



# SIGMA NEWS

For Students, Parents and Carers of The Sigma Trust

Greater than the sum of its parts



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# Welcome...

Dear Parents and Carers,



I hope you all managed to have some form of a break over the Christmas period and were able to celebrate the holiday in the best and safest way possible.

The start to the term has not been the way schools would have wished to welcome in the new year and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your patience over the uncertainty and ever-changing guidance about schools fully reopening. It has been heartwarming to hear from the schools about the messages of support staff have received and for that we are truly grateful.

I would also like to welcome Simon Essex as he takes up his headship at The Thomas Lord Audley School.

Looking back in this edition of Sigma News reminds us of all the excellent learning and projects schools

were carrying on with while working in very different ways to what was previously considered as normal. Staff in all roles have adapted to the new approaches and children have followed with varying degrees of confidence and it is pleasing to share with you, in this edition, the good that takes place in school.

That said, it has been a difficult time for everyone and the new term will bring with it further challenges. Please know that everyone in school will continue to provide the best educational offer for your child, whether it is through remote-learning, live lessons, home packs or a combination of all of these. Staff have been busy preparing online platforms, designing packs and assessing how best to communicate with you all alongside supporting families to ensure food vouchers and parcels are prepared and distributing electronic devices.

The Trust, as a family of schools, supports one another and, in turn, supports you as families in your community. Through this united position, we have been able to stand strong and continue to support and educate our children.

Please read through this edition, take heart and smile at the work that has taken place and which continues on a daily basis in the various forms. Home-schooling is hard, but rest assured schools will return fully in due course and we must continue to educate and prepare our young people for when that happens.

**Keep strong and keep safe.**

*Lyn Wright, CEO,  
The Sigma Trust*

## WE ARE THE SIGMA FAMILY...



# Doors open to new sixth form provision



Sixth formers are benefitting from the launch of Sigma Sixth. Both Tendring and Colchester campuses welcomed their first cohorts of sixth form students in September. In Tendring, the sixth form has evolved from the provision set up by Clacton

County High School. In September, it relocated to a new, extensively refurbished site with the same staff and core beliefs.

Sarah McKarry, Head of College, said: "Sigma Sixth Tendring provides an outstanding learning environment and enrichment facilities, including specialist art and design studios, dance studio, theatre performance space, mac suite and recording studio, four-court sports hall and astro turf pitches, well-equipped technology workshops, excellent ICT provision, modern social spaces and on-site café.

"Sigma Sixth Tendring provides a genuine college experience for the young people in Tendring. This new sixth form college will

enthusiase, inspire, challenge and prepare students for the next stage of their life."

In Colchester, the provision builds on the traditions of the former Philip Morant College. Sigma Sixth Colchester includes a Sports Academy, based at The Northern Gateway Sports Park.

Scott Holder, Executive Headteacher, said: "This is an exciting time for everyone at Sigma Sixth Colchester.

"With increased numbers this year, we are confident our sixth form will continue to expand and remain a centre of educational excellence for the young people in our area. The college has a relaxed yet purposeful atmosphere. It is a great place to learn, establish friendships, and prepare yourself for future success."



Visit <https://www.sigmasixth.org.uk/>

## Becoming sixth formers – just for one day

Year 11 students got the opportunity to sample life as sixth formers at the new Sigma Sixth Tendring.

They dressed as sixth form students in smart clothes, toured the new facilities and relaxed in the social and restaurant areas during breaks.



Sarah McKarry, Head of College, said: "To help students to decide which subjects to study in the sixth form from next September, they attended some typical A-level lessons to see how the study differs from GCSE courses.



"The taster day opened the eyes of our Year 11 students to the many advantages of studying at the sixth form college, not only in the variety of subject areas and options available to them, but the support, guidance and advice on offer from the Sigma Sixth team and their subject teachers."

Year 11 students have also each had a one-to-one interview with an adviser to decide on their further education plans and to complete their application to Sigma Sixth.

## 200 trees planted around sixth form site

Students dug, planted, mulched and watered 200 saplings as they considered their impact on their environment.

Year 12 students from the Knowledge, Learning, Independence and Careers (KLIC) course at Harwich and Dovercourt Sixth Form planted the saplings around the school and college site.

The eco warriors worked in partnership with the Woodland Trust to bring the hedges, trees and

flowers to the college.

Sarah Parker, Head of Sixth Form, said: "The gardening day gave students an insight into the horticulture world, as well as focusing on various environmental impacts.

