

# OUR TRUST

CHILD FIRST, ASPIRE, CHALLENGE, ACHIEVE

SEPTEMBER 2022 | ISSUE 19



THINKING  
SCHOOLS  
ACADEMY TRUST



TRANSFORMING LIFE CHANCES



Front inside cover photos taken at Plympton Academy's performance of Mary Poppins

## WELCOME MESSAGE FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Welcome to the 19th edition of Our Trust! Firstly, I am delighted to welcome several new schools to our Trust. Brixham College is a popular secondary school based in Torbay and



is the third school in the South West to join our family of schools. We also opened our doors for the first time at our new Secondary Free School in Medway – The Maritime Academy. I was really pleased to see our vision of

through education coming to the fore with many of the new Year 7's having transitioned from our local Trust Primary schools. Finally, we also launched our new Penbridge School in Portsmouth which brought together Penhale Infant School and Newbridge Junior School.

This summer we returned to the familiar routines of formal public assessments and examinations and I think it is worth recognising how well our students responded to this challenge. Across our schools, students achieved some outstanding results from Year 6 to Year 13 enabling them to move successfully onto the next step of their life journey. These comments from our students sum up how the examinations went: "It's incredible," Emily said, "I'm most proud of my English results because I successfully revised." "The teachers have been so supportive all the way through these difficult years," Layla said.

With the return to formal public examinations I reflected on how different this process of examinations was to the Teacher Assessments that had taken place during the pandemic. For me, one of the greatest educational steps forward during the pandemic was the implicit use of a criteria-based assessment system for allocating student grades on the basis of what they could do, rather than on the basis of where their score in an exam ranked compared to their peers. I suggested to one of our previous Education Ministers that this was a golden opportunity to reframe our model of

assessment and move away from the obsession that only a certain percentage of students can ever "pass" – wouldn't it be better for us to aspire for everyone to achieve proficiency in English and Maths rather than requiring X% to fail year after year? Unfortunately, I am not sure such a radical change to public policy is on the horizon, however, as expert educators we should be open to challenging the status quo and considering if there is a better way of supporting our young people to Transform their Life Chances.

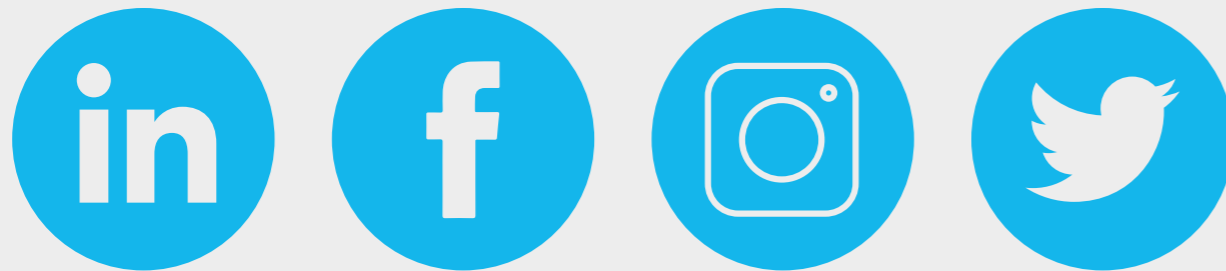
In addition, the increased emphasis and reporting of outcomes has reinforced my belief that our vision of delivering a wide breath of experiences for our students through our focus on Total Education is the right one. Whilst achieving their personal best in academic qualifications is an important element of a child's journey through school, it is only part of the growth and development required for them to reach their full potential. You only have to leaf through the pages of Our Trust to see our commitment to the holistic development of our students from the amazing whole Trust TSARs project to Muddy Madness at Cedar. This year we will be starting to measure the impact of our Total Education offer so that we can continue to develop and enhance this provision for our students. Please enjoy this edition of Our Trust,

*Stuart Gardner*

Stuart Gardner, MSc, NPQH, NLE  
Chief Executive Officer

We're always keen to hear from our readers, so if you would like to provide feedback on this publication, you can by scanning the QR code below.





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our community!

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## Trust Results Celebration

Secondary Schools across the Thinking Schools Academy Trust celebrate their students as they receive their exam results.

This summer marked the first set of 'sat' exam results for GCSEs, IB and A-Levels since the start of the pandemic. The departing cohorts encountered countless disruptions over the last few years with school closures, staff and student absences and changes to the examination processes to name just a few. Throughout this time the students across our Trust have shown great resilience and determination in their studies which has brought them to this moment – A moment to celebrate all the brilliant personal achievements of our young people.

The Thinking Schools Academy Trust now has nine secondary schools located across the south of England. On 6th July, Rochester Grammar School

in Medway received their IB Diploma Programme results. The school offers the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme as an alternative to A-Levels as it is designed to prepare students for university. Through the programme, students' study three higher subjects and three standard subjects across a range of disciplines, including languages, maths, sciences, humanities and the arts. They also complete a Theory of Knowledge course, an Extended Essay and 150 hours of Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS). CAS covers non-academic activities such as volunteering, learning new skills and community projects.

This year, the students excelled themselves, achieving a high average point score of 35, scoring over the

international average of 32 out of 45. Principal Clare Brinklow said "I am so thrilled for this year group of students who have achieved such amazing results against the backdrop of such a turbulent few years. These students did not sit their GCSEs due to the pandemic and had to work through partial school closures and further lockdowns during Year 12, but they have embraced the IB Diploma and all of the exciting opportunities it brings."

Following on from this celebration, on 18th August, Holcombe Grammar School, The Victory Academy and Goodwin Academy in Kent and Plymouth High School for Girls and Plympton Academy in Plymouth, received their A-Level Results.

As with our IB students, these classes showed great tenacity when facing disruption to their education and achieved some fantastic results despite these challenges!

Our schools saw success in a range of subjects, with many seeing over 80% of students achieving A\*- C grades, or equivalent.

Goodwin Student Maisie finished the year with three distinctions and reflected "I feel very proud of my achievements, I have been fully supported through my time at Goodwin. The teachers have been brilliant and I have really enjoyed my education at Goodwin. I am excited about the next chapter in my life." While Molly from The Victory Academy, cried tears of joy at her results, thrilled to be continuing her studies at Canterbury Christchurch University, studying Biology with the hope to return to Victory to teach Science in the future.

