

DECEMBER 2017 | ISSUE 5

LEADING THE WAY IN
TEACHER TRAINING

OFSTED 'GOOD'
SCHOOLS ENJOY SUCCESS

THE PORTSMOUTH ACADEMY
GOES CO-ED

NEW PAY FRAMEWORK
REWARDS TEACHERS

ABOVE AND BEYOND THE
CALL OF DUTY

TRANSFORMING LIFE CHANCES

WELCOME MESSAGE FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Welcome to the festive edition of 'Our Trust'. You only need to leaf through the following pages to see what an amazingly busy and successful few months we have had within our Trust and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their dedication, hard work and commitment to transforming the life chances of the young people in our care.

Our first ever trust-wide 'CPD Day' at the end of October was the perfect opportunity to bring together all of the teachers within our Trust. I have never felt quite as nervous as I was before stepping out in front of an audience of over 400 teachers. But as Queen's 'One Vision' reached the final verse and faded out, I stepped forward and felt all my nerves disappear as my opportunity to share our vision of 'Thinking Through and Through' commenced. Visiting our schools, it is becoming clearer and clearer that 'Thinking Schools' is a philosophy to education, not a checklist of activities to gain an accreditation. It is the embracement of this philosophy at a personal and organisational level that is enabling our students to reach new heights and achieve their personal best.

The focus on 'Thinking Through and Through' took another step forward with the launch of the 'Cognition Crew' this term, which saw over 30 teachers from Portsmouth and Medway wanting to spend time together to discuss the validity and application of cognitive load theory in the classroom. Our shared passion and interest in how the brain works and how a better understanding of this can make us more effective educators is at the heart of what makes our Trust a uniquely special organisation to be part of.

I look forward to continuing our journey together as a 'Thinking' organisation in 2018 and wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Stuart Gardner

Stuart Gardner, MSc, NPQH, NLE
Chief Executive Officer

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THE PORTSMOUTH ACADEMY GOES CO-ED!

The Portsmouth Academy (TPA) welcomed its first male students in its history as it started a new chapter. TPA has become a co-educational school, welcoming boys for the first time and ushering in a new era.

The change, supported by Portsmouth City Council and approved by the Government, has been hugely popular with parents, with all 200 Year 7 places filled, split evenly between boys and girls. The school is looking forward to expanding its intake further next year.

TPA which is rated 'Outstanding for Leadership' has become co-educational so boys can access the high quality education at the school, and benefit from a TSAT education from primary to secondary school. Its ethos centres on the 'Thinking School' model, an innovative cognitive teaching method empowering children by helping them better understand how their minds work.

The new co-educational cohort follows hot on the heel of the school's success in this year's GCSEs:

- 83% of students are from disadvantaged backgrounds, which puts the school in the top 1% of the country for that measure
- Proving that background is no barrier to academic achievement at the school, 76% of all qualifications were Grade C (equivalent Grade 4) or above
- TPA is also delighted to have maintained their record of more than a quarter of all grades at A* or A, which is all the more impressive given that GCSEs are widely thought to have been made harder this year

A full induction programme for the new joiners over the summer included a visit to the Royal Marines Museum, taster lessons, a chance to meet tutors, and receiving 'thinking training'. The school also invited interested parents of prospective Year 7 students for the 2018-19 academic year to attend their open evening during September.



Natalie Sheppard, Principal of The Portsmouth Academy, said:

We are so delighted to be joined by our first group of boys. We have hugely enjoyed getting to know all our new Year 7 students over the summer and look forward to seeing co-educational learning in our classrooms for the very first time.

I am a firm believer in the merits of co-education, and how it can raise standards for both boys and girls.

Our sustained improvement in GCSEs is testament to the truly great teaching which is delivered every day by our hard-working and dedicated teachers. I thank all our brilliant staff, who work tirelessly to provide an outstanding education for our children and transform their life chances.”

TPA was the first accredited 'Thinking School' in the city, and is one of only about 100 schools in the country to receive the prestigious award from the University of Exeter.



LEADING THE WAY ON TEACHER TRAINING

Our Trust has led the way on professional development by bringing together almost 400 teachers from 13 academies for a unique day of seminars, workshops and brain games – rounded off by a competitive game of University Challenge.

Our growing trust staged its first ever trust-wide ‘CPD Day’ to give teachers the chance to share their knowledge and skills that they use to stimulate the minds of their talented students. We run high-performing academies in Medway and Portsmouth, including the Victory Academy in Chatham, which hosted the ‘CPD Day’.

At the CPD event, teachers were able to choose from 19 thought-provoking seminars on offer, on topics as diverse as:

- Promoting thinking and learning outside of the classroom
- Stretching and challenging students of all abilities
- Equipping students with the skills to become creative maths thinkers and independent problem solvers
- Enhancing early years education through a ‘doing’ approach to learning
- Developing a strong school ethos and vision through positive ‘habits of mind’ and identities

At the end of the day, staff were invited to test their own cognitive capacities by participating in a round of University Challenge – and a game of Neurolympics, which uses insights from neuroscience to measure brain power.

There was also the opportunity to partake in a debate during the lunch break, and explore an interactive exhibition displaying the different ‘Thinking Tools’ that each of our schools has used to help students master their subjects. In addition, the exhibition featured stands from the National Education Union (NEU), NASUWT, and the Sea Cadets, to raise awareness of their work.

TSAT’s family of academies provides a first-class education from primary schools to secondary schools, and places a strong emphasis on the ‘Thinking School’ philosophy of education. This involves both teachers and students learning how to think reflectively, critically and creatively, and question the world around them.

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

Our CPD Day was a big success, and a great way to bring talented and hard-working teachers from all our schools together for a day of lively and thought-provoking discussion – further demonstrating our standing as an innovator in educational practice.

At TSAT we pride ourselves on our ‘Thinking School’ approach to education, and the way in which we create the environment for students to develop their critical capacities and independent learning skills.

We are on an exciting journey of growth as a Trust, and our ‘CPD Day’ was an important milestone in strengthening our vision for the years ahead.”

OFSTED'S PRAISE COMPLETES REMARKABLE TRANSFORMATION OF THE VICTORY ACADEMY

Staff and students celebrate Ofsted rating – just two years after the school joined the Thinking Schools Academy Trust (TSAT). Ofsted report highlights ‘strong leadership’ and ‘a culture of ambition’ across the school. The fantastic transformation of The Victory Academy since it joined our Trust was confirmed in a glowing Ofsted inspection report.