"Students also worked on improving their core employability skills from communication, teamwork, planning and interpersonal skills which link to their Prince's Trust qualification."



## Author helps children to work on their wellbeing

Pupils are working with a children's author as part of their recovery curriculum.

Year 4 pupils at Holland Park Primary School are taking part in an initiative with Jacqui Gray, author of *My Magical Garden*.

Virtual training workshops have been delivered to pupils, staff and parents, with each child receiving a free copy of the book

to help them to understand the benefits that relaxation and calming techniques can have on their wellbeing and overall mental health.

The book is designed to teach children the importance of wellbeing and mindfulness, while also sharing strategies for understanding and regulating their emotions, building resilience, navigating stressful situations and talking about their worries.



# The show must go on!

While singing has been banned in schools during the pandemic, children have found their voices in a new way. Pupils at Alton Park Junior School have learnt to sign their songs rather than sing them. Their efforts have been recorded and turned into a video for each year group.

Pat Whalley, Higher Level Teaching Assistant, said: "All children were enthusiastic about signing, although we all found it very difficult not to sing.

"After one or two lessons, children were enthused to

research Macaton sign language and explain it to their classmates."

Headteacher Nicky Sirett said: "Singing is something that Alton Park School loves to do. It has been hard not having lots of singing in class and the choirs unable to rehearse. But, it was lovely to see the children enjoying music and learning a new skill."



## Settling in well, despite pandemic

The youngest students at The Colne Community School and College have settled in to their new surroundings, despite the pandemic.

Rachel Harrigan, Year 7 Leader, said: "Transitioning to secondary school is such an exciting experience, but it can also be a worrying time, even under normal circumstances.

"Despite not having the usual array of transition activities available, our new Year 7 students have settled in incredibly well. They have had the opportunity to make new friends, experience new lessons and they are also enjoying having a little more independence.

"I am very proud of the way they are

adhering to the measures we have in place, looking after one another and engaging with their learning."

Student Retal said: "I found it lovely moving here. The teachers and staff are really kind and will listen to anything you need to say. I have been able to make so many friends here who are the kindest people ever. I love it here at the Colne!"

## School and parent partnership recognised

Monkwick Infant School has won the Leading Parent Partnership Award, a national standard for effective parent partnership. The award was secured in response to written evidence provided by the school and views given by video call by staff, parents, pupils and a governor.

The verification report stated: "There is a clear philosophy and culture underlying the work of the school that they are a partnership with parents and are seeking to work together to the

benefit of students and wider families.

"These are based around the key themes of ensuring open communication, celebrating students' achievements at all levels and sharing key information and developing parents' skills to support their own children."

Headteacher Claire Holmes said: "I am really delighted that the school has been recognised for the importance it places on working in partnership with parents.

"The school has always stood for community and has put supporting children and their families at the heart of all we do.

"The whole team works together to improve outcomes for pupils through connecting with parents and carers. I am extremely proud of the work the school does."

The school was assessed via video conferencing to meet Covid-19 guidelines. The award is valid for three years.



## Battling to keep students safe outside school

Industrious students have been petitioning for a zebra crossing outside their school. Tillie and Lily, Year 8 at Paxman Academy, started their battle in February, raising awareness and sharing the petition for Walnut Tree Way and Paxman Avenue.

They produced leaflets, brochures, cards and posters to distribute in the community and made a film to display on the school monitors. They also met with local MP Will Quince and spoke with councillors about their campaign. So far,

they have gathered 1,230 signatures.

Parent Vikki Brotherton said: "My daughter and her friend pointed out to me the crossing points outside the school are dangerous - as there are none! If young children can recognise this as a problem, it's time for us adults and the council to take action. This action is required ASAP to prevent a major road traffic accident occurring involving one of our children, family or other community member."

## Annual careers event relaunched virtually

The Sigma Virtual Careers Convention was launched online during the pandemic.

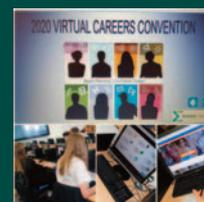
Each year, schools in Colchester and Tendring come together to meet with representatives from across various industries and local further education colleges to help them to decide on their future pathways. About 2,000 Year 11 students attend each year as they prepare to apply for their post-16 options.

Organiser Paula Deighton, Careers Lead at The Stanway School, said: "Students can go into the virtual convention and look at different areas, they can get careers guidance, read about different jobs and follow links to organisations

such as the NHS to learn more. We have brought everything together for our students in one place."

