

Welcome to the final edition of FMAT Connect this academic year. It is difficult to summarise the scale of changes we have all encountered since March and the articles in this edition begin to give an indication of all the hard work and effort given by all of our staff and students.

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly affected the lives of many people and we must never forget this. However, it has marked a moment in time where we can reflect on what had become the normal routines of academy life. Was the day structured in the right way and how did we know? How can we make the most of our digital technology? What is the best way to offer pastoral care to all our students and staff? What is the most effective way to use our sites? What does blended learning mean and how can we use it? Are we fully preparing our students for the world they will face in the future, or have we been preparing them for the world as it is/was? There are of course many questions to consider and I have been immensely impressed with the professionalism of staff as they wrestle with the challenges and big questions that lie ahead.

I would like to end this introduction by simply thanking you for your hard work and dedication over the last few months and finally I would like to thank staff for making me feel so welcome during my first five months as CEO.



MR SIMON JONES | CEO

FEATURED INSIDE

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DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY

Use
your time
wisely...

CONNECTING WITH FAIRFAX

HEAD OF ACADEMY UPDATE

It has been fantastic to welcome back so many students in Year 10 and Year 12 over the last two weeks. Attendance has been excellent and it has been a real pleasure to see so many of our KS4 and KS5 students excited to be back in school.

There is no question that things are very different in Fairfax Academy, with staggered start and end times, assigned gates, classes of 9 students and group bubbles for social time. But our students have managed the transition to these arrangements with maturity and their behaviour has been exemplary.

Whilst staff have kept in touch with students during the lockdown, they are thoroughly enjoying face-to-face contact and teaching students and are looking forward to welcoming back additional students in the coming weeks.

It has been fantastic to see so many staff in school preparing their working spaces for September; classrooms look clean and tidy and the displays engaging and purposeful.

As Head of Academy I have enjoyed meeting small groups of staff to lead training on Academy culture. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive and we are all ready to embrace Fairfax ARKS when September arrives #wearefairfax

MRS D BUNN | HEAD OF ACADEMY

**Be Ambitious. Be Respectful!
Be Kind. Be Safe.
Be Fairfax.**

ARKS

CONNECTING WITH FAIRFAX

FAIRFAX ACADEMY STUDENTS KEEPING BUSY DURING LOCKDOWN

I am delighted that many of our Fairfax Academy students have been participating in challenges set by both Faculties and Houses during the lockdown.

Our House Challenges have focussed on wellbeing including trying new skills such as cooking, cycling and reading different genres of books. Our Faculty Challenges have varied by subject and Food Technology have focussed on 'Chef of the Week'.

Students that have been developing their culinary skills during the lockdown period have produced some super dishes, with many competing for the title of 'Chef of the Week'. Very well done to all our students trying something new or improving their current skills, keep up the good work!

MRS R BOYCE | DEPUTY HEAD OF ACADEMY



CONNECTING WITH ERDINGTON

HEAD OF ACADEMY UPDATE

On the 20th March we shut our doors to the majority of our students and began a new journey in the life of our Academy. Like voyagers on a newly-discovered sea, we had no idea how long the journey would last; what perils we may encounter or what new adventures we might experience.

