



Dudley Academies Trust Spring Newsletter 2021

Message from the Chief Executive

The spring term has, once again, presented considerable challenges to schools and I am pleased to report that all of our academies have responded superbly. Our central team has provided first class support covering a wide range of provision: the further development of distance learning, training for staff, lesson resources and all aspects of risk assessments and guidance on the adaptations required to set up lateral flow testing centres. Both learners and staff are clearly happy to return to their academies and benefit from the support of our leadership teams to settle back into the rhythm and routines of school life. I should like to thank our parents and carers for being so supportive of our re-opening plans.

Our values underpin all that we do. Our Year 6 and Year 11 learners are certainly dreaming big as they are aiming to achieve the best scores and grades in their end of year assessments and examinations. Exciting times lie ahead for them all as they transition into the next phase of their educational journey.



1 - Jo Higgins, Chief Executive

Finally, our Trust is all about excellent teaching and learning.

Everyone has certainly demonstrated that they respect each other and their world. Our learners' behaviour has been exemplary when I have visited our academies. Secondary learners wear their masks and have been so sensible during the later flow testing process. At Blowers Green there is always a strong sense of collective responsibility and the pupils clearly care about each other, their teachers and support staff.

It is also wonderful to see our learners' planners out on desks and the number of merits that are being awarded by teachers. Rewarding effort is such a strong feature of our culture.

There are so many opportunities for our student leaders of all ages to set an example and contribute to shaping the future of their Trust. Leadership elections will be taking place next term and the Trust wide leadership team for 2021/2022 will be elected. I will look forward to sharing news on this in the next edition of The Buzz. Finally, our Trust is all about excellent teaching and learning. All of our learners are experiencing lessons where learning that inspires is clear to see from the high quality work that our learners are producing each and every day.

May I wish everybody a well deserved rest at Easter!

Jo Higgins, Chief Executive

Dreaming big

Where are our learners now?

It is important that as a Trust we keep in touch with our past learners. This helps to motivate our current learners to 'Dream big'. In this feature of the Buzz, we explore Pegasus Academy and where their learners are now.

Nital Patel, Pegasus Academy

“Hi, my name is Nital Patel. My journey started off in Year 7 at Pegasus Academy, when I was quite a timid person but also a student leader. By the time I was in Year 11, I was Deputy Head Girl and Student President, which allowed me build my skills and participate in a lot of events. I left school with successful grades and now I am studying at Dudley Sixth, doing A Level Psychology, Sociology and English Language. Outside of education, I also volunteer for a few things including Dudley Youth Council. When I joined I was too shy to speak; however it has helped me to develop skills and confidence and, this year, I am Chair of Dudley Youth Council and very delighted to have this role.”



2 - Nital Patel, Pegasus Academy Alumni

Natasha, Pegasus Academy

“My name’s Natasha and I’m currently studying French, Spanish and Economics at King Edward VI College. When I left Pegasus Academy with my GCSEs, I didn’t think I was smart enough to do a pure language degree, let alone a pure language degree at Cambridge. So, I initially settled for doing a mix of history and languages at some other universities. But my heart still lay with languages.

My first successes came in being accepted to both the Cambridge and Oxford summer schools for languages, which allowed me to get a feel for which out of the two universities would suit me best.

When university applications rolled around, I still wasn’t sure if I wanted to apply to Cambridge. The uncertainty caused by the pandemic had affected me adversely, and part of me had given up entirely on the idea of going to university. In the end, I changed my mind and ended up applying a week before the internal deadline. But my hopes were low. Nevertheless, I did my best in the interviews and admissions exams in the tiny hope that *perhaps* Cambridge would think, “Hey, you’re not too bad actually”.



3 - Natasha, Pegasus Academy Alumni

But my heart still lay with languages.

When I got the email telling me I'd been offered a place at Cambridge to study French and Russian, I didn't believe my eyes for a minute. Part of me believed they'd sent the email by mistake and had actually meant to *reject* me. But then I looked at the accompanying letter, and there it was in black-and-white text: **Congratulations!**

To this day, I don't know what my interviewers saw in me, but I am content in the knowledge that I'll have the privilege of pursuing my highest passion at one of the world's greatest institutions in a matter of months. In a way, it wouldn't have happened had lockdown not forced me to acknowledge that following your dreams isn't always *idealistic nonsense*. Sometimes, following your dreams can be the only way to keep weathering the storm ahead of you."

Rewarding effort

CareerFit



Despite the difficulties of the second lockdown, the Careers team has been constantly active, making sure that learners continue to focus on what they want to do in the future.