Students traditionally get one hour to visit the careers event, while this year the online facility means they can keep returning to look at information - including with their families from home.

A newsletter has been launched to share careers news and virtual opportunities with students who were also given a presentation on how to get the best out of the new-look event. Students from across The Sigma Trust secondary schools were invited to take part in the virtual event.



# New headteacher “excited” to lead school

A new Headteacher has been appointed to lead The Thomas Lord Audley School from January.

Simon Essex has been appointed to replace Helena Boast who left the post at Christmas.

Ms Boast, who has been at the school since 2008, fought to keep the school open when she joined, helped it to reach a Good Ofsted rating and achieved the status of being the most improved secondary school in Essex in 2016.

She said: “I consider my biggest achievement enabling students to believe in themselves and achieve success.

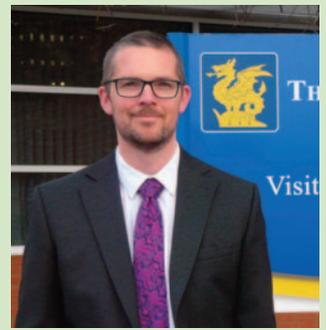
“The school is ready for a new headteacher to take it forward on the next stage of its journey and I need another challenge towards the end of my career. I will miss teaching and working with the students, working with and being supported by the staff, being part of the school community and my daily

interactions with students and colleagues.”

Mr Essex, who has been Deputy Headteacher for eight years, said: “I am incredibly excited to lead The Thomas Lord Audley School into the next stages of its journey.

“I am proud of what we have already achieved and feel strongly that we are well positioned to do even more as we move forward. I am an ambitious individual and have always been driven to ensure students are served as well as they can be by their school. I am passionate about creating the best possible opportunities for our young people.

“I believe our staff and students are amazing.”



# Building resilience and raising awareness

Pupils at Holland Park Primary School worked with the Multi Schools Council on the Resilience Programme and to learn more about autism.

Kierran Pearce, of the Multi Schools Council, delivered weekly resilient sessions where Year 6 pupils discussed self-esteem, self-confidence, understanding emotions, friendship, social media, internet safety and coping with challenges.

He also gave training on ASD and ADHD to develop understanding of how best to help others who may have additional needs, and the importance of inclusion and equality.

Sarah Edwards, Behaviour and Wellbeing Lead, said: “Pupils benefitted from the six-week Resilience Programme which was designed to teach children the importance of never giving up, as well as promoting good

mental health and wellbeing techniques, skills for coping with friendship issues, and internet and social media safety. These children then went on to have autism awareness training with Kierran as we strive to show our pupils the importance of inclusion and understanding.”

The Multi Schools Council allows children to meet regularly and have their voice heard.

# Creating festive jumpers from old clothes

Creative children upcycled their old clothes and turned them into Christmas tops.

As part of their design and technology lessons, Year 6 pupils at Monkwick Junior School were set the challenge of upcycling an old item of clothing.

Jason Beerjeraz, Lead Practitioner, said: “They had to work on plans and sketches before getting to work on actual items of clothing. Pupils created and sewed on their own applique, including snowmen,

Christmas puddings and snowflakes. Many were able to add fastenings, such as zips and buttons to their items.

“Pupils worked hard and came up with some fantastic designs. The challenge was to take all the design and technology skills our pupils have gained since their time in the school and apply them to one functional item.

“They thoroughly enjoyed this project and thrived.”



# Support group focusing on mental health

Students are being encouraged to discuss their mental health during a new support group.

Kintsugi Hope is a charity facilitating safe and supportive spaces for those struggling with mental and emotional health challenges. Philip Morant School launched a Kintsugi Hope wellbeing group for Year 11 in the last half-term before Christmas. Students in the group focused on topics such as honesty, anxiety, depression, perfectionism, shame and anger.

Stephanie Neill, Head of School, said: “Students who have attended have responded so well and we are so proud of them.”

The whole school was invited by the group to take part in a music and mental health competition where students rewrote lyrics to famous songs on the theme of It's Ok Not to Be Ok. The entries were judged by representatives from Kintsugi Hope, Colchester Arts Centre, The Roman River Festival and Kingland Church.

A group will launch for Year 10 in the new year.

# Food parcels delivered to families in need

St Helena School joined forces with GO4 Cafe and Knights of St Columba to deliver essentials to parents and children in need. Two large deliveries of food were provided by the schemes to enable the school to support its community.

Headteacher Fiona Pierson said: “Our staff have been so keen to do everything they can to help, from offering vehicles to make deliveries, to bringing in food donations.

