

The Consortium Academy Trust

# News@TCAT

October 2020

 @ConsortiumTrust

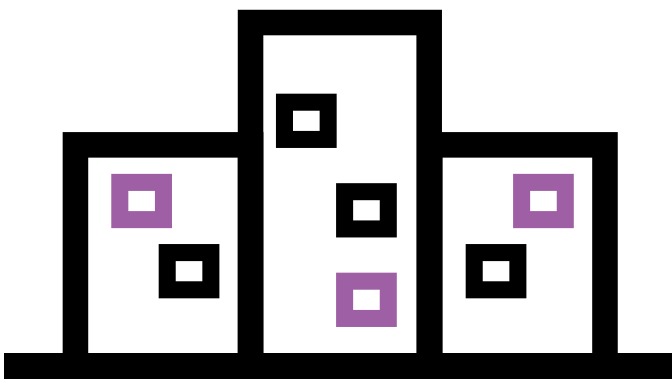


THE CONSORTIUM  
ACADEMY TRUST

## BENEFITS OF **Working @TCAT**



*We continue to invest heavily in our academies and work over the summer has included a number of projects that make a positive difference to the school environment for learners.*





**Dave McCready**

CEO

# Welcome to the latest edition of News@TCAT

**Welcome to the latest edition of News@TCAT, which seeks to provide an insight into some of the wonderful things that are taking place across our Trust.**

I want to start by thanking everyone for their huge efforts not only in making sure that every academy opened fully at the start of term, no mean feat in itself, but also for your ongoing contributions each and every day which have ensured that all learners have been able to continue their educational journey. Despite all the new procedures, policies and practices aimed at reducing the risk posed by Covid, it is inevitable that there are going to be some positive cases in our schools but hopefully the steps we have taken across the Trust will keep these to a minimum.

When we planned this edition of the newsletter our aim was to try to focus on the 'positives' wherever possible by highlighting some of the people and initiatives that are making a real difference to the lives of children and young people across the Trust during these challenging times.

Rachel Mullen, an English teacher at Wolfreton, provides a powerful,

personal testament regarding her journey in overcoming her fears related to the use of technology in supporting Blended Learning for those learners who are not able to attend school. A vital read if like me, it all feels a little beyond your comfort zone!

Alex Morris-Jarvis from Winifred Holtby introduces herself as our newest Academy Improvement Leader (AIL). She has a brief to provide CPDL opportunities related to how we can build Blended Learning into the Teaching and Learning experience for the benefit of all.

We continue to invest heavily in our academies to develop an ICT infrastructure that meets the needs of all staff and learners. Although this work is ongoing, the improvements made ensured that, where required, staff were able to work from home during the lockdown period. Now that the new academic year has started, sixth form students in three of our academies are able to access learning through a single email address, making communication much easier.

Our Capital programme over the summer has included a number of projects that make a positive difference to the school environment for learners. Pat Morris, our Head of

Estates, showcases three examples of this at Cottingham, Howden and Keyingham. Other projects include the construction of a new toilet block for the Nursery children at Penshurst and the creation of new offices for the Trust Central Services team at Cottingham. This work is only possible thanks to the capital funding we receive from central government as a result of being a MAT of a certain size, which again highlights one of the benefits of working in a Trust.

And finally, turning back to Covid, it is clear that as a society we will be living with this virus for the foreseeable future, and as a result, we will need to find ways of managing this. This is easier said than done since not only do we all have different levels of tolerance towards the virus, many of us have other personal circumstances that can affect our mental health and well-being when faced with the current situation. Jennie Ellis, one of our Mental Health Support Workers (MHSW) offers her thoughts about what we can do to help maintain positive mental health. She is also available to provide one to one support to colleagues, if required. Jennie has included her contact details with her article.

Best wishes  
**Dave McCready**

“ **We continue to invest heavily in our academies.** ”



# Estates Update



As part of our on-going site upgrades we have fitted new toilet facilities at Howden School and refurbished the main hall at Keyingham Primary and received positive feedback from colleagues at both schools.

**Patrick Morris**  
Head of Estates



Work this summer at Cottingham took place to create a fabulous new Sixth Form which includes the Independent Learning Centre with IT facilities, the Break-out Room providing space for seminars and to host external speakers, the Social Sphere providing a dedicated social space and the Hive, the heart of the sixth form which includes a bespoke dining area.



# Governor recruitment



We have a number of vacancies across our local governing boards. We are looking for people who:



- can commit to attending five meetings a year
- can read and digest reports prior to these meetings
- have a keen eye for detail
- will be ready to challenge the school's Leadership Team
- are enthusiastic about making a difference to the lives of our young people

**Gilly Stafford**  
Data Protection Officer

If this sounds like something that would interest either you or a friend or family member, please contact Gilly Stafford, Clerk to the Trust email [gilly.stafford@consortiumtrust.co.uk](mailto:gilly.stafford@consortiumtrust.co.uk)

# Online Learning

If you're ever in need of a boost to your morale, the schadenfreude that we might pretend we don't like, but secretly do, pop along to my classroom.

There, if you are very lucky, you will see a lesson aided by technology, PowerPoints whizzing along, clips from YouTube working smoothly, but you may also see either a lesson devoid of all IT, whilst I wait for help as I have got stuck- again! When I first started teaching we had blackboards, not white ones, I carried chalk in my bag and registers were on paper: using IT in a lesson was something students did in their mysterious IT class once a week.

