

2018

the buzz

Dudley Academies Trust Autumn Newsletter

Intro...

Jo Higgins
Chief Executive

I am delighted to report an excellent start to the autumn term as we return to our rebranded academies. You will have noticed the smart new signage and the

Our Values Driven

At the beginning of term, we introduced a new behaviour policy called Values Driven Expectations into all four of the Trust schools.

The Upgrade Mission

The Upgrade Mission is an initiative that has been designed to support all of our Year 11 students and prepare them for their forthcoming GCSE exams.

Rewarding Effort

Our student leaders met with us earlier this week to shape the rewards programme. This will be shared with learners in assemblies at the start of next half term. There will be celebration breakfasts, vouchers for Merry Hill, a celebration disco for learners

Investing in the future

The Trust has purchased a state-of-the-art learning technology called 'Century Tech'. Century Tech is an artificial intelligence platform that is going to be used by Year 11 learners first, and will

New developments in the classroom

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Ofsted gave us their seal of approval

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Dear parents and carers...



I am delighted to report an excellent start to the autumn term as we return to our rebranded academies. You will have noticed the smart new signage and the significant building work taking place across the Trust; indeed, we managed to secure almost £5 million of funding to carry out a range of essential works in the

schools. This continuing investment will be a key feature of our strategic plan as we move forward.

It is wonderful to see our learners wearing their new uniforms with pride and to see how behaviour in the schools has been transformed in a very short space of time. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your support with our Values Driven Expectations behaviour model; when schools and parents work closely together, then we have a strong force for change.

You will receive our newsletter every half term. This is one of the ways in which we will be sending news to you about what is happening across our four academies, and how the Trust is making progress. Each academy will also send out its own news and, in future, we will also be developing the use of Facebook and other social media so that you can see the learning, sporting and many extra-curricular activities that are available to your sons and daughters.

We hope that your children are already telling you about their work and the other aspects of their school lives; we are also committed to helping you to understand how you can be a part of their secondary school experience.

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All in all, we could not have had a better start to this academic year and we are already excited about the second part of the Autumn Term.

Jo Higgins

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If you have any queries about any of our news items, please contact our Marketing Manager Stephen.Clarke@dudleycol.ac.uk or our Executive PA Bonnie.Oakley@dudleycol.ac.uk



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Our Values Driven Expectations Behaviour Model

At the beginning of term, we introduced a new behaviour policy called Values Driven Expectations into all four of the Trust schools.

We are really encouraged by the positive response from our learners, their parents and carers and our staff. Here are some of our learners' comments:

St James Academy, Year 11

'The new behaviour system has improved the quality of learning and the attitude of students.'

The Link Academy, Head Boy

'I have already noticed a big change with our Values Driven Expectations. The five core values promote a great learning environment where students are encouraged to give their best and are rewarded when they do.'

Pegasus Academy, Year 10

'It's changed what happens in the classrooms so that we can get on and learn. Everyone pays attention and joins in more.'

Beacon Hill Academy, Year 11

'It makes me feel better about being at school. My friends like it as well.'

St James Academy, Year 9

'At first I thought it was too much. You can't be perfect. But now I'm getting merits and my Mum can see them.'

The first priority in our strategic plan is to 'create an aspirant culture'; this goes hand in hand with priority two: 'developing exemplary behaviours'. As you will see from our learners' comments, they are really embracing the high standards that we agreed with them; these standards create an environment where our learners can 'Dream Big' and pursue their goals in life. We are determined to further strengthen our standards so that we can guarantee a high quality of education for all. Further on in this newsletter I will explain how we are rewarding good behaviour.



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The Upgrade Mission

The Upgrade Mission is an initiative that has been designed to support all of our Year 11 students and prepare them for their forthcoming GCSE exams.

In September, our Year 11 students visited a workshop at Dudley College which was delivered by Elevate (for more information visit their website <https://uk.elevateeducation.com/>). Elevate offers award-winning seminars that are used in some of the country's top schools. Once the Elevate workshops are complete, the Upgrade mission will continue by providing sessions that focus first on Mathematics, English and Science before branching out into other subjects.

In order to ensure that all our Year 11 students achieve the best possible results in their exams, it is expected that all Year 11 students will attend the Upgrade Mission sessions. These sessions will be from 3-4pm on a Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. After February half term, the sessions will run until 4.45pm to give learners the opportunity to benefit from the Century Tech learning platform. This programme demonstrates the Trust's commitment to providing the best support possible for Year 11 learners so that they can thrive in their summer examinations and move on to positive post-16 destinations.



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Rewarding Effort

What learners can look forward to when they are awarded merits

Our student leaders met with us earlier this week to shape the rewards programme. This will be shared with learners in assemblies at the start of next half term. There will be celebration breakfasts, vouchers for Merry Hill, a celebration disco for learners in years

7 and 8 and a 'big ticket' prize draw for those learners with the highest number of merits in their academy. Throughout the year, merits will be tracked and high numbers will lead to further exciting possibilities for the spring and summer terms, including a range of visits

and trips to sports events, cultural events and places of interest.