Many of our A-Level students are now progressing on to their chosen universities to study a variety of subjects, such as Dentistry, Natural Sciences, Psychology, Nursing, Criminology, Ocean Exploration and Surveying, Business Management, Teaching, Sports Coaching, Economics, Politics, Law and many more. Others are moving on to apprenticeships or full-time employment in varying fields or taking gap years between their studies. Simon Underdown, Headteacher at Plymouth High School for Girls

complemented the cohort, saying "I am delighted for our year 13 students, they have shown resilience and determination in the face of significant challenges. This was the year group that missed out on being in school for the last part of their GCSE courses, yet they approached their A levels with maturity and dedication."

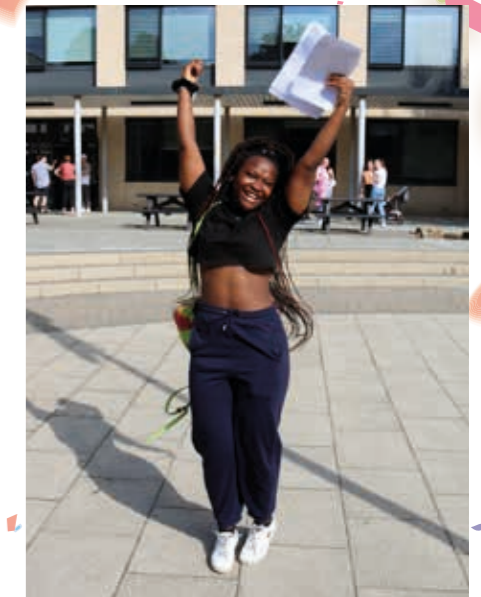
The celebrations did not stop there though, as the following week saw more accolades come through as all secondary schools received their GCSE results. On 25th August, students across the country visited their schools to find out their grades, after being the first year of students to physically sit the exams since 2019.

It's been inspiring to see young people persevere through unforeseen circumstances and achieve their desired grades and ambitions. The schools reflected that students have worked tirelessly to make excellent progress and have truly excelled themselves. They should feel extremely proud of their achievements.

Further to the results day, the Portsmouth Academy said goodbye to their first cohort of boys who completed their studies after joining the school five years ago when it became co-educational. Robin, who made history as the school's very first Head Boy, said he was sad to be leaving but is excited for what the future holds. Leavers praised the staff for their continued support

and positivity, thanking the school for their help over the last five years.

Our students now prepare to take that next step in their education by staying on for Sixth Form or attending college or embarking on an apprenticeship. Their possibilities are endless.



# Thank you Karen Morey



## Headteacher retires after almost 40 years in the job

The county asked whether Karen was okay to work in either Southampton or Portsmouth, and she was happy with both, which led her to joining Meon Infant School.

She said: "On my first day, I thought I had to go out and buy a new lipstick because I felt too young so I needed a new lipstick to make me feel a little bit grown up."

Asked about her biggest learning throughout her time at Meon Infant School, Karen said: "An Ofsted inspector approached me once to say that I love children. I was taken aback as I thought everybody in education loves children."

"The inspector said, but you have a particularly wonderful love for children... and that's just me. I'd say to anyone in education to always be very children first with a constant focus on seeing children being happy and flourish... that's what I have learnt."

Meon Infants is sited next door to Meon Junior School, also part of TSAT, and from September, Meon Junior HT, Sara Paine will step up to become Executive Headteacher of both schools.



A much-loved city headteacher has retired after more than 37 years of transforming the life chances of children at Meon Infant School in Milton, Portsmouth.

Karen Morey, who joined Meon on probation (now recognised as an ECT) in September 1985, says the school community caught her heart from day one - which has been the reason why the school has been her first and only place to teach.

She said: "I'm excited about retirement, but it's mixed with a tinge of sadness as I am part of a community here. I will miss the children, the staff, and the parents because I do feel that I am part of Milton."

"I feel honoured and quite blessed to be part of this community. I have loved this school for so long, which is one of the reasons I didn't move."

Mrs Morey started at the school in Reception and went

on to serve other year groups, before becoming Deputy Head, and Acting Head this past year.

Karen said: "At Meon, it's such a family school. There were lots of other people who stayed here for a long time as well. We were a family within the staff and the community. It has been a nurturing school."

"I have taught lots of the parents of the children that come to school, and often at the beginning when I was in the classroom, I would ask the children whose mums, dads, aunties and uncles I have taught, and many of them would raise their hand."

Karen's journey at the school began in April 1985, when she applied to work in education for Hampshire County Council.

Back then, those in education wouldn't apply for a particular school, as the council managed education for the area.

# 20 DAILY HABITS

## TAKE CARE OF YOUR

# MENTAL HEALTH



### BREATHE

Practice some deep thought



### RELAX

Take some time out of your day to relax



### CHALLENGE

Challenge your negative thoughts



### SLEEP

Get into a good sleep pattern



### STRENGTHS

Write down a list of your strengths every day



### TIME

Make time for yourself each day



### HELP

Don't be afraid to ask for help



### EXERCISE

Exercise is a great tool to reduce anxiety and stress



### DIARY

Engage regularly in a thought diary or journal



### MUSIC

Listen to music that inspires or relaxes you



### GOALS

Set some realistic and achievable goals



### FRIENDS / FAMILY

Talk to your friends and family about how you're feeling.



### FOOD AND DRINK

Drink sensibly and eat a balanced diet



### FEELINGS

Let people know how you feel



### READ

Find an engaging book that you will enjoy reading



### TECH

Take time to disconnect from technology for a while



### WALK

Go for a relaxing walk by yourself or with friends



### TO DO LIST

Start a To Do list to manage your day / week



### KINDNESS

Do something nice for someone



### MINDFUL

Engage in some mindfulness activities



# Long Service Awards

**Schools across the Trust have been hosting events and ceremonies to celebrate our long-serving members of staff who have dedicated 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 years to working for their schools and the Trust.**

The Thinking Schools Academy Trust is proud to connect schools across South England and create a network of hard-working, like-minded individuals. Our staff are encouraged to partake in Continued Professional Development training and professional reflection to ensure our roles are ever-developing and our hard work is recognised and rewarded. We have built a family and are lucky to have many employees who have been integral members of our family for a very long time.