The Academy in Chatham achieved record GCSE results this summer, and ranked the top non-selective school in Medway by the Department for Education, has now been rated ‘Good’ by Ofsted to complete a brilliant hat-trick.

It means the school has made a remarkable turnaround since TSAT started as 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 as requiring improvement by Ofsted.



“

In the report, Ofsted inspectors said:

This is a rapidly improving school, due to strong leadership and effective support from TSAT.

The Principal has clear vision, determination and a sense of direction. She has led the change towards a positive ethos and culture of learning throughout the school. The Principal and leadership team are determined to improve the life chances of all pupils.

Teachers at the school were praised for being “enthusiastic and very hard working”, showing “strong subject knowledge” and “teaching in a lively manner to engage pupils.”

The Ofsted report also drew attention to the school’s high standards of student development and behaviour, as teachers “create an atmosphere in lessons that supports pupils to make good progress and show strong personal development.” Pupils “listen to teachers and each other respectfully” and “are confident to share their ideas.”



A number of other strengths were highlighted by Ofsted:

- Achievement has risen, and the rate of pupils' progress has "increased markedly", leading to "higher outcomes". This includes the progress of students from disadvantaged backgrounds – more than half (58%) of students are on free school meals
- Staff and pupils are proud of the school, and pupils' behaviour is good, while safeguarding is "a real strength"
- The school "provides a secure and stimulating place for pupils to learn and develop"
- TSAT has "successfully recruited, developed and retained high-quality leaders, teachers and other staff" to the school
- The school is "ambitious" for its pupils, making frequent checks on their progress, and "effective interventions" are in place for those who need extra help to catch up
- The Victory Academy has "good opportunities to collaborate with other schools in TSAT", including Holcombe Grammar School. "Pupils and teachers benefit from this engagement because good practice is shared"



Mandy Gage, Principal of The Victory Academy, said:

We are so delighted with the fantastic feedback from Ofsted, which is testament to the hard work and dedication shown by students and staff to raise achievement and student outcomes since we joined TSAT.

Our 'Good' rating follows hot on the heels of this year's superb GCSE results and 'Progress 8' score, the latter of which makes us the highest-achieving non-selective school in Medway. I am proud to lead such a brilliant school.

Staff and students have worked extremely hard over the past few years to ensure everyone who joins us can go above and beyond in realising their potential, and we look forward to continuing our progression and going from strength to strength."



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

I would like to congratulate everyone at The Victory Academy for this superb achievement. Everyone has played their part and it has been a real team effort, but I am particularly pleased that the Academy's leadership has deservedly been praised.

I would like to thank everyone for the part they have played in our success, as well as the ongoing support from parents. We continue to be motivated to provide our students with every opportunity to flourish, and look forward to seeing the school continue on its journey towards 'Outstanding'."



Tracey Crouch, Member of Parliament for Chatham and Aylesford, said:

My warmest congratulations to The Victory Academy, who have been rated 'Good' – a tremendous achievement for the school, after a challenging journey with a few bumps along the way.

This brilliant success should be celebrated by all those who have helped to achieve it, especially the dedicated and hardworking teachers and senior leadership team – but also the pupils themselves, who have responded so positively to the learning structures that have been put in place for them in the last few years. Well done all."



POPULAR PORTSMOUTH ACADEMY ALL SET FOR EXPANSION AFTER MULTI-MILLION POUND INVESTMENT

Portsmouth City Council grants funding for state-of-the-art new building as Academy reveals it is oversubscribed. The Portsmouth Academy (TPA) is to benefit from a multi-million-pound funding boost to accommodate extra pupils – as new figures show how popular it is with parents.

The school can currently take 225 students in each year group but for next September 241 parents have made it their top choice, and overall 468 selected it for their child, making it hugely over-subscribed.

Now, to increase capacity at TPA, Portsmouth City Council has rubber-stamped £5.3m for a new three-storey building, which will mean an extra 50 students a year can attend the school from September 2020. TPA, which is rated 'Good' with 'Outstanding leadership and management' by Ofsted, and has celebrated a brilliant set of GCSE results this year.

As well as new classrooms, the new building will have new music facilities, a drama studio, and a whole floor devoted to art class. Works are due to begin at Easter 2019. The existing school will benefit from additional science labs, a new design and technology classroom, and a brand new 'Student Services' centre offering a single destination for students' pastoral needs.

Councillors have voted through the additional funding as part of a major drive to transform education, by increasing the number of school places in the city and maintaining school buildings. The total investment across the city is in excess of £20 million, set aside from the council's 2017-18 budget for infrastructure schemes like buildings and facilities.



Natalie Sheppard, Principal at The Portsmouth Academy, said:

We are proud not just to be a school of choice for local parents – but a school that is now so popular that we are having to expand to take more students. These additional funds will allow us to accommodate the rising number of applications and continue providing an outstanding education to young people in Portsmouth.

We look forward to opening our doors to ever more students in the coming years, and continuing to provide a high-quality education to all.

It has been very productive working with the council on these proposals. Our students deserve the very best and we are so pleased that they are going to get these incredible facilities.”



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

Education is one of the council's main priorities and dedicating a significant sum to improve Portsmouth's schools shows our continued commitment to making sure Portsmouth's children get a good education.

The Portsmouth Academy offers an excellent education to increasing numbers of students – reflected in its latest Ofsted rating and its success in this year's GCSEs – and we are delighted to be able fund the expansion of this popular school.



This is the bricks and mortar part of our improvement and expansion plans, and aims to raise standards by improving the learning environment and creating more school places. It goes hand in hand with projects to attract more teachers to the city and raise children's aspirations and attainment.”

Lee Miller, Deputy Chief Executive of TSAT, said:

We are excited to be expanding The Portsmouth Academy after the school has been in such high demand from parents in the city.

TSAT and the council has collaborated very positively on this funding, and the council is making a very significant investment in its young people through this funding.

We are looking forward to providing even more children in Portsmouth with a transformative education.”



Earlier this month, The Portsmouth Academy was ranked the second best school in Portsmouth, and set to be in the top 10% of schools in the country when final results are published in January. This is just four years after its predecessor was placed in special measures by Ofsted, after which TSAT became the sponsor of the school. Its score of 0.5 means it is 'well above average', according to the Department for Education, and its students achieve half a GCSE grade better per subject than students of a similar ability nationally.