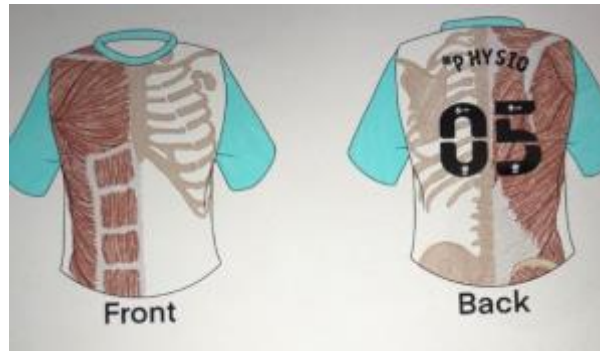
As part of our CareerFit programme, they have been:

- Sending weekly Careers newsletters to learners, staff and parents.
- Organising virtual work experiences.
- Supporting Year 11 learners in their choice of post-16 options, making them aware of different qualifications, how to apply and how to prepare for interviews. Every Year 11 learner has had a one-to-one careers meeting and follow-up support where necessary.
- Explaining GCSEs and GCSE choices to Year 9 learners, helping them to make informed choices about the right options for them.
- Showing Year 10 learners that going to university is not just about studying for a higher qualification but also an opportunity to broaden their social horizons.
- Organising an online Higher Education and Motivation session with Aspire to HE and employability talks at each secondary academy.

In addition, the Trust has purchased Unifrog for the use of all learners. Unifrog is a one-stop-shop where learners can easily explore their interests and the subjects they may want to study, then find and successfully apply for college and sixth form choices.

Design a T-Shirt

Congratulations to Ethan T, Year 8 at Beacon Hill Academy for his "Physiotherapist: Muscle Whisperer!" design which was the winner of January's Form Tutor Competition. The competition required learners to design a T-Shirt related to their dream career!



4 - "Physiotherapist: Muscle Whisperer!" design by Ethan T, Beacon Hill Academy.

And the winner of Bake Off is...

Normally, we wouldn't put a picture of a giant chocolate cake into our newsletter, but we thought you might like to see what happened when Year 11 and Year 7 at St James Academy held a Bake Off competition!



5 - Well done to all St James learners involved in the Bake Off...

Trust rewards

At Dudley Academies Trust we truly believe in 'Rewarding effort'. As our Values Driven Expectations behaviour model has become so well established, so have the rewards! Each of our five academies ensure they reward the effort of learners at every opportunity. There are so many rewards that take place that we couldn't choose what rewards should feature in the Newsletter! We recommend checking the social media platforms for each academy where you will gain a true insight into 'Rewarding effort'.

Leading together

Setting a great example

On March 12th, Beacon Hill Academy featured on BBC Newsnight for the third time in 6 months. Maddison G, a Year 9 learner, spoke passionately and complementarily about her experiencing of

returning to Beacon Hill Academy since the lockdown. Maddison said that she was pleased to be back in lessons with her teachers and friends, something that she greatly missed over the lockdown period. She also praised her teachers for providing a blended approach to teaching and learning during a staggered return, which has seen all learners mass tested 3 times.



6 - Madison, Year 9 learner from Beacon Hill Academy

Our learners made homeworking work

Across the Trust, our learners have been displaying their very best qualities since lockdown returned in January, showing a huge amount of resilience in adapting to change in order to continue engaging with their learning. A massive 'Well done!' to everyone who kept working hard during a difficult period, to the parents and carers who supported the learners and to the staff who worked so hard to make it possible.

'Thank you', also, to the many different speakers who contributed to our virtual assemblies, including Mr Neil Thomas, Chief Executive and Principal of Dudley College of Technology, Mr Martin Dudley, chairman of Thomas Dudley Ltd and Mr David Hassall, Head of Data and Performance for Dudley Academies Trust.

"A massive 'Well done!' to everyone who kept working hard during a difficult period"

Here are some of the comments about home learning that came into **Beacon Hill Academy**:

- "BIG thank you to all the staff for supporting and educating my son" - Year 7 parent
- "Thank you again to all the staff for always going above and beyond in these difficult times" – Parent
- "I get immediate help!" - Year 11 learner
- "Thank you Miss" - Year 10 learner
- "The chat box function is really helpful" - Year 11 learner
- "The form tutor is a really important and reassuring person in my child's life" - Year 7 parent
- "Lovely first live form session. You'll all be holding a PhD at this rate on remote learning and live lessons, or at least a Masters" – Parent

- “Fantastic turn out” - Year 11 tutor

And here are some parents’ comments from **St James Academy**:

- “Love the assembly, the phone calls from the form tutors that make me realise we are in this together as such a lonely time.”
- “We as parents are happy with what you have been doing to support the children through these lockdown and very bad times thank you for all your help you have given everybody.”
- “This (Raising Attainment stationery pack) will help my child achieve to the greatest working from home.”
- “Thank you to all at the school for your hard work during this really difficult time. We really appreciate the dedication shown towards keeping the school year moving!”
- “I am very impressed with the support St James have been offering to their students.”