With this in mind, we are thrilled to have brought back the Long Service Awards in 2022! Towards the end of term, schools and departments took time to celebrate their staff in their own creative ways. Gordon Children's Academy started us off strongly, combining the Long Service recognition with their Jubilee celebrations. The Reception children serenaded 'Queen Kerry' with a beautiful jubilee song as she was presented with her 5 years of service award and a range of homemade jewellery gifts.

Cedar Children's Academy built a homemade selfie frame which donned the years of service their staff were marking. Mrs Harding and Mrs Langiano celebrated an incredible 20 years with the school, while Mrs Mates, Mrs Mackenzie, Mrs Crick and Mrs Wells were recognised for their 5 years at Cedar!

All Faiths Children's Academy held an awards ceremony at the end of the year, honouring all the year's achievements from staff and students alike. All the Long Service Awards recipients received their awards as a part of the service, with everyone in the school in attendance to cheer and applaud the presentation.

Plymouth High School was overjoyed to host its first Long Service Awards ceremony for staff since joining the Thinking Schools Academy Trust. All employees and their families were invited to an event honouring those who have dedicated their careers to PHSO.



Staff were able to celebrate their tenure and share tales about how they came to join the school as well as memories from the past.

Elsewhere in Portsmouth, at Newbridge Junior School and Meon Junior School, they enjoyed plenty of scones at their tea party celebrations. The Portsmouth Academy threw an all-staff celebration with party food and games – including Play Your Cards Right and a raffle, with presentations and speeches.

Others in the Trust decided to celebrate in a smaller, more low-key fashion, combining their presentations with the end-of-year BBQs, staff meetings and intimate prize givings.

Celebrating you all for your incredible work and dedication to the schools has been an honour. Without you, we would not be able to achieve our mission of transforming life chances of our children.



**Here's to many more years together!**

**Coming Soon**



TERRIFIC STAFF AND TEAM AWARDS  
RECOGNITION SCHEME

# Holcombe students have something to say



Earth Alliance



The Holcombe Student Representatives had a busy few weeks at the end of the Summer Term, participating in several conferences within the Trust and the local, Medway area.

On 27th June, representatives from the school took part in the inaugural TSA Trust Student Leadership Conference. The conference virtually brings together students from Years 5, 10 and 12 representing their schools across our Trust, providing students with the opportunity to collaborate with their peers from schools they may not work with often. The representatives

teamed up to discuss issues that are common to young people, focusing on Equality and Diversity, Charity and Wellbeing, Student Magazine and the Student's Council. They found the experience to be informative and inspiring, coming away from the event with new ideas they wish to implement in the new year.

The second TSA Trust Student Leadership Conference took place on 11th July and was called 'Earth Alliance'. The Earth Alliance Conference was hosted by Plymouth High School for Girls with keynote speaker, Dr Daley from the University of Plymouth. The main focus of the event was to answer "Why schools need student leaders on environmental issues and why

it's important to maintain a focus on reducing our impact on our environment." Plymouth High introduced their Earth Alliance team to the schools in attendance. The conference gave students the time to reflect on a number of topics in workshops chaired by members of the Earth Alliance team. Topics covered included; Smart Meters, Planters, Clean our Patch, Zero to landfill and Earth Alliance Student Leadership across the Trust.

The Holcombe representatives used this opportunity to express their views on the impact climate change has on our planet. The students commented on the event, saying;

"I found the conference very useful and impactful. 'There is more plastic in the ocean than stars in the milky way,' was the boldest statement from

the conference. I learnt that smart meters are being installed and our school should have one to make a difference in our energy usage." - Henry Stephens, Year 10 Student Representative.

Raza Haisnain, another Year 10 Student Representative said "My favourite part of the meeting was learning about the wildlife and the trees and how we have affected them as it made me aware of this ongoing issue and want to help these things. Specifically, the facts like only 4% of animals are actually free animals and that over half of the trees have been cut down."

The Holcombe Student Representatives didn't stop there though, leaving the classroom and stepping out into the community, they attended the Medway Youth Council Conference

on 7th July. Holcombe was represented by Finn Dewanne from Year 8, Tolywanimi Williams from Year 9 and Henry Stephens from Year 10. The group discussed issues around the topic of 'Poverty – The impact on young people' and were noted to have represented our school very well.

"I was very impressed with the 3 students who came with me yesterday and thought the whole conference was very well organised and engaging for the students. They interacted well with other schools and they used the opportunity to discuss important issues several times to raise concerns and address the panel for the Q&A. It was a rewarding day all round." – Mrs J. Fox

Fantastic work from our students at Holcombe and across the Trust. It's inspiring to see so many of our young people getting involved in the big conversations and making their voices heard. Find out more about the Plymouth High School for Girls Earth Alliance here: [www.phsg.org](http://www.phsg.org)



### Hot wheels: Plymouth High Hummingbird Team are through to the finals!

We are thrilled to share that our Plymouth High School Hummingbird team won both races in the SW Formula 24 heats as well as the Sustainable Award, securing them a place in the Goodwood final later this year.

On Wednesday 15th June 2022, 14 teams from across the southwest pitted their skills against each other during the race at the navy's Predannack Airfield, on the Lizard Peninsula in Cornwall, assisted by engineers from nearby RNAS Culdrose.

The weight and shape of the car are factors the crew must consider, with the drivers laying as low as possible to

ensure Hummingbird stayed sleek and that they drove the car as smoothly as possible.

The engineering team took immense care to guarantee that no material was loose, that the components were aligned and functioned properly, and that anything that could flap around was perfectly nailed down.

The track conditions must be carefully evaluated, and the novice drivers, along with the experienced pit and performance staff, must judge how fast they can go while using the least amount of energy when negotiating the corners, as well as the most effective manner to overtake their competition.