The St Mary's Road school became co-educational this year, welcoming boys into Year 7 for the first time.

STUDENTS AT HOLCOMBE GRAMMAR SCHOOL CELEBRATE SPORTING SUCCESS

Students and staff at Holcombe Grammar School are celebrating the impressive sporting achievements of multiple students, featuring medal victories, national call-ups, and international championships.

Particularly impressive is the success of 17 year-old Josephus Van Viltsteren, who recently competed in the Masters bowling tournament, and has been selected for the 'Junior Team' England squad.

One of the top six under-18 male bowlers in the country, Josephus will now go through a final selection process to determine the top four bowlers to make 'Junior Team' for England. If successful, he will represent England at the 'European Youth Championships' in Aalborg, Denmark in April next year.

The school's sporting success does not stop there. Peter Buravitskiy, 16, has been chosen to form part of the trampoline team that will represent Great Britain at the 'World Age Group Competitions' taking place in Sofia, Bulgaria in November.

Peter is full of confidence going into the competition, having qualified in second place for the 'Loule World Cup' in Portugal earlier this year, and having finished fifth in the final.

Holcombe Grammar School's trampoline team is a very strong outfit, with Braden Cox, 13, and brothers Nathan and Ethan Johnston, 13 and 14 respectively, having also seen great success. All three students won gold as part of the synchro group at the 'National Trampoline League' competition, and have subsequently qualified for the league final event at the Velodrome, Olympic Park in December.

Nathan and Ethan continued to shine at the 'English Championships' earlier this month, winning bronze in the boys 13-14 year-old group synchro, in what was the regional team final. Their medals were presented by Olympic silver medallist in trampolining, Bryony Page.

Holcombe Grammar School provides a first-class education for all, both academically and extra-curricular activities.



Photograph supplied by KM Group

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Andrew Nanson, Head of Physical Education at Holcombe Grammar School, said:

We are all incredibly proud and impressed with our students who have thrived in a sporting environment and achieved great things in a range of competitions this year.

Their success is testament to the hard work and dedication that they have consistently shown, and their ability to stay focused and never give up.

At Holcombe Grammar School we pride ourselves on both academic and extra-curricular achievement, and look forward to celebrating many more successes on both fronts in the years ahead.”

NEWBRIDGE JUNIOR SCHOOL PRAISED BY OFSTED

Pupils and staff at Newbridge Junior School are delighted after it was praised for its ever-increasing standards in an Ofsted report which rates the school as 'Good'.

The report notes the continuing improvement and strong results achieved at the school since it joined our Trust three years ago. Attainment levels have risen significantly since 2014, with 77% of boys achieving the expected standard in writing and 75% in reading this year, figures above the national average for all pupils – in an area where girls traditionally score best. The report says all pupils are also making “rapid” progress in writing.

According to Ofsted, pupils have a good understanding of how to improve their work, and “talk knowledgeably about their next steps to success.” The Ofsted report praises the “clear leadership and vision” shown by the school’s Headteacher, Anna Webb, and the way in which her team have “risen to the challenge” of a significant increase in pupil numbers – demonstrating the school’s popularity with parents – and the opening of a separate site for Year 6 pupils earlier this year.

The report highlighted a number of other positives about the school:

- “Disadvantaged pupils achieve well” with the proportion achieving the expected level in maths and writing above the national average
- There is a “strong culture of vigilance” and parents feel their children are “happy, safe, and well looked after.”
- “Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to come together through shared activities to secure the ethos and identity of the school”
- “Pupils enjoy school” and “talk enthusiastically about the work they do”



Anna Webb, Headteacher of Newbridge Junior School, said:

We are all incredibly proud to be rated ‘Good’ by Ofsted, and receive such praise across the board.

I would like to thank all our teachers and pupils for their continual hard work and dedication, as well as parents for their ongoing support – without which this success would not be possible.

We look forward to celebrating many more achievements over the coming years, as we continue on our upward trajectory.”



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

I would like to congratulate everyone at Newbridge Junior School for such a praiseworthy Ofsted report, demonstrating the continuing improvements since 2014.

Pupils at the school have access to a vibrant and stimulating educational environment that enables them to achieve their best, as shown by the above average levels of attainment achieved.

These are exciting times for the school as it goes from strength to strength, proving a shining example to others in Portsmouth.”

A TRANSFORMATIVE PAY STRUCTURE TO REWARD TEACHERS, BOOST RETENTION AND DELIVER HIGHER STANDARDS

It is no secret that there is a teacher recruitment and retention issue in our country at present. 31% of all teachers who qualified in 2011 had quit within five years, while over 27,500 teachers who trained between 2011 and 2015 had already left their job last year.

This is undoubtedly a complex challenge that there is no single solution to, but what will help greatly is creating an effective pay framework that incentivises teachers to enter and stay in the classroom, and produce their very best teaching for students.

When it comes to pay, teaching does not always operate like most other careers and walks of life. It is our usual assumption that employees will be rewarded for excellent work – meaning they are motivated to stay with their employer and continue to perform well, leading to even higher pay in future. This creates a virtuous circle of high performance and proper reward. But teaching often does not follow this pattern, with teachers not being properly rewarded for their great work, and facing vast bureaucracy in seeking the benefits that they deserve.

When thinking creatively about the ways teachers can be attracted to the classroom, it is imperative that progressive pay structures are developed to reward teaching talent and hard work. The national pay framework no longer provides the path ahead.

At the Thinking Schools Academy Trust, we have developed a new pay structure to transform the way teachers are paid.

It will properly reward teachers for their hard work, and incentivise them to stay in the profession and with us – a simple yet powerful aim. It will also have immediate benefits for students who will reap the benefits of the vibrant, engaging classrooms that our best teachers will continue to foster. We are encouraged greatly by the National Education Union's endorsement of the new framework, after some 93.5% of its members voted in its favour earlier this term, following six months of working together to develop the details of the pay model.

We recognise that teachers at different stages of their career require different forms of support and guidance, and our framework makes a particular effort to help teachers in their first three years of teaching, at NQT +1 and NQT +2 level. Through tailored, yet still stretching, objectives, and targeted support, our framework guides these members of staff in meeting and exceeding the aims set for them.

In fostering a financially secure and motivating environment for teachers, our new pay model directly benefits students through the excellent standard of teaching they will receive. And that is ultimately what our model is all about: ensuring students enjoy the classroom experience which enables them to achieve their best, and go on to great things.