“We have been collecting donations in our staff room for several months and, by using those, we have managed to take emergency food parcels to families when they have needed it most. We will continue to do everything we can to support our most vulnerable families and encourage our parents and carers to contact the school directly if they feel they are struggling and need our support.”

The school also donated essentials from the school's canteen during lockdown and is a referral agency for Colchester Foodbank.

## Bespoke alternative provision for secondary students

The Sigma Trust has been commissioned by the local authority to pilot a Key Stage 3 provision for north east Essex.

GROW Secondary is an additional education provision to support students experiencing social, emotional and / or mental health difficulties while attending mainstream secondary school.

Students attend Stanway Youth Centre on a bespoke timetable aimed at aiding their ability to self-regulate to be able to navigate school life.

They will also learn –

- to improve self-control and self-regulation
- to strengthen their resilience and decision-making
- an enhanced enthusiasm for learning
- to reduce peer to peer conflict
- to develop positive social skills such as empathy, compassion, patience and generosity

Alison Rudd, Assistant Director of Education for The Sigma Trust, said: "At GROW Secondary, we are dedicated to helping deepen students'

understanding of their own mental process, allowing them to understand why they behave in the way they do in order to improve their self-regulation and positive behaviours.

"Crucial to the success for every student is the commitment and communication from parents or carers right from the start."

North east Essex secondary schools can refer a student to GROW for one or two terms, with attendance decided by a half-termly panel.



## Delivering smiles – and gifts – to Romanian children

Alton Park Junior School is this year supporting the 500 Smiles campaign. Launched two years ago, the initiative aims to fill hundreds of shoe boxes with Christmas presents for the children of Apalina, Romania.

Headteacher Nicky Sirett said: "For the past few years, my church has been building links with a church in central Transylvania, Romania that serves a community of Roma. The Roma are completely disenfranchised from mainstream society in Romania and live in 'shanty' towns with no running water or any of the other basic utilities and services that we all take for granted.

"I headed up a team that went out to Romania in December 2018 and helped to distribute more

than 700 boxes to children and young people. The Roma community has suffered dreadfully during 2020, with little or no opportunity for seasonal work in Western Europe that so many of them rely on for an income, plus outbreaks of Covid-19 in the village."

While visits are not an option this year due to the pandemic, Alton Park has contributed to the campaign by donating more than 70 shoe boxes.

Mrs Sirett said: "It was great to see staff and children thinking about how they can give to others, even in the midst of the pandemic."

St John's Church, in Colchester, sent more than 700 shoe boxes to Romania to children who would otherwise receive nothing at Christmas.

## Remembering loved ones on Mexican Day of the Dead

Spanish lessons took on a festive feel when students learnt about Latin culture.

Year 7 students discussed the Día de los Muertos – Day of the Dead – Mexican holiday celebrated in November.

Students learnt that while the day is linked to Halloween, the two events differ in tradition and tone, with the Day of the Dead providing an explosion of colour and joy.

The festival is a day of remembrance to demonstrate love and respect for deceased family members. Revellers put on funky makeup and costumes, hold parades and parties, sing and dance and make offerings to lost loved ones.

As part of their studies, students produced traditional Día de los Muertos masks.



## Recognising great black role models

Students were asked to discover black role models to link to the ethos of their school house.

The newly relaunched house system at Philip Morant School was used to inspire students to find people who epitomise the essence of the ethos.

The student management team recorded videos on the ethos of the house they represented and the history of the person it was named after.

Scott Holder, Executive Headteacher, said: "Every year, Philip Morant School celebrates Black History Month.

However, this year following the Black Lives Matter campaign, this was even more important. The challenge was to find a wide range of individuals from all spheres of life. The responses were excellent and will stay on display on our house boards."

## Spreading a box full of Christmas cheer

Charity-minded students rose to the challenge of donating parcels to underprivileged children.

Year 10 students at The Stanway School take part in fundraising events each autumn to support local charities. After gathering 180 selection boxes, students spent their

breaktimes wrapping the festive gifts.

Teacher Katie Henderson said: "Not only do students feel they are helping the community, but also bringing a bit of festive cheer in what may be a low key Christmas period for these children. We are very proud of them!"

# Building revamp for school science block



Harwich and Dovercourt High School has had a full refurbishment of its outdated science building.

The revamp included the demolition of a failing section of the block to make way for two

state-of-the-art new classrooms and a new landscaped outdoor space. In addition to the full modernisation and refurbishment of six science labs, the facilities have seen the installation of an upgraded heating system, improved ventilation and all new furniture throughout.