We will, of course, ensure that there are lots of rewards and incentives to motivate our Year 11 learners to excel on the Upgrade Mission programme.



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Investing in the future: cutting edge technology



The Trust has purchased a state-of-the-art learning technology called 'Century Tech'.

Century Tech is an artificial intelligence platform that is going to be used by Year 11 learners first, and will later be rolled out to every year group. This is a big investment in your children's education and a major step forward for the Trust and for education in Dudley.

Put simply, the software behind Century Tech looks at how each child learns and sees what they know or don't know, then it feeds

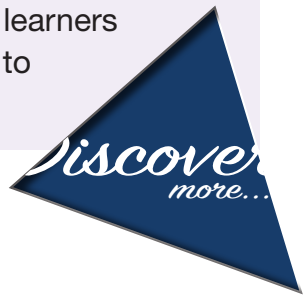
them work that is suited to them personally. It also tells their teachers exactly how well they are doing so that the teachers can help them, and it continually challenges them to improve. This award-winning technology has been proven to work in practice in schools that are just like ours, and because it can be used at school or at home, you will be able to join in with your children's learning and track their progress.

We will tell you when your child has access to this learning platform and give you some guidance on how to provide parental support.

Further investment

The introduction of Century Tech is just the start. 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.

In the meantime, the Trust has significantly enhanced IT at Beacon Hill by providing the first batch of 120 brand new, high-spec computers; 180 more will follow, and the academy will gradually increase the number of new, state-of-the-art devices. Both staff and learners are very excited about this breakthrough and can't wait to use the new machines.



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New developments in the classroom

One of our key values is to provide learning that inspires, so we are very pleased to report on the successful introduction of collaborative learning structures into our classrooms.

Collaborative learning involves the teacher using a variety of student-led teaching activities that encourage learners to work together. Learners also assess and provide feedback to each other, thus developing their communication skills and raising their confidence and self-esteem.

Comments from our learners about the collaborative learning structures include:

'You can communicate with your friends and the person next to you; you can make friends with people you didn't really speak to before.'

'It's really helpful; we can give feedback and ask questions to each other.'

'Instead of just keeping ideas to yourself, you can share them in class. You can share them with the person next to you, and if they're struggling they'll understand more because you're helping them.'



Outfox the Class

- 1) Students create a question that they can answer, but make it as hard as possible for others.
- 2) Stand up and find a partner.
- 3) Students take turns to answer each other's questions - they write their initials and +1 if they are correct or -1 if they get it wrong.
- 4) Find another partner and go again.
- 5) The student with the lowest score managed to outfox the class.
- 6) The teacher checks the student can answer it themselves - then all praise.

Gather and Share

- 1) The teacher asks a question - write down two answers.
- 2) Stand up, raise your hand - find someone else with a hand up - partner up and put your hand down.
- 3) If your partner has any ideas that you do not have, write them down.
- 4) Thank each other and raise your hand - find a new partner.

Buzz and Go

- 1) Students are given a sheet of paper each.
 - 2) They have 2 minutes to list as many features as they can about a given topic on their individual sheets.
 - 3) Each student then passes their list clockwise to the next student, who has an additional 1-minute to extend this list by checking it and adding any missing ideas.
 - 4) It is passed on again, where a further 30 seconds is provided.
 - 5) Finally, it is passed on to a fourth student who is given 15 seconds.
- Note - timings should be altered to fit the task.

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An interim inspection by Ofsted took place on 18th September and I am delighted that the HMI (inspector) recognized the massive improvements that have been made since last year. He said that Pegasus Academy has improved GCSE results, improved attendance, improved behaviour and improved progress in every year group throughout the school.

Here are some of the points from the Ofsted report (the full report can be accessed on the Pegasus Academy website):

- There is a cohesive leadership team. High expectations are evident
- There is clarity about the academy's strengths and weaknesses and effective actions are being taken to address these
- Funding is used more effectively now to drive the key priorities
- Decisive actions have been taken to address staffing issues and recruitment
- The Trust clearly provides additional capacity in key areas
- Pupils say that the quality has improved
- The best teachers demonstrated excellent subject knowledge
- Pupils led the learning

- English provision is very strong – teachers build on pupils' skills and knowledge really well and assessment is accurate
- Behaviour is improving: pupils and staff confirmed this
- Positive behaviour was observed in lessons and social time
- Bullying is rare; when it happens it is dealt with effectively and systems are in place
- Positive behaviour is rewarded reinforcing high expectations (the planner).

Ofsted's approval is not just good news for Pegasus Academy but for all four of our schools as we use the same systems, processes and models in all.



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