Of course, different academies face different circumstances, and TSAT's pay model may not be the exact path that other academies choose to go down. At this time of great challenge for teacher recruitment and retention, it is important that we encourage innovation and originality, and support those who propose new models for teacher pay. The right answer will not always lie with TSAT's approach, despite its many positives.

But through a system which at its heart is based on the principle of fairness, and which provides both financial security and reward, teachers and students will receive immediate and tangible benefits, and our classrooms will continue to go from strength to strength.





So what does our new framework look like?

- Newly qualified teachers are well-remunerated from the beginning of their career, guaranteeing a minimum starting salary of at least £25,000 from September 2018 – more than £2,000 above the national average.
- Teachers only move up to the main pay scale as a result of excellent teaching, as all progress, including within the upper pay levels, is based on performance only.
- Teachers at the top of the pay scale are rewarded, as those who surpass performance objectives are recognised through a three per cent non-consolidated pay award. This is a bonus which both protects the financial viability of the structure, and creates a reward-based culture for those who would otherwise not receive any benefits for exceptional performance due to their position at the top of the scale.
- As the Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Justine Greening MP, spoke about last month, it is important that great teachers have an incentive to stay in the classroom rather than taking management responsibilities which come with larger salaries. It is absolutely right that teachers who want to stay in the classroom have a stretching path ahead that they can follow, and we should not be forcing teachers to choose between their love of interacting with children and helping them achieve their potential, and their desire to progress in their own career. We are therefore immensely proud that our framework allows talented and passionate teachers to continue doing what they enjoy on a day to day basis, delivering the best standards of education for their students and achieving their own personal goals.
- Bureaucratic barriers to teachers receiving proper rewards are being removed. While the national pay framework forces teachers to go through the arduous process of submitting an application to gain access to the upper pay scale, TSAT's high-performing teachers will be automatically entitled to these rewards from 2018. The criteria for such performance, approved by the NEU, is based on a set of objectives around pupil progress, teaching standards, and professional development – all of which are checked at performance management meetings throughout the year. We also believe it is important to recognise teacher performance in the year it has been achieved, so are introducing annual incremental increases, so that teachers on the upper pay scale do not have to wait for two years before their pay is reviewed, as they do within the national framework.



THE PORTSMOUTH ACADEMY CELEBRATES STUDENT SUCCESS AT ANNUAL AWARDS EVENING

Students and staff at The Portsmouth Academy (TPA) celebrated outstanding student achievements, as they welcomed education leaders and parents to their Annual Awards evening.

Local leader Julian Wadsworth MBE, who received an 'Order of the British Empire' in 2010 for his services to the young people of Portsmouth, praised TPA students' excellence in the company of special guest Alison Jeffery from Portsmouth City Council.

The 'Annual Awards' highlighted the brilliant work of students with the highest attainment in each subject and year group, as well as those who demonstrated resilience and perseverance in their learning. Year 11 students were honoured in categories including leadership, outstanding achievement, and sustained effort in learning, and the Head Girl and Boy's excellent performance was also rewarded.

Alongside the award presentations, guests enjoyed live music performances from student pianists Anna Danso-Amoako and Jade Villanueva, and solo singer Cleo Black.

The awards mark a year of great success for The Portsmouth Academy, after the school was named second best in Portsmouth for the progress students achieve between Year 7 and Year 11, when they complete their GCSEs.



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Natalie Sheppard, Principal at The Portsmouth Academy, said:

Our 'Annual Awards' evening was a great way to celebrate our students' brilliant successes over the last year, and to recognise their incredible work and dedication.

I would like to thank Julian Wadsworth MBE for his inspirational speech, and all of our special guests for making our awards ceremony an evening to remember.

We are on such an exciting journey as a school, having achieved brilliant results this summer and being so popular with parents that we are expanding. We are looking forward to going from strength to strength in the coming years.”

HEADTEACHER SETS OUT HIS VISION FOR ALL FAITHS CHILDREN'S ACADEMY

The new headteacher of All Faiths Children's Academy has set out his vision for the school, and how it will achieve strong results across the board.

Cormac Murphy, who took over at the school earlier this year, said he had drawn up a plan to drive improvements and build on existing strengths.



Mr Murphy said:

Since becoming Acting Headteacher at All Faiths, and subsequently taking on the position permanently earlier this year, I have been delighted to work closely with parents, teachers, and our Trust's senior leaders to identify areas where the school is already performing well and those where we still have room for improvement. I am so proud to lead a school where the whole school community works together to transform life chances for all our pupils. We are a friendly, caring, and happy school with high expectations for all of our pupils, and are proud to nurture successful children who are confident and can think and act independently.”

Mr Murphy said that identifying areas of improvement and putting in place a detailed action plan for raising standards and attainment was already having a positive impact, as highlighted in an Ofsted report published this week. The report rates the effectiveness of the school's leadership and management, its early year's provision, and students' personal development, behaviour and welfare as 'Good', and overall says the school is in the Requires Improvement category.

The report says:

- “Pupils are well cared for. There is a culture of safeguarding that permeates every level of school life.”
- The headteacher is “passionately committed to driving the school forward” and “has united the staff and parents behind him in his determination.”
- The changes to assessment, curriculum and leadership introduced by the headteacher “are beginning to improve standards across the school.”
- “Leaders are doing the right things in the right order and as a result the school is improving.”
- “The revised curriculum engages and excites pupils. They enjoy their learning.”
- “Children get off to a good start in the early years and make good progress from their starting points.”
- Governors “have taken swift and decisive action to secure the support the school needs.”
- Leaders at all levels “have benefited from the effective support provided by the trust.”
- “Parents are supportive of the school” and “Staff at all levels build positive and productive relationships with families.”



Mr Murphy added, in terms of his plans to improve the school:

I have made it my top priority to raise educational standards at All Faiths Children's Academy. I have worked closely with governors and TSAT's leadership to put in place detailed plans for making improvements.

These include substantial improvements to curriculum and assessments, as well as additional measures such as regular assemblies to develop our ethos as a 'thinking school', and pupils and staff taking part in the 'thinking drive team' to share ideas on how to develop thinking, and parent events and workshops.

We are delighted that inspectors have found that the school is already improving as a result of the measures we are taking, and I am excited at the prospect of all the positive changes we can continue to achieve for the school by working with parents, teachers, and the wider Trust.”

ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY

Our Trust recognises the dedication and commitment that staff continue to provide in our schools to support the development and success of each and every student.

The Trust team developed an initiative where each headteacher would have the opportunity to celebrate the dedication and commitment of a particular teaching or non-teaching member of staff who had acted above and beyond the call of duty, by nominating them for the award. Each nominee is entered into a termly prize draw for a voucher or an experience worth £100 and awarded with a certificate. All nominees, including termly winners, will be entered into an annual prize draw, which will take place during the end of Term 6.

Term 1 nominees were: Gillian Gurman (All Faiths Children's Academy), Lisa Cassidy (Cedar Children's Academy), Inci Tomris (Holcombe Grammar School), Mandy Chandler (Isambard Brunel Junior School), Jan Atrill (Meon Junior School), Laura Hickman (Moorings Way Infant School), Magdalena Pinkos (New Horizons Children's Academy), Stuart Scarcliffe (Newbridge Junior School), Clare Dixon (The Gordon Children's Academy), Vanessa Pszonak (The Portsmouth Academy), Sam Reckless (The Rochester Grammar School), Sarah Daffey (The Victory Academy) and Catherine Boorman (TSAT Central).

Nominees have been recognised for: giving up their free time, evenings and weekends to develop school resources, including providing additional tutoring to students; foreseeing possible problems and being proactive to reduce negative outcomes; developing and supporting colleagues to maximise the positive outcome for EAL students; volunteering to attend courses to share gained knowledge with departments so that students can benefit from new practices; and being outstanding ambassadors for transforming life chances.

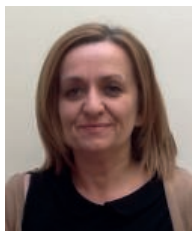
The winning nominee for Term 1 was Inci Tomris who organised to teach an additional group in her own time to ensure that students were able to follow either 'Literature' or 'Language and Literature' depending on their ability and need. In addition, Inci spent many Saturdays helping a hospitalised student prepare for their GCSE exams which they had been too ill to sit the previous year. This enabled the student to access A Levels.

Although the nominees for Term 1 recognise 13 members of staff who work at the family of schools within our Trust, we know there are many more members of staff that continue to work above and beyond the call of duty.

We look forward to celebrating those who will be nominated this term. Remembering that the smallest act of kindness can have a positive impact on the students we teach and the colleagues we work with.



Gillian Gurman
(The Portsmouth Academy)



Lisa Cassidy
(Cedar Children's Academy)



Inci Tomris
(Holcombe Grammar School)



Mandy Chandler
(Isambard Brunel Junior School)



Jan Atrill
(Meon Junior School)



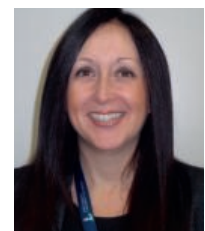
Laura Hickman
(Moorings Way Infant School)



Magdalena Pinkos
(New Horizons
Children's Academy)



Stuart Scarcliffe
(Newbridge Junior School)



Clare Dixon
(The Gordon
Children's Academy)



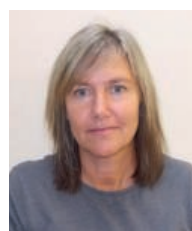
Vanessa Pszonak
(The Portsmouth Academy)



Sam Reckless
(The Rochester
Grammar School)



Sarah Daffey
(The Victory Academy)



Catherine Boorman
(TSAT)

KEEPING YOUR EYES ON THE PRIZE

December marked an important month for teachers within our Trust. It was the beginning of our termly 'TSAT Cognition Crew' meetings attended by a group of staff willing to commit extra hours in already hectic lifestyles to unpick some of the most hotly debated research topics in education.

Spurred on by the need to be research engaged, staff from across the Trust were invited to an evening of free flowing pedagogical dialogue. With a session held in Portsmouth and one in Medway, staff were provided with the time to engage with a piece of prior reading – this session focused on the 'Cognitive Load Theory'. We discussed the strengths and limitations of the paper with colleagues from different schools and then looked for possible applications to our own contexts.

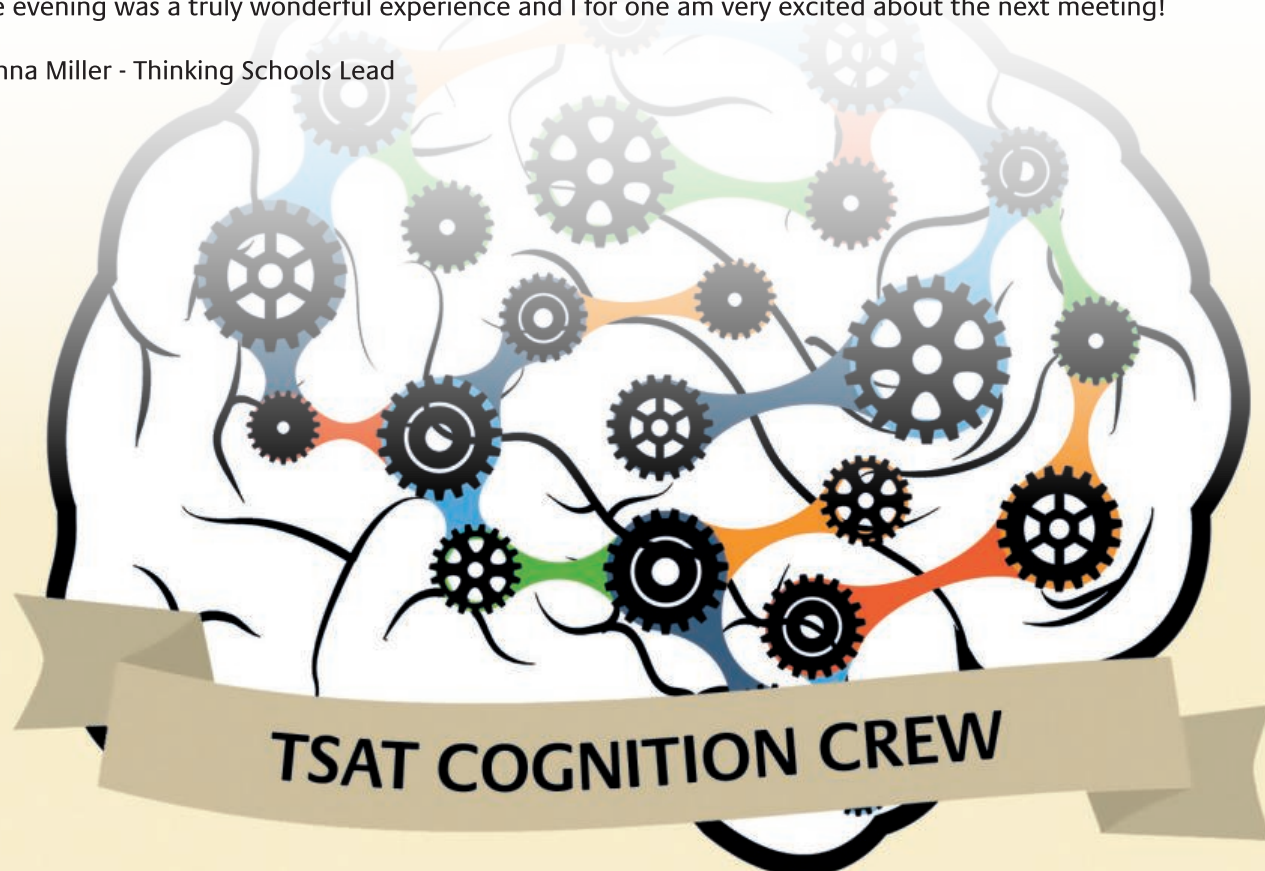
The idea is that we are not passive recipients of popular research and we recognise that encouraging critical analysis of research papers and aiming to take part in our 'own school' research trials to establish what works, why it works and where it works, might further improve our outcomes for children and staff by enabling us to reflect on our own practice, as part of a supported group of people.