Smart TVs have also been installed, giving a boost to a modernised teaching and learning environment for all staff and students. Brand-new student toilet facilities were included in the works as part of the development of an enlarged foyer space with extra exit points to improve circulation.

New double-glazed windows, roof insulation and PIR activated LED lighting have been installed throughout the building as part of the Trust's drive to reduce the school's overall carbon footprint.



## Pens banned to encourage discussion

Paxman Academy took part in No Pens Day to encourage and prioritise the use of spoken language.

As part of the day, students engaged in parliamentary debates in English, discussion of environmental issues in science and storytelling and problem-solving in maths.

They also took part in practical technology lessons, working on their sewing skills and giving critical evaluations of works of art.

Kate Steele, Assistant Headteacher, said: "Schools spend a lot of time working on developing students' writing skills, when of course the most cited skill needed for success in school and beyond is verbal communication.

"As a school, developing our students' oracy skills is a key focus and so we felt it was a good opportunity to put some of this work into practice."

The national event is run by the I Can Foundation.

## Opening minds to expanded vocabulary

A Word of the Week competition has been launched to encourage students to expand their vocabulary.

The competition at St Helena School is aimed at getting students to use tier three words – content-specific vocabulary often defined in textbooks or glossaries.

Once a week, students complete a

reading literacy task and at the end of each half term they use the key words from the task to construct a piece of writing using tier three vocabulary.

Steve Bidgood, Director for Teaching and Learning, said: "This has proved very successful in building confidence and understanding of key terms, particularly in Key Stage 3."



## Teaching students how to revise

A programme helping students to revise has been launched at The Stanway



School. The scheme has been set up to help students to make the most of their time when revising, to help them to feel positive about revision and to improve their generic revision skills to help in all subjects.

Students are being taught to use tools such as flashcards, mindmaps and knowledge organisers, while building their resilience. One-hour sessions on each area are being held online, with video

presentations provided for future reference.

Crystal Wadsworth, Assistant Headteacher, said: "Too often, we tell students to revise, but don't take the time to show them how to prepare and revise properly. "It was fantastic to see how many attended each week and how much they learnt from it. The How to Revise program has been well received by parents and students."

## University picks student's work to appear in journal

A student's work was of such high standard it was selected by Cambridge University to appear in a journal.

Susanna Jonas was among a group of students from Thomas Lord Audley School to take part in the Brilliant Club programme when in Year 9.

Cambridge University's access charity's mission is to increase the number of young people from under-represented backgrounds attending highly selective universities.

Students worked with a PhD researcher to discuss the social impacts of new technologies represented in 19th Century

literature before producing an essay on the topic.

The assessments were graded as though the students were at university.

Susan Green, Careers Leader, said: "Susanna achieved a First for her piece of work which was subsequently selected to be published within the Brilliant Club's journal, The Scholar. This is an amazing achievement!

"Susanna worked incredibly hard and put a lot of thought and detail into her final piece and this is recognised with it being chosen to be published."

# Reflecting on our heroes of lockdown

Students at Philip Morant School took part in a competition to mark the relaunch of the house system and to reflect on their experience of lockdown. They could choose to write a reflective piece on their lockdown heroes, to write a poem or prayer on loss or to produce a poster on staying safe.

Stephanie Neill, Head of School, said: "The competition was

an opportunity for students to reflect on their experiences of lockdown and to help us to identify those who might need additional support."

The winning entries – judged by a panel from 16 Air Assault Brigade, local churches and local councillors - were rewarded with the first new house awards.

## One-way systems, social distancing and staggered starts



A range of measures are keeping infant school pupils and their families safe during the pandemic. As with all schools, Monkwick Infant School has had to adapt the way it operates as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak.

Parents are requested to wear masks when they are on site,

pupils are served their dinners at tables, tables are cleaned between uses and children stay in their bubbles during lessons, play and lunchtime.

Headteacher Claire Holmes said: "These are just some of the many new ways of working we have adapted. The children are brilliant and have coped so well. We wash hands and sanitise so many times and children really manage this independently now.

"Staff miss spending time together as we no longer use our small staff room, but we have staff meetings remotely.

"We so look forward to brighter days when our school community can mix and be close together again. Until then, we make it work as best we can and the children keep us all focused and, of course, give us much to stay positive about."

## 400 children plant 400 trees



A woodland scheme has seen a whole school community plant their own forest. Alton Park Junior School has offered Forest School to pupils for the last ten years.

