils at Newbridge Junior School have been working on their 'Alchemy Island' topic with Year 6 creating a museum for their parents of all their work from their 'Life as we know it' topic. Newbridge also had a visit from a science teacher at the Portsmouth Academy, demonstrating dissection of a heart!



THE APPLIANCE OF SCIENCE CONTINUED...

Gordon Children's Academy had a very special assembly to start our British Science Week celebrations in. Years 1 to 5 had the opportunity to meet a Science Boffin called Boffin Dave and he demonstrated lots of fun scientific experiments to the school.

Everyone was very excited when Boffin Dave made elephant toothpaste and a solid foam hand, and he even demonstrated the speed of airplanes! Here is what the children in the assembly had to say about our special Science learning:

"I thought the Science assembly was great because we got to learn about Science in a fun way." - Harriett M.
"The experiments were amazing!" – Jodie I.



MILL COTTAGE FARM EXPERIENCE

In March, Sarah and Tom from Mill Cottage Farm Experience visited Meredith Infant School. They travelled down from Alton with animals such as Poll Dorset sheep, Golden Guernsey goats, alpacas and a variety of chickens, geese, ducks and turkeys.

They believe a hands on experience is the best way for the children to learn about the animals and to teach respect for living things. They delivered a great deal of science and maths curriculum through their sessions.



TUDOR TIMES

At The Gordon Children’s Academy, Year 5 were visited by Peter the Peddler who brought in a variety of Tudor items and replicas for them to look at.

The children all tried on different costumes, robes and even armour. The chainmail was incredibly heavy.

Peter also showed them items on the ‘dangerous table’ and they looked at how weapons have changed over time, even during the Tudor period. Peter also gave them all a Tudor coin to take home as a souvenir.

Gordon’s pupils have also experienced Viking life, when they had an opportunity to look at food, clothes, weapons and learnt battle commands. The pupils really enjoyed the experience, not wanting the day to end. The only thing they didn’t like were the itchy clothes.



MINI YOUTH GAMES

Gordon’s pupils take second place at the Mini Youth Games after battling through eight hockey performances.



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