

NEWSLETTER

Vol 1 | March 2021



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A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

Welcome to our first edition of the EKC Schools Trust Newsletter.

There are so many incredible things happening across the schools and collaboratively across the Trust. We wanted to find a way to stay in touch, share and celebrate and communicate with everyone.

The past 12 months have been described as ‘unprecedented,’ ‘a marathon,’ ‘strange times.’ We have developed a whole new language around our COVID practices; social distancing, doomscrolling, herd immunity, key workers and I never thought someone would greet me by asking “Are we elbow bumping?” We have new routines in our houses ... keys, money, glasses, mask, and we spend a proportion of all our social interactions telling colleagues and loved ones “You’re on mute.”

In addition to all this, so many of our communities have faced hardship, redundancy, personal challenges and bereavement. It has been an exceptionally difficult year!

And yet, despite all of this, the schools I am privileged to work with have continued to offer fantastic provision to our pupils, supported families through incredibly difficult times and achieved terrific things with remote learning. It’s really hard to juggle everything, and I continue to be grateful and impressed by the calm, focused and incredibly caring leadership of the Headteachers in the Trust and the teamwork and support you all offer one another to respond to the needs of our pupils.

Thank you and please continue to look after one another and continue to do everything we can to make sure our pupils get the very best life chances they can.

Tammy Mitchell
CEO



MEET BRIARY PRIMARY SCHOOL



ENCOURAGING THE JOY OF READING

Literacy and reading can transform lives; so with library closures and the rising cost of books, we wanted to make sure our families can access a range of reading materials when at home. Our award-winning* Book Shed, allows children to freely borrow books; and thanks to the generosity of our families, there are lots of tales to choose from. Manned by our Reader Leader, adults can gain advice on how to support reading at home.

Our new parent/carer Book Club builds on this success; inviting parents to join a termly meet up to discuss selected books we have read and challenge ourselves to read something different. Once read, copies are donated to the Book Shed for other parents to borrow and so on. Our growing project has been great for our families, with children able to see their parents as readers too.

**"Best Initiative to Encourage Reading for Pleasure" at the KM Literacy Awards.*

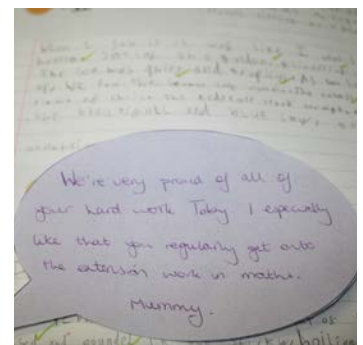
CELEBRATION OF LEARNING

At Briary, we feel it's important for families to share and celebrate their children's learning with them, so we introduced the Celebration of Learning.

Parents/carers are invited into class once a term, to hear from their children about their learning.

The impact has been really positive for both children and their adults, with children talking confidently about their learning and showing pride in what they have been doing.

Equally enjoyed by the adults, they write a comment in their children's book as a keepsake for their child.



THERAPY DOGS AT BRIARY

Former teacher, Miss Turner, is currently completing her master's degree; her research project explores the use of therapy dogs to support young learners. We're happy to be part of the project, as are the children, and as soon as restrictions allow, she will recommence her study.

MEET BYSING WOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL



CHIFFCHAFFS PRE-SCHOOL

Our Chiffchaffs PreSchool is a real success story for Bysing Wood. As a school, we are committed to our belief that learning starts from birth, and we seek the best outcomes for all children; so when the independent nursery provision operating on our school site closed, we stepped in to help.

Autumn 2019 was spent preparing our new venture, enhancing the vacant space and ensuring high quality, fully integrated care and education for our children and families. Thanks to the hard work of our EYFS Leader and team, Chiffchaff opened its doors in January 2020.

A year on, and our Nursery has gone from strength to strength. Opening its doors to eight children a year later, and we have 30 children on roll with lots more youngsters ready to join us when they're old enough in the terms ahead.

Including families with no connection to the school - we even have a waiting list for September 2021.

Better yet, we're able to support our community significantly earlier than previously, making a real difference to school readiness and progress. Our curriculum is delivered by qualified teachers and early-year educators and offers carefully planned adult-led experiences that enable children to learn specific skills and knowledge. However, it is through play that children learn most effectively and where we gain a thorough understanding of each child's development.

We are very proud of the high-quality provision at Chiffchaffs!

If you are wondering why the choice of name, the woodland adjacent to the pre-school (where our Forest School is based) has many of these migrant warblers visiting through the spring, summer and autumn. So, for much of the year, we hear their characteristic song all around us.