Earlier this year, the school applied to the Woodland Trust's Free Trees scheme for a large wildlife pack of trees, including a mixture of native species such as hawthorn, rowan, blackthorn, silver birch, hazel and common oak. More than 400 tree saplings were delivered and planted by pupils and teachers as part of Forest School.

Tim Evans, Forest School, said: "We decided to plant our new trees to form a Miyawaki forest, a system of dense planting

named after the Japanese botanist who came up with the idea. Trees planted in this way grow faster, are more resilient and restore biodiversity more quickly.

"The plan was for every child at Alton Park to have the opportunity to plant a tree here and to learn more about the importance of trees as they did so, especially about their role in combating the climate crisis by removing carbon from the air and providing homes and food for wildlife."

Headteacher Nicky Sirett said: "The Miyawaki forest teaches children about biodiversity, as well as native tree species. The forest will be of continued focus of interest and study for the children as it grows."

## Learning real-life and alternative skills



A broader curriculum is teaching young people skills for life.

This academic year, Clacton County High School launched a new initiative to teach students real-life and alternative skills to sit alongside their academic learning.

To broaden the curriculum offer, Year 9 students have the opportunity to choose from a variety of activities, including the Duke of Edinburgh's Bronze Award, employment skills, understanding money and finance, boot camp, yoga, gardening, basic first aid, cooking

meals, web development, learning basic Greek, STEM/robotics, community work and charity work.

One lesson each week is devoted to the new broader curriculum with students taking part in five of their chosen activities throughout the year, with each one lasting for seven weeks.

Chris Taylor, Head of School, said: "The students are already enjoying the diversion from the traditional subjects and have embraced the opportunity to learn some additional skills which will be of use to them later in life."



## Every little helps at Christmastime

Students, staff and parents at The Colne Community School and College contributed to the Food Bank Project by donating tins and packaged food items. The items were distributed to local food banks to ensure families had enough to eat over Christmas.

Ben Cooksley, Subject Leader RE, said: "2020 has been an unprecedented year and the hardship many families and

individuals face are pressing. People like Marcus Rashford have drawn awareness to the reality of hunger in the UK and its impact on children.

"All at the Colne have been incredible in their response to this urgent issue. A special thank-you to all of those who have been involved. To quote a national supermarket: 'Every little helps'."

# Importance of happiness and positivity in pandemic



Students looked at how they could change their mindset to develop positivity during the current climate.

Year 7 and 8 students at Clacton County High School developed ideas

focusing on what makes them happy as part of the PROUD (Perseverance, Responsibility, Opportunity, Unity, Diversity) session.

The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) work linked to World Mental Health Day.

Dave Hodgson, PROUD Co-ordinator, said: "The PROUD lesson focused on the topic of mental health and wellbeing. Under the current climate, it is important for us all to acknowledge why happiness and positivity are so important to our mental health.

"Throughout the year, we devote numerous lessons to topics that link to our PROUD ideals."



## Comfort brought to homeless by schoolchildren

Caring school councillors appealed to their families to support homeless people during the winter.

Year 5 pupils from Holland Park Primary School committed to raising awareness of homeless charity CHES after attending the first virtual Multi Schools Council. At the meeting, five pupils raised their concerns about people who may find themselves homeless during the colder months.

They decided to ask families to help by donating warm

clothing, blankets and coats.

Sarah Edwards, Behaviour and Wellbeing Lead, said: "The Multi Schools Council gives all local children a voice and a chance to express their views on a variety of topics.

"We were delighted with the response from our Holland Park family and would like to thank them for their support. We know these donations will be of great comfort to those in need."

## New experiences with art techniques

Young artists got to try their hand at various creative techniques to broaden their experiences.

As part of their Added Advantage curriculum, Year 5 pupils at Monkwick Junior School have been taking part in events and activities to provide them with unique experiences. They took part in an art exploration day, choosing from a range of activities including tie dye, using glow in the dark paints and

experimenting with acrylic paint on canvas.

Mark Visagie, Assistant Head, said: "The children enjoyed creating different patterns with tie dye and were amazed by the effects of the glowing paint. Many children also commented that they plan to continue using these new mediums and techniques at home."

## Brilliant students work with Cambridge University



A group of brilliant students had a taste of what life is like studying at university. Year 9 students from St Helena School were selected to take part in the Brilliant Club,

by Cambridge University.

The university access charity's mission is to increase the number of young people from under-represented backgrounds attending highly selective universities.