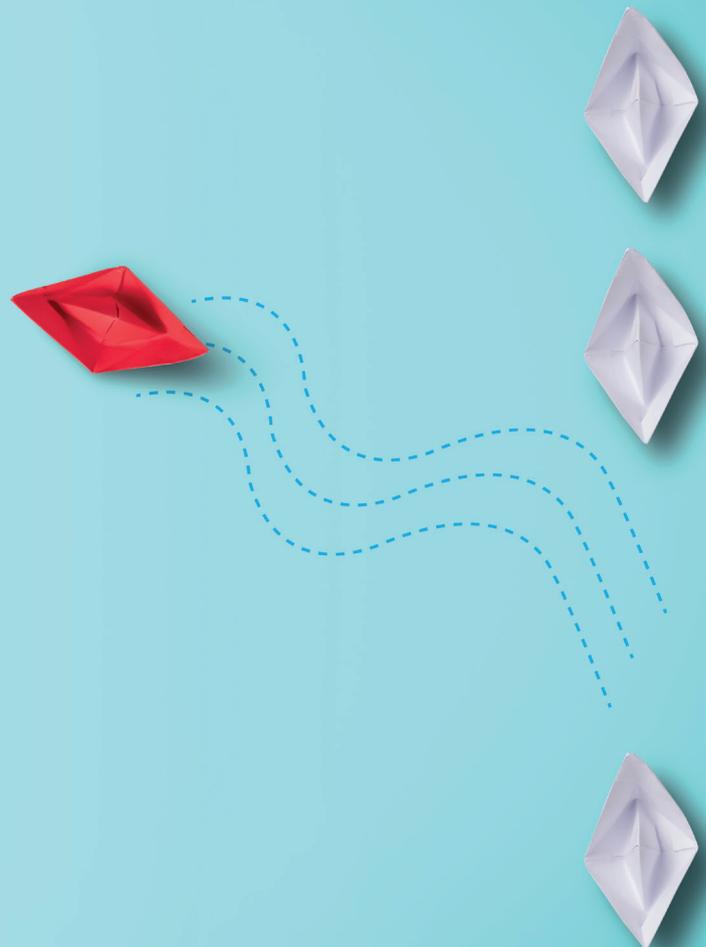
We began to navigate our way around this 'brave new world' and welcomed back Year 10 on the 15th June, with students initially being taught in bubbles for four lessons a day, five days a week. We were able to deliver lessons in their core subjects as well some options, PSHE and PE. There were staggered start and finish times and staggered breaks and lunches. Students responded really positively and we saw an increase in Year 10 wanting to return to school! The increase meant that we had to re-chart our course and make changes to our plans. We moved to split the Year 10 students further, half of the bubbles were moved to attend school on Monday & Tuesday for five lessons and the other half attend Wednesday – Friday for five lessons. The students have adapted to the changes to their environment really well and have thoroughly engaged with all their lessons.

We have continued to contact all our students weekly and to set home learning – it hasn't all been smooth sailing for them, but we have managed to help them navigate their way through it, by both steering and supporting our students and their parents/carers. Although the conditions of learning have changed, the dedication of our staff and high expectations of students remains anchored in excellence. All students have been given the opportunity to showcase their home learning through 'exam week' where all students have been set 45-minute assessments in all subjects to complete with the results being sent out in their end of year report.

We look forward to welcoming students in Years 7 – 9 next week for some face to face contact with their form groups and form tutors, for a one-off targeted reintegration session. We believe that spending some time back in school will be of benefit to the children's wellbeing and will support their confident return to a more formal school setting next term.

As we sail into the sunset of the summer holiday we reflect, it has been an extraordinary voyage to steer; we hope that we have passed through all the stormy waters along the route, and are looking ahead to the next stop on our itinerary. Whatever September looks like we are ready to sail to our final destination of 'normality' when we can welcome back aboard all of students and deliver the exciting new curricula we have planned.

MR SIMON MALLET | HEAD OF ACADEMY



CONNECTING WITH ERDINGTON ACADEMY

AIMING HIGHER IN ART

I was very pleased to receive the following email from one of Erdington Academies Year 9 photography students”

“Hi sir

I would like to inform you that I have successfully won the runner up prize in the art in isolation competition.

I would very much like to thank you for allowing me to enter this competition with great work and compassion for photography. If it weren't for your great support I would've not been here right now.

Thank you so much.”

The art department would like to congratulate Mohamed Frej on his recent success in a competition ran by Aim Higher West Midlands. School closure and social distancing has been a strange and difficult experience for many students. Aim higher wanted to challenge students to express themselves through a piece of art.

Students were asked to create a piece of artwork based on the themes of aspiration, motivation and inspiration under the title of Art in Isolation. Mohamed chose to submit a black & white photograph he had created which the judges loved and on 29th June he was awarded one of the runners up prizes.

Well done again Mohamed Frej.