MEET HOLYWELL PRIMARY SCHOOL



WE ARE A GOLD UNICEF RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOL

Achieving UNICEF UK's Gold Award was a proud moment for our school, one of only four Kent schools to receive the accreditation.

Assessors recognised our commitment to putting children's rights at the heart of everything we do; a community where children's rights are learned, taught, practised, respected, protected and promoted.

Assessor feedback highlighted the:

- development of pupil voice and the positive impact this is having on learning, inclusion and wellbeing
- way the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child underpins school improvement and policy review
- commitment and energy of senior leaders and staff in embedding a child rights approach
- consistency of messaging and communication about rights across the school community.



Going forward, we will be sharing our achievement with other schools in our Trust and other local primary and secondary schools who are just starting on their journey to become rights-respecting.

By embedding the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child we help our pupils grow into confident, caring and responsible young people so they may realise their potential. This award has allowed our children to recognise the power of their voice to facilitate change not only in school but also in the wider world.

FROM THE MOUTHS OF BABES...

"I feel great about being a pupil at this school because the staff here are kind and are always willing to help me"
Pupil A, Year 5

"At Holywell excellent learning is everywhere. I really enjoy English, the Maths is great, Science is fun and topic is amazing" Pupil H, Year 6

"One thing I find amazing... is the morning work because it gets our brains ready for the day" Pupil P, Year 2

MEET QUEENBOROUGH PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY



ACHIEVING THE NATIONAL SMSC QUALITY MARK - GOLD AWARD



We're extremely proud to have achieved the National Quality Mark, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is at the heart of everything we do.

We were delighted with the assessor's feedback.

"SMSC is embedded in the culture of the school. It features in all aspects of the pupils' personal and academic development. It is evident by the way the pupils treat each other, their high levels of self-esteem and the appreciation they have for each other and their school. The family feeling that is sensed from the moment you walk through the door. Your school feel like the little pot of gold at the end of the rainbow logo!"

Following our achievement, we continue to reflect on our practice to ensure our provision develops with our children's needs and share our SMSC practice and experience with other schools.



PARENTS AND CARER VOICE

"Just a little note to say how amazing your school has been through all of this. From providing help with tech support to the lovely calls from the teachers... Thank you".

"... I feel fully confident and assured that the whole team are working tirelessly to ensure the safety of staff and children and to also ensure all children receive the best education they can and continue to offer all support that we may need."

" Thank you everybody! Reception's home work has been great and story time adds such a lovely element where they can stay in touch - we've loved it. Can't wait for singing and instruments next week!"

"Your help and support is amazing – we are really grateful."

MEET OUR TEAM

Meet Barbara Conroy, Headteacher of Queenborough School & Nursery on the Isle of Sheppey.

As the Trust approaches its first birthday, what has been your proudest moment over the last year?

My proudest moment has to be joining EKC Schools Trust. Following our last inspection, we explored various options to continue moving our school forward, none of which excited me or felt right for Queenborough. I was told that what I was looking for didn't exist. I had to disagree; I just hadn't found it yet! Working within the Trust, with like-minded colleagues from other local schools, and with overwhelming commitment, dedication and support from our school community, the dream became a reality.

2020 was a challenging year for our communities. What are your hopes for 2021?

It most certainly was a year like no other! Our main priority has obviously been to keep everyone safe and like every other school, there were adjustments to be made. Despite the challenges, however, I have been humbled by the overwhelmingly positive response from all members of the school community.

My hopes for 2021 have to be that all the children are back to full-time education

so that we can move forwards with their learning and fully realise our ambitions for as a school and Trust, offering life-long learning for both children and adults alike.

What advice would you give an aspiring school leader?

I think, most importantly, it is about being true to yourself. While you can certainly learn from other leaders, you have to find a style that works for you. Also, realise that you cannot do it all; recognising and nurturing leadership potential in others (emerging leaders) who might bring a new perspective. Embrace the change! Experience has shown me that no matter how bad things may appear when you are experiencing them, in reality, with the right support around you, you can overcome the challenges.

Finally, I would like to mention that I couldn't do my job without the positivity and commitment of my team. I have always said, you don't choose Queenborough; Queenborough chooses you and will capture your heart. I am surrounded by people who buy into this and recognise that together we can achieve anything!