They visited the university for a launch and induction event before working with a PhD student to learn more about university style lecturing.

They discussed Post Truth Politics, looking at the EU referendum, Brexit and the

United States elections. Students had to produce a 2,000-word essay on the topic, using subject specific research.

Cherri Farren, Second in Science, said: "Each and every student worked very hard throughout the Brilliant Club. We are very proud of our students' achievements and hope they continue to use their subject knowledge, written communication, resilience and determination in their studies and beyond."

## Learning how to be good male role models

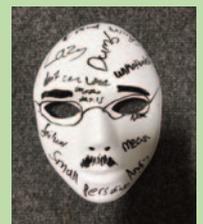
Young boys are looking at what masculinity means to them. The Alpha Project is an eight-session programme focusing on a targeted group of boys, exploring what makes a man and how different factors influence a young man's view of himself and the world. The project covers different perspectives of masculinity; "what masculinity means to me", male role models, academic aspirations and male mental health. It aims to develop and improve key skills and personal characteristics such as confidence and self-esteem, manners, kindness and respect, self-reflection skills, behaviour for learning, and teamwork and leadership skills.

Alex MacPhail, Head of Year 11, said: "After reading the book Boys Don't Try by Matt Pinkett and Mark Roberts, I was inspired

to do more at The Stanway School to support our young men and close the boy/girl progress/attainment gap. I did this through the creation of the Alpha Project.

"It's early days, but I feel it's been really powerful so far getting our young men to consider how their views of what makes a man have been shaped by different stereotypes, societal pressures and experiences in their lives. I hope by giving them a safe space to discuss these important issues, we can support them to be the best men they possibly can be."

Year 11 students have started the programme and it will be rolled out to the rest of the school this year.



## “We will remember them”

On November 11 at 11 am, Clacton County High School fell quiet as lost and injured servicemen and women were remembered.

Year 8 students attended a socially distanced Armistice Day service at Clacton War Memorial. The students joined ex-servicemen and women and lay a poppy wreath in honour of the fallen heroes from all of the armed forces.



## Reflecting on sacrifices by servicemen and women



Students devoted two weeks to focus on the theme of remembrance.

Paxman Academy hosted a range of activities where students and staff could reflect upon the sacrifices made during conflict. During a virtual assembly on some of the individual stories

from the First World War, students heard the story of the youngest casualty, Valentine Joe Strudwick, and about the heroism demonstrated by William ‘Bill’ McFadzean, who was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.

Form time literacy sessions were dedicated to the story of The Unknown Warrior, where students discussed those who fell in the conflict and those who never recovered from the fighting.

Dan Suen, Head of Humanities, said: “It was a really proud and

inspiring couple of weeks at Paxman Academy.

“Our students paid their respects in form time by beautifully decorating poppies, which have since been displayed across the school, and really ignited dialogue around Remembrance within the school community.

“Remembrance had a new and circumstantially different feel to it this year, but this did not deter the students from showing the utmost respect and enthusiasm during all of our activities. We live in hope that this time next year, we can bring the entire school body together as one as we continue to pay our respects.”

On Remembrance Day, the school community observed the two-minute silence and watched a virtual assembly.



## School trip organiser shortlisted for national award



A member of school support staff has made it through to the final four in a national award for her work organising trips for students.

SLT Support Assistant Maree Green was nominated for the School Travel Organiser Award when she was business support assistant and school trips co-ordinator at Harwich and Dovercourt High School.

David Cook, Director of Humanities Faculty, nominated Maree and said: “Maree has been incredibly supportive of all school visits and goes above and beyond to help staff organise these visits.

“Her organisation of a London trip – with 200 students going to 16 venues – was amazing. Without her help and dedication putting children first, many of these visits wouldn't happen.”

Mrs Green said: “I thoroughly enjoyed

organising the 2019 Year 7 trip to London and still have the 200 thank-you letters from the students. If I am successful in winning, it would be lovely to arrange a trip for our present Year 7 students who unfortunately haven't been able to experience a trip due to the current circumstances.”

Mrs Green has made it to the final four of the national competition. A ceremony is due to be held in spring 2021 when the winners will be announced.

## Caring children provide five-star home for bugs

Critters living in a school forest have a place to call home, thanks to caring pupils.

As part of their Added Advantage curriculum, Year 3 pupils at Monkwick Junior School have been taking part in events and activities to provide them with unique experiences. They created a five-star bug hotel to provide a home for critters in the school's forest area.