Communication among all teams is critical to the Hummingbirds' success, and this race was no exception.

Jess, the school's new driver, achieved the fastest lap, navigating the 0.8mile circuit in 44 seconds! Incredible!

This racecourse relied heavily on Hummingbird's ability to race on various surface conditions. When designing Hummingbird, PHSG engineers and the design team kept this in mind. As a former airport, the circuit was significantly bumpier than planned, giving Hummingbird the advantage and allowing them to win both races.



# Meon Field Gun

## Meon Junior's first Field Gun teams do Portsmouth proud on Armed Forces Day

Children from Meon Junior School have competed in a Junior Field Gun competition for the first time in Portsmouth.

The Armed Forces Day event, which took place on June 25, saw pupils from the school show the very best skill, stamina, resilience, and teamwork for the challenge.

They had six weeks to prepare for the day and were the only school in Portsmouth to take part.

Miss A. Faye, who cheered the students on while competing against Fareham's Crofton Anne Dale School at the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, says she's proud of what has been achieved.

She said: "It was amazing to watch the children and to see everything they have reached in only six weeks. I am

so proud of every single one of them, it was encouraging to see them having so much fun while doing Meon Junior School proud.

"Their families are so proud of their efforts and continue to cheer them on for more events into the future."

The school had two teams in the contest – Meon's Knights and Meon's Dragons. Throughout the day, onlookers included local city councillors and the Portsmouth South MP Stephen Morgan.

The opportunity came about after Meon Junior signed up to Future Fit Junior Field Gun, which strives to keep Field Gun alive in schools when they were approached to participate.

Miss Faye added: "Both of Meon's crews are amazing and did so well. I decided to

challenge schools in Plymouth for a race next June, for their Armed Forces Day, and they seem up for it.

"We invited Crofton Anne Dale to join us, and they have accepted. I'm hoping that we will see more Portsmouth schools forming their Field Gun teams soon. It would be great to start a league within the city and encourage some friendly competition."

Throughout the training, the children used thinking tools, such as reflective practice and critical thinking, to help them develop the best possible habits for success as a team.

Well done, Meon Junior, we can't wait to support you at your next event!







Staff, children and young people from across the Thinking Schools Academy Trust have impressed thousands of people as they took centre stage for the Trust's talent competition.

Trust's Got Talent, which was the first for our Trust, came as part of the TSArTs week, which saw schools in Plymouth, Portsmouth, Medway and Kent focused on all-things Arts and how it can play a part in achieving our mission to transform life chances.

At the Thinking Schools Academy Trust, we believe we have a responsibility to build our young people's cultural capital as much as possible.

This means offering opportunities for young people to explore culture, by immersing themselves in the Arts and learning all about the world beyond their personal location and circumstances.

As a Trust, we're committed to the Artsmark journey which ensures the cultural and creative education provided by our brilliant schools is broad, diverse and engaging... and this contest provided exactly that!

There were three categories and trophies up for grabs for Trust's Got Talent: Best Primary School, Best Secondary School,



and Best Staff Performance. For the Best Primary School, the trophy went to children from Moorings Way Infant School in Portsmouth.

They have been jumping with joy after their recent win following on from their performance, which celebrated Her Majesty The Queen's 70 year reign on the throne.

The children dressed up in costumes to celebrate the occasion, from footballers to doctors, and impressed everyone in the Trust who could vote for their favourite, as well as guest celebrity judge Ore Oduba who helped with casting the final vote.

He said: "That performance is definitely one of the best group performances I've seen.

"Congratulations [on winning] it was an amazing celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, I loved the song you guys showed such enthusiasm, you sung it beautifully, and I was obsessed by the outfits."

Elated headteacher Ruth Vonk said: "It feels amazing that we have won and the children have had their talent recognised and they feel really proud of themselves.

"One of our school values is about being confident and resilient and, for the children, it was an opportunity for them to perform in front of people and grow their confidence. I'm so very proud."

For the Best Secondary School, the trophy went to students at The Victory Academy in Chatham!

The students performed a dramatic dance piece set to the music of 'Requiem for a Tower'. The creative use of lighting and stage make up emphasised the drama, complementing the choreography perfectly.

Ore praised the "great use of a very 'Britain's Got Talent' tune, I loved the synchronisation between you all. You're all very talented performers." He said "I thought it was outstanding [...] the young guy who was front and centre (Logan), commanded that stage. Well done everybody, you came together so well."

As for our Staff, we saw numerous soloist and group performance entries which were truly fantastic. But there had to be one winner. Congratulations to staff at Plymouth High School for Girls, who were voted as winners by our student judges.

One judge said: "As someone who loves musicals and singing, I thought the harmonies in this performance were fantastic, and they didn't waver or break at any point."

The competition was a fantastic effort from everyone who entered from across our Trust. Keep singing, dancing, performing and laughing!



# Music Mark

Music makes the medicine go down at Plympton Academy!

Plympton Academy is now an independent member of the Plymouth Music Hub and a Music Mark school, providing students with infinite opportunity to access professional resources and music workshops.

“The Music department has given me a voice and is the place where I feel most confident and free to express myself. The Academy puts a high importance on the value of music, and the department provides opportunities for everyone to be involved.”  
Student at Plympton Academy, Willow McDaniel

Plympton Academy will create additional relationships with other schools in the local area as a Music Mark School, allowing students to collaborate on future music shows and concerts.

“The Music department is committed to offering the best musical experiences to our students and is fully inclusive no matter previous experience. We have joined Music Mark to support this commitment and to emphasise the Academy wide support for the high-quality Music education for our students. We look forward to being able to offer Music projects and opportunities from industry practitioners to enhance the high-quality provisions that we already provide.” Nicky Clapson - Head of Music at Plympton Academy

As part of Plympton Academy’s mission to “transform life chances”, we believe we have a responsibility to increase the cultural capital of our young people as much as possible, which includes providing opportunities for

our students to explore and immerse themselves in the arts, as well as learn about the world beyond their location and circumstances. We believe that by broadening our students’ cultural awareness and encouraging them to participate in new experiences, we can help them grow personally and increase their understanding beyond the classroom.