With a vast range of experience and expertise across our Trust we hope to make a positive impact on our educational community – at all levels. For some staff, the session provided new understandings and clarifications and for others it provided the underpinning to practices they might have been doing anyway, but can now enable them to make informed decisions rather than purely instinctive ones. Staff in this session discussed the potential applications of 'Cognitive Load Theory' to different year groups. The next session will focus on what has been achieved as a result of the previous session and build upon or discuss a related or different hot topic.

The culture we want to provide for all staff is one where research is contextualised, whether that means doing what you've always been doing but utilising the new knowledge gained or whether that means innovating with new practices and principles. Transforming the life chances of our students is at the heart of what we do so being active in that process is something we aim to embody. So our prize is to create a culture within our Trust where children and their outcomes trump all else. Navigating our way through the deluge of educational research and disseminating the knowledge throughout the Trust will require the pioneering work of our Trust's 'Cognition Crew'. Many thanks to all who attended for their time and insightful comments which were very much appreciated.

The evening was a truly wonderful experience and I for one am very excited about the next meeting!

Hanna Miller - Thinking Schools Lead



EDUCATIONAL WELFARE TEAM PRAISED BY PARENT

The Trust recently held an attendance workshop at the Teaching and Learning Centre, on the site of The Portsmouth Academy, with all of the Attendance Improvements Managers from our family of schools.

The day consisted of looking at the importance of attendance, data analysis, engagement with parents, keeping children safe by knowing where they are as well as sharing ideas and good practice.

One story of many, really expressed the importance of attendance and the support that attendance teams and staff provide to parents and carers of pupils at our schools. But it goes hand in hand that when parents and carers work with their schools as a team they can help to provide their children with an opportunity to achieve and progress in school.

Mrs Sanz-Dobbs, a parent, wrote to Mrs Clarke-Basra at Cedar Children's Academy to thank her, Mrs Lucas, Mr Clynsaw (Medway Council) and the team for supporting her son. Through the efforts of Mrs Sanz-Dobbs and the team, her son has been awarded the termly 'Attendance Champion' award.



Mrs Sanz-Dobbs said:

I just wanted to write and thank the attendance and educational welfare team for all their support, help and guidance over the last two years. To cut a long story short my son spent most of his reception year poorly with chronic tonsillitis. I bounced between the school, doctors and hospital on many occasions and the end result was an attendance level of about 43% and my son was almost a year and a half behind academically. Exhausted, physically and mentally drained, I felt like the world was against me. I was just a mum wanting her child to get better and do well at school.

At my lowest point I attended an attendance meeting with Mrs Clarke-Basra, an academy Attendance Officer and a council representative. I was petrified of being fined and of no one listening to me or understanding what I was going through. Completely broken down, I was a blubbing mess. To my surprise they listened to all I had to say, they offered words of support and encouragement and also tissues to mop up my floods of tears. I had felt stuck between the school wanting my son to be in school full time and the doctors telling me that my son's illness was nothing to worry about.

My son ended up having an operation to sort his health problems and at the start of Year 1 I was told he probably wouldn't pass his tests at the end of the year. Doing my utmost to keep him healthy and in school, I helped him with extra work at home. At the end of Year 1 he had passed his tests with results in the high 80s and low 90s and an attendance mark of 76%.

Three weeks ago I had yet another attendance meeting letter and last week I once again went to the meeting. This time it was different as I met the same three people and there were smiles all round. It was a meeting to say well done, because since the beginning of September this year my son has only had three days off school and this half term he is currently at 100% attendance. He is also now on par with his peers in his class. It has been two long years to get him to this point but I couldn't have done it without the understanding of the educational welfare team.

My son is living proof that attendance does matter and is so important. The educational welfare team are not there to be awkward or make your life a misery, they are there to help and support you and your child. Don't leave it too late to ask for their help as your child needs you to do the best you can for them.”

REMEMBRANCE

Schools across our Trust take part in various workshops to show their respect for those who have lost their lives and their loved ones. Workshops at the schools include making poppies and learning about and hearing from veterans who recite stories of their experiences.

Our schools like many others, sell poppies and honour a period of silence and in these moments of silence we are so grateful for the lives we have and the opportunities to transform our life chances.

The photographs (to the right) show the great work that the pupils at New Horizons Children's Academy and Cedar Children's Academy (CCA) have created during their 'Remembrance' workshops.

The Victory Academy (see photo below) were joined by Major Meek, who is based at Brompton Barracks, for their service. The service began with a prayer and the reading of 'Taking a Stand' by students at the school. The playing of the 'Last Post' on the trumpet then signalled the start of the silence. Afterwards a wreath was laid at the foot of their flagpole as a mark of respect for those who had lost their lives.