Hope Steward, Class Teacher, said: “We started by learning the importance of providing insects a safe place for the

winter. We designed and labelled what we were going to include in our hotels, ensuring we included a cosy place to stay and lots of food. Finally, over a few fun afternoons, we built our amazing bug hotels!

“The children were so thoughtful and creative with how they designed and made their bug hotels. I was extremely impressed with the enthusiasm all the children showed when they were building. It even inspired some children to build their own at home and also

forage for special pinecones and sticks to add to our class hotel.

“We have gone to visit our brilliant hotels many times since making them and have been overjoyed to find happy little critters living there.”



## Opening students' eyes to 50 healthcare science roles

Students with an interest in healthcare science got a real-life insight into the industry. Year 9 health and social care and Year 10 science students watched virtual presentation The Human Guinea Pig show by Medical Mavericks. The programme introduced students to the world of healthcare science and its 50 jobs within the NHS, including undertaking tests on patients, designing equipment to be used and analysing results.

They discovered the roles - a mix of physiology, lab science, bio medical, engineering and IT - and are all accessible with GCSE grades nine to four.

Students watched live medical tests, including –

- seeing how the heart and liver work with an ultrasound scan

- looking at the jugular vein in the neck and understanding how this drains and brings blood back to the body
- seeing an ECG being undertaken and understanding the analysis of the results
- looking into an eye with an ophthalmoscope
- watching what happens in a bronchoscopy where a camera was put up an individual's nose and into their lungs and took samples for biopsies

Susan Green, Careers Leader, said: “The students thoroughly enjoyed the virtual presentation and this developed their knowledge to support their learning in both science and health and social care and also the career opportunities within the health care sector.”

# Running helps to focus the mind

Students have accepted a form time challenge to help support their mental health.

Year 7 and 8 students from The Colne Community School and College take part in a tutor mile walk every two weeks. The aim is for students to engage in physical activity to help focus their

minds while completing as many laps as they can within their form time slot.

Each half-term, the form which accumulates the most laps will receive house points, a free breakfast and sports hall or gym access.

## Role model hailed a sporting hero



A PE co-ordinator has been given the Active Essex Activity Hero Award.

Sarah Hughes, from Holland Park Primary School, was nominated by Tendring School Games organiser Nigel Walker.

Mr Walker said: "Without fail, whenever I'm in Sarah's company attending a school sports festival or competition, I'm genuinely in awe to witness the respect, high regard and fondness all the children and parents have for her. "Sarah is an altruist and, over decades, has selflessly devoted her time, professionally and

personally, to helping improve children's lives through the participation in physical activities and sports.

"An Active Essex Hero Award would be a great way to recognise Sarah's work."

With restrictions meaning the usual celebration event could not take place, the awards ceremony was held remotely.

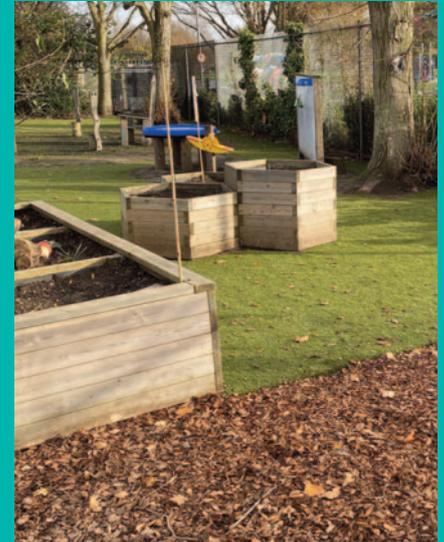
Miss Hughes said: "I would like to thank the children at Holland Park for doing so well in the sports and teams I have worked with. This award is as much for them as it is for me."

## Outdoor learning developed due to pandemic

Pupils at Monkwick Infant School are making more use of their outdoor space to meet safety guidelines.

The outdoor learning areas have been developed to create more individual play spaces, so children can play separately.

An astroturf has given the school greater outdoor access during the wet weather.



## Running a marathon – on our school playground

Supportive children took on a challenge to run a marathon in support of their learning mentor.

Wendy Watts, Learning Mentor at Monkwick Junior School, is a lifelong sufferer of rheumatoid arthritis.

She aimed to walk 10,000 steps a day throughout October to raise money for arthritis charity Versus Arthritis.

Pupils were keen to join in and decided to run or jog the equivalent of a marathon on the school playground.

Mrs Watts said: "The children enjoyed having a focus for the running and were sad to hear that so many charities had lost out on vital funds due to Covid-19 lockdowns."





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