Students performed a superb Broadway standard production, Mary Poppins, last term. From lighting to costumes Plympton put the super in supercalifragilisticexpialidocious.

# Muddy Madness

Cedar Children’s Academy gets muddy for charity

Cedar Children’s Academy gets muddy for charity.

In June Cedar Children’s Academy got messy in their Muddy Madness assault course. Working with local company, Muddy Madness 4 kids, an obstacle course was prepared, with 3000 litres of water used to create a mucky mess. On the day, staff and students ran the course,

going under, over and through a number of fun obstacles, getting themselves into a bit of a mess along the way.

Speaking to our children afterward they all shared how much they enjoyed the event. Everyone was sponsored to take part, raising money for the PTA. It was incredible to see so many people involved.

A big shout out must go to the school’s brilliant PTA for their fantastic work and support throughout the day.

The total number of donations came to a phenomenal £2,809.56! This amazing amount will make such a difference, thank you to everyone who donated.



# Thinking School Accreditations

Schools rejoice as they celebrate being awarded several fantastic achievements!

New Horizons Children's Academy had a whirlwind final term. Before breaking up for the summer, the school took some time to celebrate many brilliant achievements including retaining their 'Good' rating from their recent Ofsted inspection and gaining their Artsmark Gold Award. What's more the Trust celebrated a double win as both New Horizons Children's Academy and The Victory Academy became accredited as Advanced Thinking Schools!

The University of Exeter's Thinking Schools @ Exeter leads the way in research in Metacognition, Thinking Skills, Creativity and Dialogue in Education - providing a structure for schools to become recognised Thinking Schools. The Victory Academy was accredited as a Level 1 Thinking School in 2018. It was identified as a "school with a clear vision of the attributes that it wants all children to develop and is relentless in its pursuit of this vision." New Horizons Children's Academy was accredited as a Thinking School in 2017 and was the

first school in Kent to gain additional accreditation through the SEND Inclusion Award in 2019. "These achievements reflect the



school's drive for sustained holistic development, together with an unwavering commitment to lifelong learning for all."

In order to achieve Level 2 Thinking accreditation to become an Advanced Thinking School, the academies were assessed on; Dissemination of Practice, Evaluative

Research, Professional Development, Differentiation, and Whole School Assessment. These areas identify the school's continued work to support lifelong learning and holistic growth for all students. Both schools have fully embedded Thinking Skills into their teaching, assessment,

evaluation, and staff development which was recognised throughout the reports. The University of Exeter documented, "It is clear that The Victory Academy has an exceptional commitment to its continued development as a Thinking School, both in terms of ethos and pedagogy. [...] there are effective strategies in place across subject areas that encourage and support evaluation and reflective practice of learning and teaching approaches and impact."

Principal of The Victory Academy, Michelle Smith, says "The staff at The Victory Academy work tirelessly to transform the life chances of our students, support their progress and develop their thinking. I couldn't be prouder that the University of Exeter's School of Education recognises our commitment to our young people and awarded us the Advanced Thinking School Accreditation. Thank you to everyone involved who worked so hard to achieve this award."



New Horizons was praised for providing additional work on a national level, supporting schools across Plymouth and Portsmouth, and running a number of workshops at Trust conferences. The school "is working with the Assistant Head of a school in China on using meta-cognitive language aligned to Thinking Tools" and have recently been part of a "research group for a new book on Retrieval Practice." The University of Exeter states, "There is a clear and effective programme of dissemination across the whole multi-academy, the Thinking Schools network, regionally, nationally, and internationally which includes contributions to conferences and publications."

Cormac Murphy, Principal of New Horizons Children's Academy, says, "I am thrilled to have our commitment to the development of staff and students at New Horizons recognised by the University of Exeter. We strive for excellence and aim to provide an education for our children that will transform their life



chances and help them thrive as they continue to learn. Thank you to everyone who has been involved in this process and for your incredible hard work in achieving this award."

This is a proud moment for the two schools and is the result of all the hard work the staff and students have put into understanding and applying the Thinking School ethos to

all aspects of school life. The schools will continue to grow through staff development and training and embedding cognitive education to support our children to become skilled, independent, and reflective learners.



## Meet the teachers supporting students' great achievements using the Microsoft Reading Progress app...

Teachers from The Portsmouth Academy have helped increase the average reading age for some Year 7 pupils by more than 5 months after they introduced the Microsoft Reading Progress app into everyday literacy.

Chiara Fraser, Liv Fox, and Sam Devoil were recognised for their reading revolution at the Teach Portsmouth Awards earlier this year after receiving the Innovation in Teaching Award. Thinking Creative spoke to the team on what it is all about, and their big plans...

Why did you win the Innovation in Teaching Award?

The award recognises the work we have done around literacy, to improve the average reading age for students within the school, with the Microsoft Reading Progress tool on their digital One:One devices.

As a Thinking School, we know that as our society and community move forward, we must move forward with them. Part of the One:One overhaul – where every student in Years 7 and 8 receives a laptop to

support their learning – is to encourage accessibility around learning for our students. So, the three of us thought let us improve literacy by using these devices.

We won the award due to our ability to use Microsoft applications on our One:One devices to make literacy more accessible to our students.

How has the Microsoft Reading Progress tool helped students at the school?

The Microsoft Reading Progress app enables us to upload various pieces of text that the students can engage with using their One:One device.

But what is fantastic, is we can adapt how students – such as those with an accent or a certain dialect – can engage with the reading.

When the students are reading aloud to the app, it can show how many pauses they make, the intonations they have, the mispronunciations they speak and their speed.

It tracks when they stumble over words, their pauses, fluency, and everything else to do with reading aloud.

Staff can then log onto the

app and see the app's report for every student, so can then support them even further.

You can film and record yourself through this app too, which will provide you with a percentage score out of 100 and provide you with a breakdown of what to do differently to improve.

How has the Microsoft Reading app changed how you teach?

One example of how the app has changed how we teach is that it has allowed us to quickly find the most common and complex words for a whole class.

If, for example, a student is reading aloud to the app and stumbles on a challenging word, if that happens consistently across the class then we can address that and get everyone's ability aligned.