Imagine my horror then, when in early lockdown online learning began to be casually mentioned. I can just about manage a Whatsapp video call to my sister (as long as I can phone her, as I don't know how to pick it up) I can write and receive emails, (though I can rarely search for old emails successfully), and I would say I am pleasingly confident with typing a word document-writing this, for example, doesn't faze me- (although if I am not careful I may accidentally save the document in the wrong place) but learning online? My nemesis at the heart of my practice? My old foe gaining its long sought after revenge? Perhaps it was time to put me out to pasture. On discovering my scarily competent colleagues were teaching sixth form virtually in early summer, I breathed a metaphorical sigh of relief. I had no sixth form in the academic year we'll never forget, so I had managed to escape the old adversary. And, as time went on, we could all see Covid's numbers were reducing, infection was going down, schools were going back, so I would be able to plod on as I was, my 'skills' from time to time rectified by my patient colleagues. Online learning? What online learning!

Then the news I had dreaded: the year 11 bubble had been closed for two weeks. The year group I was most anxious to help and that had missed months of my lessons in year ten were confined to their homes once again. But this time, I would have to teach them online! The very next day!

I could barely sleep the night before, thinking of all the things that could go wrong, in fact, nothing I thought would go right! I figured if the worst came to the worst, I would email them all and promise lengthy evening lessons upon



**Rachel Mullen**  
English Teacher Wolfreton

their return as a sort of atonement for ending up in my class. We had lots of helpful reminders

which I read and I had done the Teams training and felt like I 'got it' at the time, but the panic was quite overwhelming. I didn't want to let these students down!

All feelings of anxiety and doubt seeped away the next morning as I opened the screen of the computer, somehow- (and I am not sure how) I got onto Teams, and saw the faces of my adorable year 11 students. They had done nothing to deserve being at home and nothing to deserve having this old dinosaur as a teacher. I would do everything to make it work. Somehow or other I got through the lesson, even though I felt a bit weird talking to a screen when people walked past looking in the window! But the lesson happened. And it wasn't a disaster. So the things that went well: most students got on; they could hear me; I could ask them questions and (when I figured out you can turn the volume up) I heard their answers; the hands up button got used

and, second time round, everyone had the source material to hand. Most importantly, the lesson wasn't all that different from being in the classroom: I didn't feel anyone had missed out. Things that anybody still reading this will have been able to do for years (acquiring these skills by some kind of magical osmosis) that I am going to try tomorrow are: looking into the camera instead of at the students, using a PowerPoint-(I have uploaded it ready) completing a survey (too exciting) and getting better with the mute switch. I am sure there are another million wonderful things I could do, and that when I include them I will become delighted and eventually more competent. But for now, it is enough to know that my old enemy and I have something of a truce going on. A circuit breaking ceasefire. And that the students I teach, hopefully, can have their education this year wherever they are.



**Welcome to our new Academy Improvement Leader**

# Remote Learning

The 2019/2020 academic year plunged education into the unknown for all individuals in our profession in March when, for the first time in our careers, schools shut due to a global pandemic.

This was an event that no amount of pedagogy and experience could have prepared us for. As always, we improvised, we adapted and we overcame the huge obstacle we were faced with to ensure that it did not prevent our learners from progressing in their education.

It goes without saying that the recent months have been exceptionally challenging, but they have also given us the drive to deliver an academic provision to our young people by alternative means. Staff across the trust did a fantastic job in delivering blended learning sessions through Microsoft Teams, and for most of us this technology was unknown territory pre Covid.

I will be working with staff across the trust to see how we can build

blended learning into the teaching and learning experience and ensure we have a comprehensive programme of blended learning CPDL so staff feel confident in delivering digital learning. My objective is to support staff in unleashing a full strength virtual learning environment and to assist staff in avoiding chaos in the cloud. I am truly excited about collaborating with such incredible staff across the trust and am grateful for the opportunity to do.



**Alex Morris-Jarvis**  
Academy Improvement Leader



***My objective is to support staff in unleashing a full strength virtual learning environment and to assist staff in avoiding chaos in the cloud.***



# What do you need right now?



**Jennie Ellis**

Mental Health Support Worker

Covid-19 is a fluid situation, with changes each week which brings so many unknowns.

How are you showing up for yourself?

How are you adapting?

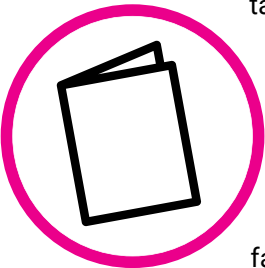
Here are some thoughts I wanted to share with you.

**#1 Communicate** – Talk to someone and build those connections that make you feel good. Investing in your social connections will help avoid those feelings of being ‘in it’ alone.



**#2 Focus** on what you can control. By focusing on what we can control it leaves less time to worry about the things we can't control. Shifting focus from feeling powerless and overwhelmed allows feelings of accomplishment, positivity and happiness to seep in.

Challenge yourself to write a list of everything that's worrying you now and recognise from that list what is in your control and what actions can you take?



### **#3 How can you show up for yourself?**

What is it you're doing when you feel your best? Identify it and prioritise it into your week – facetime family and friends,

going for a walk, reading that book you've had for ages!

**#4 Limit news and media intake** – If it is making you unhappy, limit your exposure.

Fact check what you do see or read using government websites.



**#5 Practise gratitude** – acknowledge the good things happening in your life right now. Notice those moments of joy and practise gratitude for them. It also gives you a grounding to hold onto when feeling uncertain.



**#6 Practise self-care** – Listen to that voice inside us, is it being critical or kind? So often we tell ourselves critical thoughts or judge ourselves harshly. Practise self-care and compassion by recognising that at the moment things are difficult, and embrace yourselves with kindness and care in response.

### **Need further support?**

Email [staffsupport@consortiumtrust.co.uk](mailto:staffsupport@consortiumtrust.co.uk)  
or

**Jennie Ellis**  
Mental Health Support Worker

[Jennie.ellis@consortiumtrust.co.uk](mailto:Jennie.ellis@consortiumtrust.co.uk)