CCA spoke about fallen soldiers and the reasons why we taken the time to remember them on 'Armistice Day'. They also spoke about the relevance of the 'poppy' and its symbolic purpose. CCA raised £193.13 by inviting pupils to attend school in their Beavers, Cubs, Brownies and Rainbows uniforms as part of the day.



New Horizons Children's Academy



New Horizons Children's Academy



Cedar Children's Academy



The Victory Academy

SCHOOLS' UPDATE - TERMS 1 & 2

Football Crazy

With the FIFA World Cup 2018 taking place June next year, it's great to see so many children getting involved in football.

The Cedar Children's Academy has hosted its second annual Key Stage 2 football tournament. Pupils were invited to take part in a 'World Cup' style knock-out tournament. Teams were selected and managed by the players who were solely responsible for ensuring they had the right number of players and were aware of the schedule and in the correct football kit. Not only does this tournament promote the game of football but more importantly it promotes independence, teamwork, thinking for yourself, organisational skills and self-reliance.

Year 6 pupils (Greece) won the tournament and the runners up were Year 4 pupils (Argentina).

The question is, will England finally experience the glory of 1966 again?



Clancy Docwra Presents Cheque to Holcombe Grammar School

Clancy Docwra, a construction company, has presented a cheque of £1,000 to the Holcombe Grammar School as a kind gesture to thank them for the patient of their students and staff during the work that took place to replace water pipes around the surrounding area which has 4,500 service connections to properties.

As part of the company's corporate responsibility policy, the cheque was handed over to Juliet Diaz, Headteacher at the school, as a thank you.



Licence to Kill and Road Safety Workshop

The Victory Academy and Holcombe Grammar School have recently taken part in the 'Licence to Kill and Road Safety Experience' workshop.

The experience was emotional and delivered impact to promote awareness of driving safely which many of the students in our secondary schools will do in the coming years.

The video footage and stories that Marion Cornick (mother who lost her daughter due to a road traffic accident), Alan Faulkner (Watch - Manager Road Safety Team, Kent Fire and Rescue) and Darren Chapman (Kent Police) gave to the students, reminded them that driving with disregard to others, not only effects the them, their passengers but also the public.

It was clear that the workshop had effected some of the students emotionally and a reminder to us all that it is our duty to drive safely on the road.



Charity Starts at School

There is a saying that “Charity starts at home”. We all know that this isn’t the case as every one of our schools participate in charity events throughout the year to raise funds, helping those who need support.

One of our primary schools, Meon Junior School which is based in Portsmouth, held a Macmillan coffee morning and raised an impressive £440.93 for the charity.



In addition they raised £329.64 for Children in Need by wearing anything spotty and donating during the charity event.



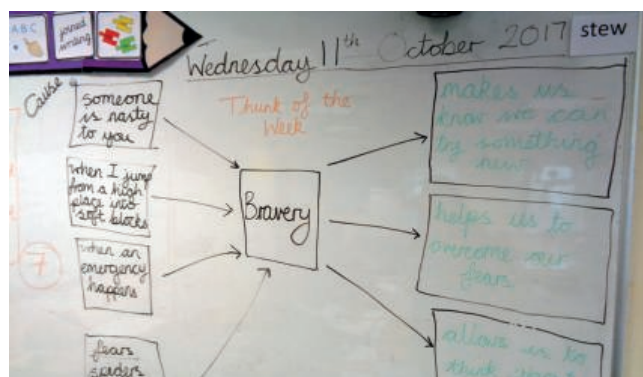
Cedar Children’s Academy have also been raising money for Children in Need and managed to raise £930.03 for the charity by having a non-uniform day which included odd socks and a bake sale after school. They also sold Pudsey Bear headbands during the school day.



Think of the Week

What is the ‘Think of the Week’? As a ‘Thinking School’, The Gordon Children’s Academy encourage their children to use a range of thinking techniques to answer questions during class assemblies every Wednesday. They use thinking hats, maps, keys and habits to support learning and use the ‘Think of the Week’ to think about and discuss key points.

‘Thinks’ during the last two terms have been based around goals, creativity, flexibility and bravery.



Victory Day 2017

The Victory Academy (TVA) held their annual 'Victory Day' at the end of September, celebrating the second anniversary of their official opening. Students took part in fun-filled and inspiring activities, developing their team-building, communication and interpersonal skills.

Activities were led by staff together with representatives from the Sea Cadets and Chatham Historic Dockyard. Year 5 and 6 students were invited from local primary schools to take part in workshops for art, performing arts and design technology. For one hour TVA opened its doors to the public giving guided tours to see the school's first-class facilities and students at work. An evening celebration was held with refreshments, live music and performances from their talented students to celebrate their anniversary. The celebration was a wonderful event where students, parents and carers, staff and guests enjoyed the entertainment, coming together as a school community.



Children Raise Funds for School Library

The pupils at Moorings Way Infant School have been enjoying themselves by having a Christmas hot chocolate and mince pie evening.

Pupils created artwork for auction and cakes, which parents bid on to raise funds for their school library.



Book Thieves

'Book Thieves' is a weekly lunchtime reading club that has been happening at Holcombe Grammar School for nearly two years.

Every month they are visited by Sophie Castle, from a local library, who brings boxes of new titles to borrow and share.

It is a great opportunity for students to 'Get Caught Reading' and receive house points for engaging in reading for pleasure.

The initiative that helps to develop reading and writing skills has been a real success and students from New Horizons Children's Academy have been invited to 'Book Thieves' to take part in the club as well.



Festive Fun

Our December edition wouldn't be complete without the inclusion of some colourful photos of pupils taking part at rehearsals, leading up to their Christmas performances which take place at primary schools within our Trust. Meon Junior School also had a 'Decorations Day' where they created selfie decorations.



PRIMARY SCHOOLS REVIEW

Our Trust primary schools have had a particularly successful year during 2016-2017 with Ofsted visits, improvements in attainment and results above national figures.

Three of our schools; the Gordon Infant School, Gordon Junior School (both of which are part of The Gordon Children's Academy) and New Horizons Children's Academy, had visits from Ofsted and all were judged 'Good' showing that each school is committed to supporting and developing the education of our children to progress and achieve.

We officially welcomed two new schools into our family, Moorings Way Infant School and Meon Junior School on the 1 July 2017, both of which are based in Portsmouth.

End of year results brought further good news stories with all schools showing improvements in attainment from the previous year. Phonics results showed that all Trust primaries were broadly in line with or significantly above national figures. KS1 SAT results improved from the previous year particularly in reading and writing for our schools.