Are you only using the app in English?

No. When you think about developing your literacy, so many people categorise it into English lessons, but that is not right.

Literacy is used in every subject, so we are hoping to use the Microsoft Reading Progress tool in as many

subjects as possible. In the 2022/2023 academic year, we are rolling this reading progress app out into history, geography, and science. Students' homework across these subjects will incorporate the app too so that the young people are consistently improving.

What is next for you?

Now that we have a firm grasp on Microsoft's Reading Progress feature, we are planning to roll that out across the whole of Key Stage Three [Years 7, 8 and 9] and eventually school wide. Alongside that, we will introduce Microsoft Reading Coach to the students too. Reading Coach will build on what students have achieved in the Reading Progress app by showing the 5 words each student struggled with the most and presenting them again with the tools to support them in practising independently.

The tools available can include text-to-speech, syllable

breaking, and a picture dictionary. We will be able to customise how it is delivered, so pupils can have a learning experience that is bespoke to their needs which will hugely support their progress.

How have you worked with Microsoft on the roll out of these apps?

We have learnt so much from Microsoft and continue to learn too. We are on a journey with using these apps to help students here at The Portsmouth Academy. We heard about this around six months before it was released, so we have been very privileged to work in partnership with Microsoft to have the success stories we see and hear today.

How do you feel as professionals in education seeing the Microsoft Reading Progress App positively playing a part in transforming life chances?

It is a proud moment to see students engaged and open-

minded about this tool. It is sometimes a bit of a struggle for them to take literacy seriously, or to care about it, but they have received the app well and it is encouraging to see a difference is already being made.

It is all about accessibility here. Young people cannot see and understand their world without being able to read. That is not just about reading information but reading culture. We live in such a multicultural place, in Portsmouth, so it is amazing so many of our students can now engage with this tool and improve their reading.





# TSAT ROCKS

Times Tables Rockstars Battle

## All Faiths finish the year on a high with three TSAT Rocks win under their belt

Last year, junior school students across the Trust battled it out to be crowned TSAT Rocks Champions. Times Tables Rockstars is an enjoyable and interactive tool, helping children across the country learn and practice their times tables. During the TSAT Rocks tournament, our junior school students compete against each other to become Top of the Rocks and take home the TSAT Rocks trophy.

Our students have been taking part in the termly tournaments since December 2021, with each tournament seeing over 1,500 children getting involved across 96 classes in 7 schools, including; All Faiths Children's Academy, Cedar Children's Academy, Gordon Children's Academy and New Horizons Children's Academy in Medway and New Horizons Primary School, Meon Junior School and Newbridge Junior School in Portsmouth.

Every tournament gets bigger and better with our final battle seeing a phenomenal 1,617,552 questions answered, breaking the previous record. This is due to the sheer hard work and determination of our students, who should all be extremely proud of what they have achieved this year.



All seven schools involved have done an incredible job competing over the months, but a special mention must go to All Faiths Children's Academy for winning a fantastic 3 out of 5 tournaments! As a one-form entry school, this is an incredible achievement which both the staff and students are thrilled to celebrate!

Jody Murphy, Director of Education, said: "It's been wonderful to see students from both Medway and Portsmouth taking part in the TSAT Rocks competition and

improving their times tables in a fun and competitive way. As always, this couldn't be possible without the support from the Maths leaders in our Primary Schools as well as teachers and parents. Congratulations to everyone who took part in all of our competitions – we look forward to a new year of battles and welcoming a new cohort of students taking part!"

Well done to all of our children who took part and represented their schools; you are all Times Tables Rock Stars! Keep up the hard work, continue to practice your sums, and we'll see you at the next battle.

Take a look at the results of all of our tournaments throughout the year.



|                     |                               |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Term 2</b>       |                               |
| <b>First Place</b>  | Gordon Children's Academy     |
| <b>Second Place</b> | Cedar Children's Academy      |
| <b>Third Place</b>  | Meon Junior School            |
| <b>Term 3</b>       |                               |
| <b>First Place</b>  | All Faiths Children's Academy |
| <b>Second Place</b> | Gordon Children's Academy     |
| <b>Third Place</b>  | Newbridge Junior School       |
| <b>Term 4</b>       |                               |
| <b>First Place</b>  | All Faiths Children's Academy |
| <b>Second Place</b> | Newbridge Junior School       |
| <b>Third Place</b>  | Cedar Children's Academy      |
| <b>Term 5</b>       |                               |
| <b>First Place</b>  | Newbridge Junior School       |
| <b>Second Place</b> | All Faiths Children's Academy |
| <b>Third Place</b>  | New Horizons Primary School   |
| <b>Term 6</b>       |                               |
| <b>First Place</b>  | All Faiths Children's Academy |
| <b>Second Place</b> | Newbridge Junior School       |
| <b>Third Place</b>  | Cedar Children's Academy      |





# THINKING fitness

Thinking Fitness is proud to have opened a brand new sports centre this year: Thinking Fitness Plympton!

Thinking Fitness is our very own gym and sports centre brand, which offers access to fantastic equipment and facilities to our young people during school time and to the public on evenings and weekends. All profits generated from Thinking Fitness memberships are recycled back into our Trust, to support our mission of transforming life chances for each of our young people.

Our first Thinking Fitness gym at Holcombe Grammar School has proved a fantastic success, and this year we extended our Thinking Fitness family with the launch of Thinking Fitness Plympton at Plympton Academy in Plymouth.

Thinking Fitness Plympton saw its official opening this July, attracting many new members from the local area of Plympton. The students at Plympton Academy have also enjoyed using the gym's equipment and facilities, which includes state-of-the-art cardiovascular equipment and the school's 3G football pitch.

In line with our Trust's 'child first' value, Thinking Fitness is also proud to offer Junior Memberships, which allow families to attend the gym and keep fit together.

We are proud to be extending the Thinking Fitness family, and the team is working on the launch of two new Thinking Fitness gyms later this year. Building works are underway at The Rochester Grammar School, where we will be opening a brand new Thinking Fitness gym with a wonderful new sports hall and gym. An exciting new project, the opening of Thinking Fitness Rochester will see students at Rochester Grammar enjoy access to the best, state-of-the-art sports facilities, as well as our second Thinking Fitness

gym in Medway! Members of Thinking Fitness Chatham and Thinking Fitness Rochester will have access to both sites, and attend a great variety of classes across two centres, included in their memberships.