Now that’s commitment!

The Trust’s Commitments programme asks learners to take on challenges and activities that match our five Values. One Beacon Hill Academy learner who has been showing incredible dedication to the Commitments programme is James of Year 8. Not only has he taken part in the commitments challenges that have been set during lockdown, but he has also been instrumental in raising money for the charity Mind, collecting £1,155 for the health charity in his 110 mile bike ride. Well done James!



7 - James, Year 8 at Beacon Hill Academy

Red Nose Day at Blowers Green Primary

What an amazing effort from all our primary pupils and staff to wear something Red for Red Nose Day 2021! The pupils raised a fantastic £122.40 for the charity. Thanks are extended to everyone who took part and kindly donated. Well done Blowers Green Primary!



Respecting each other and our world

Building for the future

The Trust has now invested over ten million pounds in the fabric of our buildings, providing new roofs, windows, electrics and lighting, heating systems, doors, alarms and security. There is also an ongoing effort to make the public spaces smarter and more inspiring with motivational artwork and imagery.

While the Trust has been busy with the multi-million pound projects, our site teams have been busy decorating and improving the learning environment. Many classrooms and corridors are now whiter and brighter, with new display boards and an uplifting atmosphere.

Thank you to all our site staff across the Trust. Watch this space as next time our Trust Estates & Projects Manager, Miss Hunter will be providing an update regarding all the exciting and important works that have taken place this academic year.



8 - The redecorated English Department at Pegasus Academy, where there are new white boards and ICT resources, including 75" interactive digital screens.

National Day of Reflection

The Trust joined the nation on the 23 March, the first anniversary of the first UK lockdown, for a National Day of Reflection to think about the collective loss, remember those who have been bereaved and hope for a brighter future. Staff and Learners observed a minute's silence at Noon.



9 - Learners at St James Academy stand in silence.

Staff & Learner Wellbeing

Technology was vitally important during lockdown however, it was equally important that staff and learners take time to focus on their mental health and wellbeing, away from the screen. Therefore, on 10/02/21 Dudley Academies Trust held its Wellbeing Wednesday afternoon. The purpose of the afternoon was to promote mental health and wellbeing. This included all staff and learners completing activities that do not involve excessive screen time. Staff and learners completed a range of activities include exercise, reading, cooking or creating something unique.

A range of information and resources including access to external support can be found on each academy website under Curriculum > Mental Health, Wellbeing & Online Safety.



10 - Blowers Green Primary pupil enjoying 'Slime' during Wellbeing Wednesday.



11 - Blowers Green Primary pupil enjoying 'Slime' during Wellbeing Wednesday.

Anti-Racism Working Party

On Wednesday 31 March 2021, Year 10 learners Ruby S and Makayla M from The Link Academy delivered a presentation to the Dudley Academies Trust Principal Board. The Board involves high level colleagues from across the Trust including the Chief Executive, Chief Operating Officer and Secondary Principals to name a few. The purpose of the presentation was to share the work of the Anti-Racism working party at The Link Academy. To date, the working party have achieved the following:

- Lead a Black History Month Assembly. During the assembly they shared experiences and focused on Black Lives Matter and understanding of the term 'white privilege'.
- Carried out a staff survey regarding the cultural communities that make up the academy.
- Created an action plan of what objectives they want to achieve.
- Reviewed the current curriculum with lead teachers to ensure that all ethnicities feel represented.
- Requested that The Link Academy considers adopting 'The Halo Code' which ensures that race-based hair discrimination does not exist in our academy.

The working party also discussed their plans for the future. This involved Trust wide collaboration with learners from other secondary academies. This will enable each secondary academy to share best practice and celebrate diversity to the fullest.

Generous donations



12 - Mrs Edwards-Morgan, Principal at The Link Academy and Michele Bickerton, Thomas Dudley Ltd.



13 - Mr Landers, Principal at Pegasus Academy and Michele Bickerton, Thomas Dudley Ltd.



14 - Mr Moore, Principal at St James Academy and Michele Bickerton, Thomas Dudley Ltd.



15 - Mr Dhami, Principal at St James Academy and Michele Bickerton, Thomas Dudley Ltd.

Thank you to Thomas Dudley Ltd for their generous donation of winter coats and shoes to each secondary academy within our Trust. These items will help our learners and their families during such difficult times. Thank you to Maple Workwear of Netherton that supported Thomas Dudley Ltd with these purchases.