MR DANIEL | SUBJECT LEADER - ART



YEAR 11 VISIT TO THE GLOBE THEATRE



The English and Drama faculty at Erdington Academy prides itself on being able to provide enriching cultural opportunities

for our students. In March, we were fortunate enough to take a group of Year 11 to the Southbank in London, and view a performance of Macbeth at the Globe Theatre. It was a fantastic opportunity for students to make sense of a key GCSE text. Initially, students were a little wary, as we were allocated standing tickets. However, it allowed for a great insight into how Shakespeare crafted his plays - it is no easy feat to keep an audience engaged, while standing, for nearly two hours. The production did not let our 'groundlings' down. Flyers proclaiming Macbeth as a tyrant being distributed throughout the audience and confetti cannons raining down on the students

were two of the many brilliant moments in which the cast interacted with the 'groundlings.' A pregnant Lady Macbeth peaked the attention of all, including staff. It was particularly lovely to see the diversity of our students reflected in the diversity of the casting, adding another character-building dimension to our trip.

This was the culmination of an exciting year working with Deutsche Bank's 'Playing Shakespeare' programme, beginning with a twilight session with our faculty on the Globe's active approach to teaching Shakespeare texts, and an opportunity for students on the trip to have a one-hour workshop with a Globe practitioner in school, as well.

With the current climate, it has also been a privilege to give our students this experience, as there is still uncertainty for companies like the Globe and Royal Shakespeare Company and what they will be offer in the future.

MISS SIMONE MABBETT | ASSOCIATE ASSISTANT

CONNECTING WITH SMITH'S WOOD

HEAD OF ACADEMY UPDATE

BIG HEARTS

As we draw to the end of the academic year I would like to offer my sincere thanks to staff, students and parents of our students for their unwavering support, particularly during the latter part of this academic year. I have been overwhelmed by their support for the Academy and, very importantly, their support for each other.

The last few months have certainly been a testing time but have also provided many of us with a period of reflection; a time to reassess what is important in our lives and to take stock of what really matters.

From a personal perspective I have started to notice more. I have noticed the small acts of kindness from others, I have noticed more about the people I know and I have noticed more about my surroundings. Noticing these things has helped me to feel an acute sense of gratitude.

During the lockdown period I have been in awe of the contributions that our Academy community has made to the world around them. 'Gratitude' relates to the quality of being thankful; it is a readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness; something which our children have shown in abundance.

I have been proud of how our children have managed themselves and supported their families during the lockdown period. I know for many it has been a particularly difficult period. That said, many young people have put others first and have supported the local and national effort through charity work. Many of our students have worked hard to show their gratitude in this way. They have tried hard to give something back and I am very proud of them for of this.



CONNECTING WITH SMITH'S WOOD

HEAD OF ACADEMY UPDATE

A special Smith's Wood thanks goes to:

Nowaf Abagana, Year 7 has been making cupcakes and selling them for 50p to raise money for the Black Lives Matter movement, a cause which Nowaf is very passionate about.

Beau Brotheridge, Year 8, alongside other students took part in sponsoring a family member to raise £500 by shaving off their hair!

Mason Silver, Year 8, has been helping out at his Grandparent's Care Home; buying residents essential products and food items (also some sweet treats too!). With the help of his family Mason has impacted on the lives of many vulnerable people.

Alongside these volunteering efforts Mason has also raised £1000 for the NHS with his Granddad, by volunteering to shave off all of his Granddad's hair!

Tye Velvet, Year 9, is one of our talented musicians. He has been taking his drum kit out in the street in which he lives and playing the drums for the residents to enjoy and recognise the work of key workers.

Chloe Weston, Year 9, has been buying essentials and donating them to local charities to help vulnerable people during this time. She has also been delivering essentials to people who are unable to leave their homes.

Zarah Ben-Farhat, Year 10, has been volunteering with her Mum, who is a key worker, by picking up parcels from the council, and distributing them to families in need.

Kieran Raybone, Year 10, has raised a fantastic £135 for the NHS by completing a 12K run on his Treadmill!

These are just a few of our children that deserve special recognition for simply being the good people that they are.

One of the things that I truly love about working at Smith's Wood is the people that I am fortunate to work alongside every day. To be part of Smith's Wood you have to have a big heart; thankfully that is exactly what our staff and students have.

I send my very best wishes to all that belong to our FMAT family and I hope that you have a restful and enjoyable summer break.