New Horizons Children's Academy, our first 'new school', continued to improve its phonics results, which were once again above national and excelled in its first ever SATs results being above national results in all areas.

Overall in KS2 SATs, the percentage of pupils who achieved at both the expected and higher standard improved from 2016 with The Gordon Children's Academy junior division, Meon Junior School and Newbridge Junior School achieving higher than national average for KS2 at expected standard and both Meon Junior School and Newbridge Junior School achieving higher than national average at the higher standard.

Clearly our children love coming to school as attendance figures gave increased results yet again with the majority of schools being at or above national standards.



SECONDARY SCHOOLS GCSE RESULTS

Students at The Rochester Grammar School, Holcombe Grammar, The Victory Academy and The Portsmouth Academy have been celebrating successfully fantastic GCSE results for 2017.

The Rochester Grammar School (RGS) had a 100% success with students achieving 5 A*-C grades including English and Maths, placing the school as amongst the highest performing in the country. Grade 5 was achieved by 95% of students in English and Maths which is defined as a 'strong' pass by the government which set grade 4 as the new pass in their latest grading system.

Holcombe Grammar School (HGS) students experienced excellent results with 96% achieving grade 4 or above in English and Maths. One of the school's top performers was extremely jubilant having achieved 9 A* and 3 A grades.

The Victory Academy (VIC) which caters for many students from disadvantaged backgrounds has been on a remarkable journey over the last five years. In 2013, just a quarter of students achieved 5 A*- C GCSEs including English and Maths. This year 46% of students have achieved grade 4 or above in the 2017 reformed English and Maths GCSEs. There are 41% of students at the school who receive free school meals, which is typically seen as an indicator of disadvantage, but staff and students refuse to see this as a barrier to success.

The Portsmouth Academy (TPA) which has now become a co-educational school has proven that being a school with 83% of its students from disadvantaged backgrounds is not a barrier, but instead a driving force to success. Despite these challenges, 76% of all qualifications were Grade C (equivalent Grade 4) or above, whilst 66% of students gained a standard pass in both English and Maths. TPA is also delighted to have maintained their record of more than a quarter of all grades being A*/A.

Both the HGS and VIC results have improved year after year with HGS continuing to improve for the fourth year running and VIC achieving five years of successive improvement.

Students at RGS, HGS, VIC and TPA have all endeavoured to achieve, despite the fact that the exams are widely perceived to have been made more difficult. In the core subjects of English and Maths, where students were sitting reformed examinations for the first time, a high proportion of students achieved the very highest grades.

The Progress 8 scores are truly exceptional for our Trust as a whole. All secondaries received positive Progress 8 scores: TPA 0.5, RGS 0.89, VIC 0.32, HGS 0.49. All schools have made significant progress this year; with a Trust average Progress 8 of +0.55, this puts our family in the 'Well above average' category.

We congratulate the many students who worked hard to exceed predictions at all levels with their GCSE results, particularly those students who overcame some very significant challenges to achieve great grades. We also congratulate all staff for their hard work, commitment and dedication to transforming the life chances of the students that they teach.

Progress 8 Score 2017

Provisional scores

The Rochester Grammar School:	0.89
Holcombe Grammar School:	0.49
The Victory Academy:	0.32
The Portsmouth Academy:	0.5

GCSE Grade 4/C or above 2017

English and Maths - Provisional scores

The Rochester Grammar School:	100%
Holcombe Grammar School:	96%
The Victory Academy:	46%
The Portsmouth Academy:	66%

SECONDARY SCHOOLS: KS5 RESULTS

2017 has been a remarkable year for three secondary schools in our Trust that provide Sixth Forms, where students have achieved excellent A Level and International Baccalaureate results.

Students at Rochester Grammar School (RGS) were jumping for joy on Thursday 17 August – after the school achieved record-breaking A Level results for the fifth consecutive year.

An incredible 81% of all grades were between A* and B, while a record eight students took up places at the prestigious Oxford and Cambridge universities.

The superb results followed the excellent performance of students in the International Baccalaureate (IB) earlier in the summer, which saw the school rank in the top 7% globally. One student, Lauryn Anderson, scored the maximum 45 points in the IB, a feat only achieved by 0.3% of IB graduates worldwide; she is now reading English Literature at Cambridge.

Students from Holcombe Grammar School (HGS) were overjoyed after receiving outstanding A Level results in this year's examinations with nearly half the grades at A*-B.

Having taken all exams at the end of a two-year course for the first time, nearly a fifth of A Level students at HGS achieved top grades (A* and A), with many overcoming personal hurdles and challenges to reach some of the most prestigious universities in the world, including Imperial College London, University of Bath, University College London and St Andrews.

Students at The Victory Academy celebrated a set of outstanding exams results in both A Level and vocational qualifications – with strong improvements shown across the board. An impressive 62% of all qualifications were at A*-B and 78% were at A*-C.

The average A Level grade achieved by students increased by an impressive whole grade from 2016, while results in vocational subjects were truly outstanding, with students on average attaining half a grade higher than their targets in all subjects.

In particular, students performed excellently in Art and Product Design, with results exceeding the national average by more than a full grade. In addition, the percentage of students who have achieved the top distinctions in BTEC Sport, Health and Social Care, and Art and Design is well above the national average.

As a result of their success, students will take up places at acclaimed universities across the country, including the Universities of Kent, Roehampton, Canterbury Christchurch, and the University for the Creative Arts.

Progress 8 Score 2017

Provisional scores

The Rochester Grammar School:	0.28
Holcombe Grammar School:	0.00
The Victory Academy:	0.23

Average Result 2017

Provisional scores

Medway average result:	C
England average result:	C+
The Rochester Grammar School:	B+
Holcombe Grammar School:	C
The Victory Academy:	D

GCSE AND KEY STAGE 5 RESULTS GALLERY

GCSE Results



KS5 Results



CHRISTMAS CARD DESIGN COMPETITION

Congratulations to everyone who took part in the Trust 'Christmas Card Competition'. We have very talented students in our schools and it was very difficult to choose the overall winners. The winning designers have each received a pack of cards which they will be proud of.

Mia - Year 1
Cedar Children's Academy



Cerys - Year 6
Isambard Brunel Junior School



Hannah - Year 9
The Rochester Grammar School





THINKING
SCHOOLS
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