Thank you also to the Church of Love, Faith and Hope in Netherton for their generous donation of stationary to The Link Academy. Their donation also included a motivational book by Author Nicola Morgan. The generosity of our community helps to support our learners and their families.



16 - Mr Robbs, Assistant Principal at the Link Academy and Matt, Lead from Church of Love, Faith and Hope in Netherton.

Learning that inspires

Learning from the top!

Learners are at the heart of all that we do and we strive to provide the very best learning experience for them. A vital part of this is delivering 'Learning that inspires'. The curriculum is delivered by a range of experienced professionals and includes our very own Chief Executive and Secondary Principals. Each Principal specialises in their own area of study. Below is an overview of what our Chief Executive and Secondary Principals teach:

- Miss Higgins, Chief Executive is an English specialist.
- Mr Dhami, Principal at Beacon Hill Academy is a historian.
- Mr Landers, Principal at Pegasus Academy specialises in Geography.
- Mr Moore, Principal at St James Academy is a historian.
- Mrs Edward-Morgan. Principal at The Link Academy is a Science specialist.

Miss Higgins, Chief Executive recently visited The Link Academy where she taught a Year 11 English Language class. We are delighted that Miss Higgins will also be visiting our other secondary academies before the end of the academic year to teach more lessons.

Watch this space next time where we will feature learning from the top across our primary phase.



17 - Miss Higgins, Chief Executive



18 - Mr Dhami, Principal at Beacon Hill Academy



19 - Mr Landers, Principal at Pegasus Academy



20 - Mr Moore, Principal at St James Academy



21 - Mrs Edwards-Morgan, Principal at The Link Academy

[The National Society for Education in Art & Design](#)

The Art & Design department at Pegasus has achieved national recognition for a project they ran with Shropshire based business, Hundred House Coffee. The National Society for Education in Art and Design (NSEAD) ran an article featuring the packaging designs produced by Pegasus learners which are truly of professional quality.

Some of the fantastic designs for coffee packaging featured in AD Magazine. The NSEAD event Tweeted "From studios and classrooms across the U.K. and beyond we are so pleased to share best practice. Mr Sharp's art and design classes are leading the way - working with industry bringing learning to life".

Following that success, the department has been working with Dudley Museum and Art Gallery to explore their collection and to highlight Dudley's cultural heritage. The first in this series of projects is focusing on Dudley born artist Thomas Phillips (1770 - 1845), a member of the Royal Academy of Arts.



22 - A self-portrait by Dudley artist Thomas Phillips.

Teachers learn with us, too!

The Trust likes to look to the future by offering newly qualified teachers the opportunity to develop their skills. We asked some of them to tell us how they were getting on and this is what they said:

- “My placement at The Link Academy has been very rewarding and being around teachers and my mentor, who are passionate for the subject has helped me to grow my love for teaching.” A Griffin, The Link Academy.
- “It is inspiring to be surrounded by such an organised, supportive, and experienced team who are focused on children growing into capable and confident learners. I am proud to be a part of ‘Team BG’ and value every day that I am with them in school.” A Pypliak Clancy, Blowers Green Primary.
- “The atmosphere here at Beacon Hill is amazing and I know my progress will continue to improve with the abundance of support that is available here. I am in awe of the wealth of experience and knowledge amongst the staff! I know I am in the right place!” J McDermott, Beacon Hill Academy.
- “Training to become a teacher is both a thrilling and overwhelming experience. Add a global pandemic to the mix and you have an unprecedented teacher training journey. My placement at Pegasus Academy has enabled me to be resilient, embrace change and find creative ways to overcome barriers.” Miss Thompson, Pegasus Academy.

World Book Day

Learners from across the Trust enjoyed celebrating their favourite books as part of World Book Day. It is wonderful to see so many learners who are passionate about reading. Developing a love of reading lies at the heart of our provision. We are delighted that so many learners in our academies

are now reading more challenging texts and this will undoubtedly benefit them when studying all parts of the curriculum.



23 - Learners and staff and St James Academy on World Book Day.

Introductions



24 - Kevin Tranter, Chief Operating Officer

We are delighted to introduce our Chief Operating Officer, Kevin Tranter who has recently joined our central team. With over 20 years educational experience, Kevin is committed to helping the Trust improve the lives of young people.

In his arms, is the delightful puppy, Frankie who belongs to David Hassall, our Head of Data and Performance. Frankie is a French bulldog and just twelve weeks old.

Should you require any additional information relating to the content of this newsletter, please contact info@dudleyacademiustrust.org.uk.