



Please take a moment to read about the achievements of your children and their teachers over the last few months, and about what the Trust has been doing to improve their educational experience and their schools.

Jo Higgins Chief Executive

## A great attitude to learning

**Our Values Driven Expectations behaviour model is central to ensuring the highest of standards and creating an excellent climate for learning. When I visit our academies, I am delighted to see learners from all year groups enjoying their lessons and rising to the challenge of Dreaming Big. I am also so pleased to see how learners are co-operating and supporting each other in lessons.**

We are now just eight weeks away from the beginning of exams and our year 11 learners are showing a great sense of responsibility for their revision and progress. The Upgrade sessions at the end of the school day have been really well attended and learners are now doing extra time on the fantastic Century Artificial Intelligence Learning platform; they are using this for English, Mathematics and Science. We are challenging them to see who can demonstrate the highest level of effort and make the most progress. There will

of course be rewards for these learners. On Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays the school day will be extended by another 45-minute lesson for all Year 11 learners, who will be using Century either in school or at home. We are determined that this year's results are going to be a major advance on recent years and a reflection of our learners' true potential.



It's time to discover more.

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# Stamp of approval from our visitors

As part of our drive to rapidly improve our academies, we frequently invite school improvement experts and visitors from other Trusts to take a look at what is going on in our academies. This is a really important way of evaluating our progress.

We have a high number of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who are eligible to receive free school meals. Before Christmas, we commissioned an external body to review our provision for these learners and it has been so reassuring to receive their positive reports confirming that we are fully committed to providing an excellent education for all; we are definitely encouraging all of our learners to 'Dream

Big'. We also prioritise the education of learners with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND); again, external reports on their experience highlights the commitment of our staff to provide first-class support so that our learners can thrive.

Only recently, representatives from a national training organisation, Ambition School Leadership (ASL), visited all of our academies. They were unanimous in their praise of the excellent climate for learning, typified by the exemplary behaviour of our learners both in and out of lessons. The Trust will be working with ASL colleagues to enhance our training programme for teachers to ensure that we really do have the very best



Release your inner



**PANDA**

**You too can be a PANDA!**  
Get 100% attendance for the next two terms  
and earn a panda keyring at the end of the year!  
Plus, you'll go into a draw for a trip to WILD  
Zoological Park at Halfpenny Green  
[www.wildzoo.co.uk](http://www.wildzoo.co.uk)

**PANDA FACTS**

- Pandas are rare – just like 100% attendance. There are only around 2,000 in the world.
- Pandas are smart! They can work collaboratively, trick zookeepers and learn kung fu.
- Nope that's why Pandas have no natural enemies. No-one messes with a Panda!
- Pandas have lived on Earth for 2 to 3 million years.
- A new-born panda weighs less than an iPhone.
- Pandas live where it is cool and wet. Dudley would be just perfect for them.
- Nobody knows for sure why pandas are black and white. If you know why, please tell your Biology Teacher!
- We have students who have achieved 100% attendance for 5 years. If they can do it, so can you.

**PANDA**  
Perfect Attendance - No Days Absent



## Did you know?

188 learners at St James Academy had 100% attendance last term. That's nearly 30% of the school! We're now running a PANDA campaign (Perfect Attendance No Days Absent) and attendance has been rising across the Trust. 100% attendance earns a PANDA key ring and could also win a trip to Wild Zoo in Bobbington.



# the buzz

## Rewarding our learners

Once again, I would like to thank you all for your support with our Values Driven Expectations behaviour model; the schools now have an extremely positive atmosphere that you can feel when you walk around them. Many of your children will have received rewards for their attendance, behaviour, effort and achievement, or for acts of thoughtfulness and kindness.

I was delighted to meet a great many of the learners who had earned rewards, including VIP breakfasts, family tickets to the Black Country Living Museum and even Amazon Echo speakers as a special end of term reward. Over the next few weeks, we shall be handing out 'Well Done' cards for achievement in English and Maths, and I shall be personally telephoning learners, parents and carers to congratulate them.

## £multi-million investment in buildings

We have already spent approximately £4m across the four academies on replacing and repairing their roofing, heating, windows and other structural features. We are currently awaiting the outcome of major funding bids on a range of contracts scheduled for commencement over this summer. These include:

- **St James Academy** - Electrical & roof replacement works
- **The Link Academy** - Electrical and roof replacement works
- **Pegasus Academy** - Window replacement and heating works
- **Beacon Hill Academy** - Heating and roof replacement works.



## £500,000 investment in IT

In the last newsletter, we told you about 300 PCs that were being delivered to Beacon Hill Academy and the introduction of Century artificial intelligence software. There has now been another massive investment in the IT used by your children.

- Beacon Hill Academy has received another 40 PCs from Dudley College and we have plans to replace 300 more in the future
- St James Academy has received 280 laptops and 100 PCs plus 60 more donated by Dudley College; another 100 desktops are on the way
- Pegasus Academy has received 140 laptops with another 140 to be delivered in the summer
- All four schools have had significant improvements to their network cabling to speed things up, and Pegasus Academy has had £20,000 spent on its wireless network

All in all, that will be some £500,000 of new computer and networking equipment put into the schools during our first year of operation.

**Our IT strategy for the next five years will provide our learners with the best technological solutions to support their learning, engage them in new and exciting ways and accelerate their progress.**



# Other News... *the buzz*

## Welcome back, Emma!

At the beginning of term, we welcomed Emma Edwards-Morgan as the new Principal of The Link Academy, Netherton. Emma joins a very strong management team that has already made great progress at The Link Academy. Locally raised and educated in the very same school, Emma has a passionate enthusiasm for raising educational standards in her community and wants The Link Academy to be the outstanding school in the area.



## Opera comes to Dudley

Twenty learners from across the Trust are attending fortnightly workshops with Sandra Taylor from Welsh National Opera and a range of professional musicians. It's part of a collaborative project between Welsh National Opera, Wolverhampton University and Black Country Music Hubs. Singers and instrumentalists from all four schools auditioned for this exciting project, so that they could learn to perform opera repertoire and create content of their own. They can then perform as part of a large ensemble on 23rd May 2019 at Wolverhampton University, around the theme of Freedom.

## Gold for Pegasus Academy

Last term, Pegasus Academy achieved the Quality in Careers Gold Standard, the national quality award for careers education, information, advice and guidance. We want your children to be thinking about careers, college and university, and Dreaming Big about their futures. We are therefore delighted to announce that the Trust is developing an exciting careers development strategy. This will help learners to understand the world of career opportunities and to make informed choices when selecting their options.

## Unlocking Potential

Some of our learners have been chosen for the AQA Unlocking Potential programme, run by exam board and education charity AQA and the Dame Kelly Holmes Trust. Only 20 schools nationally are on this year's programme. The young people are being mentored by former BMX racer, Kelvin Batey, who will provide personal mentoring for the students to help them develop the determination and confidence to succeed.

## Winning in the Wolves Den

Year 9 learners from Beacon Hill Academy and The Link Academy won a prestigious entrepreneurial competition, part of the Aspire to HE programme at the University of Wolverhampton. They had to pitch their business ideas in the Wolves Den to three panels of specialists from the university's School of Business. Both teams were competing against pupils from other schools across the Black Country and Telford, the majority whom were sixth form students. The panels were extremely impressed with the professionalism and confidence of our teams, both of which won £500 for their schools and the chance to develop their ideas further.



## On top of the world

School can be hard work, so it's great to see some of your children getting a break from it all and having a go at a sport that is challenging and fun. Here is the half-term ski trip from Pegasus Academy and The Link Academy, enjoying the sun and snow.