MRS K CRAIG | HEAD OF ACADEMY #bettertogether #no-oneleftbehind



CONNECTING WITH SMITH'S WOOD

MR DAN BARCLAY | ASSISTANT HEAD TEACHER

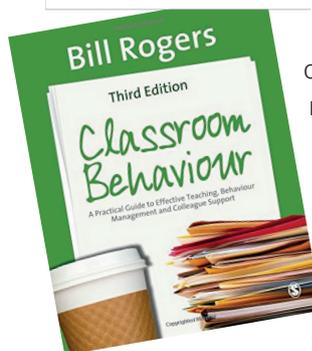
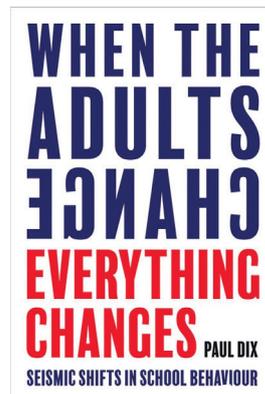
A new ethos for behaviour at Smith's Wood Academy

Connect – Respect - Excel

Having joined Smith's Wood at Easter, having previously been a Head of Department and a member of SLT at Cockshut Hill School, I have had the bizarre experience of starting a new job whilst the vast majority of students stay at home. However, whilst this has meant forming new relationships and really getting stuck in has been on pause, this has provided me with the time to really look at behaviour and ethos at Smith's Wood Academy in a detail I perhaps may not have had the time to do in the hectic nature of a normal school day. It is during this time that myself and many others at Smith's Wood have been working on creating a new ethos for behaviour at Smith's Wood Academy.

It started with a conversation in April around our sanctions at Smith's Wood. The conversation became focused around a few questions. Does this sanction meet our ethos and vision for the students? Is this an effective sanction not just for punishing a behaviour, but does it support the student or work towards a solution? Has lockdown and the potential experiences our students and staff have faced during Covid mean we need a new ethos?

After this conversation we decided to create a new vision and ethos for behaviour. This has been something I have found challenging but thoroughly enjoyable. I knew early on that writing this myself, in isolation, whilst sat at my dining room table would just not work. Not only did I not have all the answers, but I wanted to draw on the expertise around me. I started by surrounding myself with some great minds of education. I read books by Bill Rogers, Paul Dix, Doug Lemov as well as authors on trauma and behaviourally challenged students. I read blogs, notably some fantastic ones by Mary Meridith, and gathered ideas from twitter.



I also made the most of the wealth of online CPD there is available currently, listening to how other schools have done things. I also wanted to hear staff views and get their input in designing this. So, I held focus groups with members of staff who voiced their views on what works currently and what doesn't, as well as helping to contribute to the wording of our new vision.

Over the past two months this has led to our new ethos for behaviour at Smith's Wood. Put simply, it is that at Smith's Wood we will all ensure that we:

Connect – Respect - Excel

We felt the simplicity of three expectations would help all members of our community remember what we expect. Furthermore, I knew I wanted this to be a positive document, not a list of negative behaviours and an appropriate sanction, but rather setting out our sky-high expectations. I drew on the FMAT values, feeling passionately about excellence being at the heart of all we do and understanding that we need to support students to become the very best they can be. Furthermore, once we broke down what these three steps looked like in detail we drew on the idea of dedication, integrity and traditional values. These driving values can be seen throughout the document.

CONNECTING WITH SMITH'S WOOD

MR DAN BARCLAY | ASSISTANT HEAD TEACHER

The document goes on to set out in more detail, always positively framed, what does it look like to connect? What does being respectful look like? How do we know if we are excelling? These are expectations for all at Smith's Wood. Smile, ask how people are. Start each day as a fresh start. Be positive. Speak to each other calmly and politely, complete all work to the very best of your ability, be on time and be smart. Whilst the expectations are high and some students will need challenging when they do not meet them, this ethos also sets out how we will support students to meet them.

Our next steps are to make these expectations into visual posters and surround people in them as much as possible to really embed our positive expectations. This will be combined with regular staff CPD in approaches that meet our vision such as how to build, maintain and repair relationships in order to connect, how to de-escalate situations in order to be respectful and how to positively frame instructions to ensure all can excel. Additionally, we intend, over the next year and beyond to look at other ways in which we can alter what we do at the Academy to ensure we are always connecting, respecting and excelling; this will include things like improving staff wellbeing, providing more opportunities to connect, revamping sanctions where needed to ensure they meet our vision.