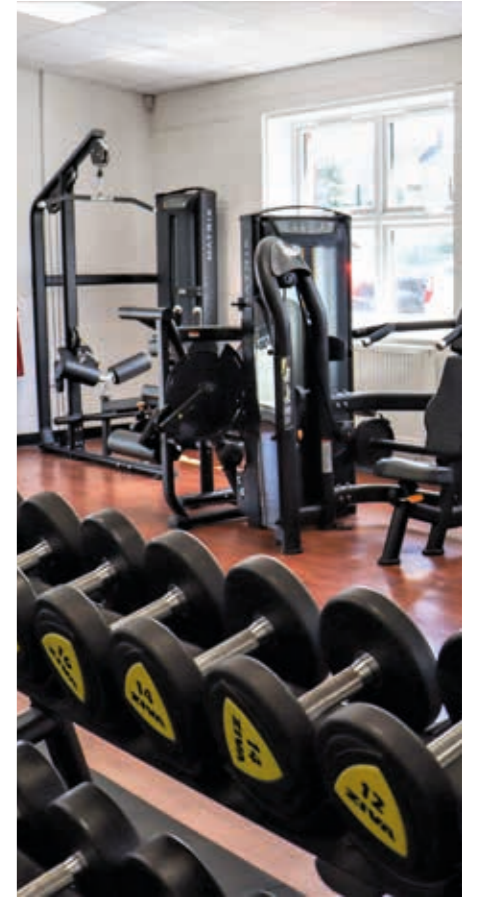


At the start of September, our Trust welcomed Brixham College as one of the newest members of our Thinking Schools family, and with it, another Thinking Fitness gym! From November, the school's gym will be equipped with new equipment and facilities for students and the wider public to enjoy

"Thinking Fitness has gone from strength to strength, and the growth of our Thinking Fitness group of gyms has been brilliant," said Nick Forward, Head of Business Development. "To have expanded from one Thinking Fitness gyms to four by the end of the year is really exciting, and all the

more rewarding knowing the income generated by our sports centres is recycled back into our schools to enhance the education of our young people. I'm so proud of the team and our schools for their hard work and cooperation, and can't wait to see Thinking Fitness develop further."

Congratulations to the Thinking Fitness team on these fantastic milestones. We are excited to report on the launch of our two new gyms in future editions of Our Trust.



For more information on our Thinking Fitness gyms or to secure your own membership, visit <https://www.thinking-fitness.com/>



# Goodwin Sports Day Assistance and RGS Sports Award

## Schools use sports to connect to local communities



Sport is a large part of school life, with students participating in interschool, regional and national leagues and tournaments throughout the year. The students at Goodwin Academy had a busy few months using sports and exercise to support a number of events.

Within the Summer Term, the academy sent a group of Year 12 Sports Leaders and Year 10 BTEC Sport students to provide assistance at the Kingsdown Primary School Summer Cup. Taking place on 5th July, all primary schools in the area are invited to take part. The students from Goodwin helped in running the events, setting up each activity, assisting pupils, starting the races and giving out the awards. The Headteacher and sports coaches from Kingsdown Primary School

could not praise our students more highly. All students involved were a true credit to our school and the PE Department.

Goodwin Academy also had groups of students from Year 9 and 10 visit Parochial Primary School and Hornbeam Primary School to support with their sports day events. Similarly to Kingsdown, the feedback from the primaries was glowing and the pupils, once again, did the school proud. Goodwin Academy always looks for ways to connect with the community and thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to work closely with the infant and junior schools in the area.

This Summer, the Commonwealth Games were hosted in Birmingham, showcasing the phenomenal sports talent available within Britain and beyond. As part of the Kent-wide School Games organisers strategy for the legacy of the Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2022, SGOs across the county organised several



Commonwealth Sport events alongside community clubs to ensure "a lasting legacy" of the games. – Introducing the Goodwin Try'athlon, spelt this way to coincide with the aim to encourage people to have a 'try' at new sports.

Phase one of the Try'athlon was run as a school house competition in a relay format. Each house completed 30 lengths in Dover Leisure swimming pool, with a pupil from each house and form completing 750 metres, a 20km cycle, which took place in the fitness suite and a 5km run around the academy field.

Staff were on site to monitor lengths swam and distance travelled throughout the race. Alongside this, Mrs Cribben, a teacher at Goodwin Academy, raced in a local triathlon for the first time, raising money for Macmillan Cancer Support. Collectively between the Try'athlon and Mrs Cribben's fundraising, the school raised a combined sum over £1,000.

Following on from this, students from Years 7, 8 and 9 participated in the Try'athlon - "A Birmingham Commonwealth Legacy" in July. The event aimed to engage Key Stage 3 students who may not have access to community clubs or events like this in their everyday lives.

The event took place at The Duke of Yorks in Dover, where our students had to complete a 100 metre swim, followed by a 4 Kilometre cycle and finish on a 1.5 kilometre run. They really challenged themselves and completed the race through sheer perseverance and resilience. It was wonderful to see how proud they were for completing all three activities and only had positive feedback from the experience. They commented on how much they enjoyed the opportunity to complete a new individual challenge. Each student was awarded with a T-shirt, medal and certificate for their efforts.

Over in Medway, Rochester Grammar School encountered a number of brilliant sporting successes this year, leading them to achieve the School Games Gold Mark Award for the 2021/2022 academic year. The School Games Mark is a Government-led award scheme launched in 2012, facilitated by the Youth Sport Trust, to reward and recognise school's engagement in the School Games against a national benchmark and to celebrate keeping young people active.

Rochester Grammar is a big supporter of celebrating their students' successes in sports both within school and as extracurricular interests. The school praised many of their students' sporting achievements throughout the year, including Scarlett, who was a runner up in football with Kent at the National County Championships against Stoke City FC and awarded top goal scorer of the season.