Whilst this will be a long term project that will develop, embed and change over the next few years, I am firmly looking forward to welcoming all students and staff back to Smith's Wood soon and to see everyone connecting, respecting and excelling.

MR D BARCLAY | ASSISTANT HEAD TEACHER



CONNECTING WITH BOURNVILLE

MRS CHARLOTTE CROSS | ASSISTANT HEAD TEACHER

The Covid-19 crisis has meant that we have all had to adapt and trial new ways of working – I was the first to trial a Virtual Lesson on Teams. Year 10 students were in school, appropriately socially distanced, with an adult in the room, whilst a TA and I were at home and dialled in. Logistically, this meant I only had to set up a meeting with the adult in the room.

As we were new to this way of working, I researched it and spoke to colleagues in other schools who had already done this – either with students in school or, more usually, with them at home dialling in. This means a specialist teacher can teach much bigger groups and with not all staff available all of the time, means that students get a better diet of specialist teaching. Of course, for us, this is quite new and scary, for students it seemed significantly less so - they were completely unfazed by it and took it all in their stride!

Our teaching model is really suited to this way of working and students are used to a Do Now, a teacher explanation and then working independently. In this instance, I shared my PowerPoint on screen as normal, I was also on screen (but this is optional). Then I worked through a detailed explanation, this was new content, a poem they have not seen before. After this, the students had the opportunity to ask questions through the adult in the room to check their understanding, I then provided a model and they then began their deliberate practice, an essay. The students photographed their annotated poem and the deliberate practice they had started and then completed the essay at home, emailed it to me for feedback, and I built that into the next lesson as normal.

The teacher in the room did leave her video on, so I could see her and communicate with her, and she could indicate to me if I was going too quickly or the students wanted clarity – but she turned her microphone off as there was an echo. Speaking to her meant I felt less like I was teaching into a void and made it seem more familiar.

Following the lesson, I immediately emailed the

PowerPoints, which has a voiced narration at times, for those not there and I recorded the lesson on Teams and sent that to. This meant that students could go back over their learning or, if they were not able to attend the lesson, they could access it.

From my initial experience, I would say there are lots of benefits to this, including being able to teach huge groups at any one time and to deliver new content really easily. Clearly, there are some limitations; including it is not easy to differentiate – but students can email questions after the lesson. It is also difficult to judge pace as you can't see their expressions. I would also have like a visualiser to be able to live model – all things that are easy to solve. However, I would envisage this method could supplement more conventional teaching, not replace it. It does beg the question, why have we not thought to record lessons, or parts of lessons before to email to students to consolidate the learning for those who were there and help to bridge the gap for those who were absent!

As I said, the students were asked to feedback and it was wholly positive, 'I was in the video call class on Tuesday and it [the technology] was completely fine. I think it's good that you're able to teach me again.'

'I think Monday's lesson was really good and I like how we learnt the poem in class and then had to write the essay at home.'

It has also been wonderful to see students developing in their confidence in emailing to ask for clarification, or just checking their understanding, this is a life skill I hadn't anticipated how they would also benefit from developing.

But most importantly, I also saw a marked increase in the quality and quality of work I got from students compared to just putting it on a digital platform and I look forward to seeing where this may take us.

MRS C CROSS | ASSISTANT HEAD TEACHER

CONNECTING WITH THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

MARK RHATIGAN | DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

New types of Learning? : `Remote, Blended, Flipped and Digital`

You have probably seen these terms used frequently in the news and the educational press as we emerge from lockdown. Even as we prepare to welcome all students back to school in September, the prospect of a `second wave` or `local lockdown` may mean some or even all of the students are educated at home at some stage over the next year.

So, what are these terms describing?

Digital learning is any type of learning that is accompanied by technology or by practice that makes effective use of technology. It encompasses the application of a wide spectrum of practices including: blended and virtual learning

You would be aware of the Trust Digital Strategy Group that has been researching and recommending ways of improving the experience of technology for all of us, particularly for the children we serve.

Remote learning is learning off-site. It does not have to be digital, of course, but is often referred to in those terms. Remote learning enables students and teachers to remain connected and engaged with the content while working from their homes.