In June the school's Year 7 Cricket team competed in the Medway SSG Cricket Competition, finishing in second place, while the Year 7 super 8s athletics team placed 5th overall in the Medway Secondary School Games competition.

When they're not taking part, the students assist in competitions in many other ways. In June, a number of sports leaders umpired and scored at the Medway Sport MYG Kwik Cricket competition at High Halstow CC. Throughout the day their confidence grew and they were a great representation of the school.





# MARITIME ACADEMY

**This September, Maritime Academy officially opened its doors and welcomed its founding Year 7 cohort!**



technical knowledge and teach transferable skills highly sought after by employers.

We are incredibly proud of every member of our Trust who contributed to the successful opening of Maritime Academy. This term marks the beginning of a very special and exciting journey for the Academy, and we are excited to see it go from strength to strength as its student body grows.

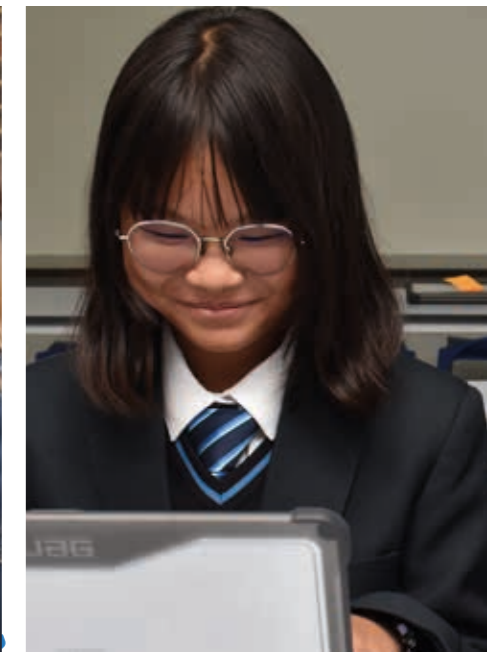
Maritime Academy is a new school offering much-needed school places in Medway, and the first brand new secondary school that we have opened as a Trust. Planning for Maritime began in 2016; years of hard work, collaboration, research and development have gone in to creating a new and unique school of which we are incredibly proud.

Maritime is built on an ethos of academic and personal development, and the Academy aims to 'Make Excellence a Habit' for its students and support them in becoming lifelong learners.

Maritime started its first year with a highly successful One:One device roll-out: every student was given a free personal device to support their learning, develop their



"Maritime Academy has been a long time in the making, so to see our first cohort in their new Maritime uniform enter our doors for the first time was a truly magical moment. To open a brand-new secondary school is a very unique opportunity, for our Trust and for every member of staff involved. I am incredibly proud of this achievement and would like to take the opportunity to thank our Central services team who have been integral to the successful opening of our school. We have designed a school with values and a vision that will provide the best possible education for our students and transform life chances for all," said Jody Murphy, Director of Education for Strood.





# Welcome

Over the last 12 months Thinking Schools Academy Trust has been working alongside Brixham College on their journey to join our Trust this September 2022. We are delighted to welcome all staff and students to the Trust.

Brixham College is a mixed secondary school and sixth form located in Brixham in the county of Devon. As well as ensuring students succeed in exams, the college aim to develop knowledge, character, leadership and continued improvement in all their pupils. Brixham College is a value led school and students are expected to demonstrate our values in their work, attitude and contribution to our community and to society. Joining the Trust is a natural progression for the College

who will work alongside the Trust to share knowledge, resources and best practice with other academies through the Trust's collaborative networks.

Mark Eager, Principal at Brixham College, said:

“We are delighted to embark on the next phase of Brixham College’s journey by becoming part of the Thinking Schools Academy Trust. This will support a greater capacity for providing quality first education for our students and will also provide some exciting opportunities for collaboration with other schools both locally and further afield. This larger learning community will provide further opportunities for us to inspire success in all that we do”.



This is an exciting time for the Brixham and Torbay community as over the coming months, Furzeham Primary and Nursery will join Brixham College in their conversion to the Thinking Schools Academy Trust to provide children with an all-through school education experience.



# Welcome



Penhale Infant School and Newbridge Junior School have now merged to form Penbridge Infant and Nursery and Penbridge Junior School. This exciting news was met with much jubilation by the schools' staff, students, and local community.

While the schools officially joined together this September, they have been working together, with the support of the Trust, over the last 12 months to transform life chances and ensure a smooth transition for its pupils. By joining together, both the Nursery and Junior School will be able to offer their children a complete primary education on two different sites and benefit from shared teaching resources and knowledge as well as extracurricular activities.

Both sites hosted parties in honour of the occasion. Stephen Morgan MP, Shadow Minister for Education, visited his old elementary school,

Penbridge, as a special guest. The Portsmouth Academy, New Horizons Primary School, and Meon Junior School's respective heads of schools, as well as Cllr Suzie Horton, were present at the celebration of the schools' transition.

The schools will be called Penbridge to represent the union of the two. Staff and students were heavily involved in the design of the school's colours and logos, and they couldn't be happier to start the new school year wearing a brand-new uniform that is distinct in colour and personality.

Anna Webb, Executive Headteacher for Penbridge



Schools, said:

"For many years, the infant and junior schools have worked closely together, sharing curriculum improvements and taking part in events for our children. Both locations becoming Penbridge Schools is a natural progression. I'd like to thank our staff, children, and the larger community for their support, and I'm looking forward to the next chapter in our journey."

Natalie Sheppard, Direction of Education for Portsmouth Schools added:

"I am thrilled to see so many members of our staff, children, and community in Portsmouth celebrating the opening of Penbridge Schools. Children in Portsmouth will receive an excellent, all-through primary education as a result of the merging of both sites. Incredibly excited to see where Penbridge School goes, I am incredibly proud of Anna and her team."

Stephen Morgan MP, Schools Shadow Minister, said:

"As a former pupil of both these schools, it's encouraging to see them working even closer together to ensure every young person succeeds and thrives in our community.

"It's been fantastic to visit the school today as the new term starts and I look forward to hearing about the future successes of Penbridge Schools."





THINKING SCHOOLS  
ACADEMY TRUST

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