Blended Learning blends (as per the title!) a digital type of education in which students learn via electronic and online media as well as traditional face-to-face teaching. Universities have used this model for a number of years, with good results.

There are a range of types of `blended learning` depending on the amount of digital and the amount of `face to face` interaction. **Flipped learning** `is a kind of `blended learning` where pupils learn core content outside of class time (normally online) and then participate in activities in

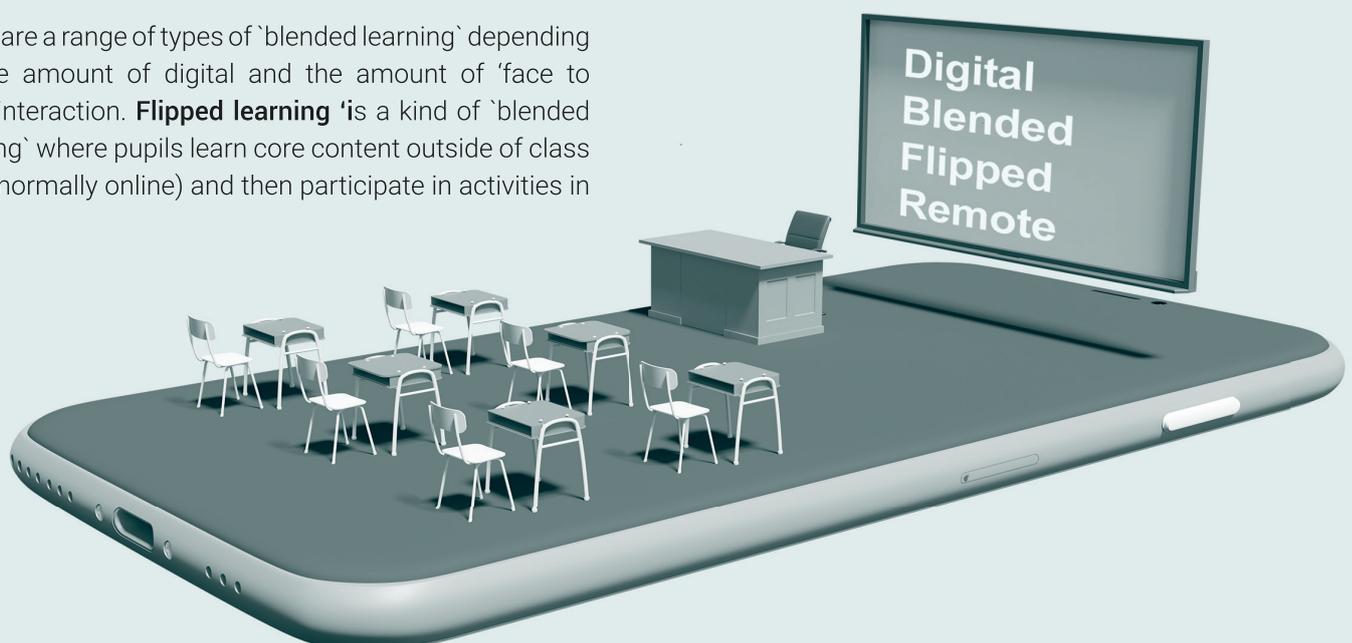
class to reinforce their learning.

As Charlotte Cross shares in her excellent article, there are obvious advantages to digital learning if the teacher cannot be present or the students themselves are at home. Charlotte does make a good point, however; `I would envisage this method could supplement more conventional teaching, not replace it`. Quality `blended learning` can ensure no student is left behind but it is not an attempt to replace the special nature of `face to face` learning.

The recent Government guidance regarding the return of all students to school in September does mention `remote` education in a `blended` context.

`remote education, where needed, is high quality and aligns as closely as possible with in-school provision: schools and other settings continue to build their capability to educate pupils remotely, where this is needed. The guidance does state that schools should: Develop remote education so that it is integrated into school curriculum planning.

This last point is important for teachers in the Trust. The Heads of Academy are clear that any `blended` learning will complement current planning, not add to it. The work that teachers have completed sharing resources and planning puts us in a stronger position overall, and the children benefit as a result



CONNECTING WITH THE CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

JOHN FITZGERALD | COO



INCOME AND GRANT GENERATION

I have worked at Erdington Academy (previously Kingsbury School and Sports College) for 20 years as the Leisure Centre Manager. In April 2020

I was appointed to the Central Team as the Income & Grants Generation Officer.

It has not been the start I had wished for as COVID-19 has put a stop to all lettings across the Trust. That said, all our groups are keen to return when it is safe to do so. The income from lettings provides valuable additional income for our Academies, which supports educational opportunities for students. Our Academies have a fantastic range of facilities and my role is to maximise their use, thereby benefiting both the Academies and the community.

My new role, whilst promoting out of hours lettings, now encompasses supporting colleagues in sourcing and applying for funding and grants. Working from a centralised position means that funding opportunities can be shared and coordinated across the Trust.

I am looking forward to working with staff across the Trust in raising the profile of our facilities and to support, guide and enable others within the Trust to undertake successful bid writing and funding submissions.

TRACY STEVENS

INCOME & GRANT GENERATION OFFICER



GRAPHIC DESIGN

It's been an extremely busy half term for Graphic Design with several projects happening across all of the academies.

These have ranged from working to help raise the school environments, assisting the site team with COVID-19 signage, plus ensuring new parents and students have all the information they need to prepare for the transition from primary to secondary school.

There is ongoing work to be completed to assist the schools in getting ready for the start of the new term including postcards, student cards and external advertising for Open Evenings.

Over the last few weeks some of the projects completed have included:

- Work on 175 display boards, from creating artwork to resizing/rebranding existing artwork, all produced in-house.
- Approx 250 laminated COVID-19 signs to assist in the safe return of staff and students, all produced in-house from design to print/laminate.
- 1250 Transition booklets for parents and students, created and produced in-house.

KEELEY CLARKE | GRAPHIC DESIGNER

ACADEMY FINANCE EMAIL ADDRESSES



F@bournville.bham.sch.uk

financeteam@erdington.bham.sch.uk

finance@fairfax.bham.sch.uk

s215finance@smiths-wood.solihull.sch.uk

CONNECTING WITH THE DIRECTOR OF HR

DANIELLE BILLINGTON | DIRECTOR OF HR



For four months now, the newly created, centralised HR Department is now operational, supporting the entire organisation. In July, we started working with Civica with the aim that this new partnership will improve the Trust's services further. Two critical changes are made to the Trust's operations this month by implementing the HR self-service and the Civica payroll bureau service. Thank you all for your support with achieving these milestones.

In preparation for the first payroll run by Civica, it is paramount that you please access the self-service and check that your personal and bank details are accurate, even if you have not changed them recently. This is to ensure that we have the correct details recorded, and your pay is transferred to the correct bank account. You would need to make any amendments using self-service by Wednesday, 15 July 2020, close of play to ensure that the correct bank details are used from the first payment run onwards.

Please be also reminded that with July payroll, the 3-yearly pension auto re-enrolment process will be carried out. This means, everyone who is currently not in a pension scheme, will be automatically enrolled with July 2020 payroll. If you do not wish to remain in the pension scheme, you would need to 'opt out' so that pension deductions are no longer made. Teaching staff, who wish to opt out of the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS), would need to log into their TPS portal to opt out. Support staff, who wish to opt out of the Local Government Pension Scheme (operated by the West Midlands Pension Fund), will need to request the opt out form from the HR inbox and also return the completed form to the HR inbox (hr@fmat.co.uk). If any of you have missed the deadline of 8 July 2020 for opting out, you can still do so, and it will be actioned with the next available payroll run.

If you have any queries or concerns with the service, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I wish you all an enjoyable and relaxing summer break.

Stay safe and well.

DANIELLE BILLINGTON | DIRECTOR OF HR

 hr@fmat.co.uk

SOCIAL MEDIA

In order to improve our communication links and promote our Academies and the Trust as a whole, we would like to encourage all of our employees, Directors, Associates and parents to follow our social media sites. Links to social media can be found on our websites.



www.fmat.co.uk/



www.fairfax.bham.sch.uk



www.bournvilleschool.org/



www.bournvilleprimaryprovision.org/



www.erdingtonacademy.bham.sch.uk



www.smithswood.co.uk

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