Beginning her career as a mature student in the nineties, Barbara has been with the school 25 years, achieving her headship dreams in 2006 and securing an Ofsted Outstanding judgement in 2016; the first school on the Isle of Sheppey to achieve this!



REFLECTING ON... REMOTE EDUCATION

In the first of our series, we're reflecting on remote education and the key learns and that have helped with the shift to digital delivery.

Deciding on when to introduce new concepts?

This is a significant challenge for many children accessing remote education. The barriers to 'getting help' are far greater and research shows children are far less likely to ask for help outside of the classroom environment. Therefore, if its new, how do we know it's being learnt? It may be better to focus on deepening learning, strengthening skills, revisiting and embedding.

Are there enough graphics to overcome language and vocabulary barriers?

The challenge for many around their language development will be widening. Visual images and explicit unpicking of vocabulary is even more critical online than face to face.



"We do not learn from experience... we learn from reflecting on experience." John Dewey

How balanced is the day?

Just as we sometimes rely too heavily on one approach to learning in the classroom; are we varied enough in the approaches online? Has the day got a good balance of live, independent, textbook, creative, recording, talking, investigating? How is each aspect being assessed?

Found something that resonated for you, great! All we ask is you pay it forward and share with your network.

Oh and join us again next issue.

TOP TIPS

Whiteboard fi

Missing the use of mini-whiteboards? Why not explore <https://whiteboard.fi/> with your children. It's simple to use, instant and free (basic package).

Create a class, send the children a link, and everyone will get a digital whiteboard. Children can draw, write text or annotate a picture, image or diagram.

As the teacher, you can view everyone's boards and choose to allow the class to do the same, with a feature to anonymise if you want to highlight an example of exemplar work or a useful misconception.

Why not have a go and see what you think?

WELLBEING FOCUS

The wellbeing of our school community is uppermost in our minds, particularly supporting our dedicated staff so they can continue to support our children and families.

Action for Happiness, a registered charity, have dedicated themselves to encouraging happier living.

Based on the latest scientific research including neuroscience, they have identified 10 Keys to Happier Living that consistently tend to make life happier and more fulfilling. Together these keys spell "GREAT DREAM".

We invite colleagues across the Trust and beyond to learn more about these keys and how you might apply them in your daily lives.

There's a wealth of resources on the website actionforhappiness.org and we'll continue to highlight them here.

Monthly calendar

Packed with actions you can take to help create a happier and kinder world. Each month takes it's lead from one of the ten keys.



Online events

Action for Happiness host a regular series of free online events with world renowned speakers.

Upcoming events:



Here are a couple of our past favourites:

Click to book/ view or visit the AfH website to learn more.



CPD NEWS



We believe wholeheartedly in our moral purpose...
to strengthen the opportunities available for everyone
within our communities.

Educational Services, our professional development centre, provides our family of schools, partners and the broader education community with high-impact CPD opportunities that strengthen school improvement.

HIGHLIGHTS

Watch Your Language!

We're passionate believers in the power of language acquisition, holding the key to unlocking both the academic curriculum and, critically the wider life chances of young people. Watch Your Language, a joint programme with the EKC Group explores language and vocabulary from multiple angles.

As a Trust, we're excited with our momentum and, moreover, delighted to have shared Watch Your Language with over 25 Primary and FE settings across Kent. We've been extremely pleased with the positive feedback received, especially given that the final three sessions were delivered virtually in light of COVID restrictions.

Thank you to everyone involved from both the Group, the Trust and especially our Teaching School Alliance, and here's to many more joint training ventures!

Sharing Best Practice Sessions - Our Termly Best Practice Swap Shop

We come together as a Trust throughout the year to celebrate successes and share best practice across our schools. Our dedicated and talented staff talk through priority projects and their impact, inviting questions, and sharing learns.

UPCOMING EVENTS

This summer, we're hosting two incredible CPD events, starting with our [Virtual Inclusion Conference](#) in May and then our two day event [Achieving Excellence in Personal Development](#) taking place June and July.

We're opening up both events to our partners (Kent MAT Alliance and the EKC Group) and neighboring schools and settings. If you'd like to learn more about these events, be part of the conversation and share in best practice you can find out more in the following events flyers and on our website.

JOIN US THIS MAY FOR OUR VIRTUAL INCLUSION CONFERENCE

The Inclusion Agenda underpins everything we do in our schools, our culture, values and ethos, ensuring that every pupil is treated with equality, with affection and with the respect they deserve as the unique people they are.

The importance of inclusion is always front and centre in our schools, but it can be challenging to ensure every aspect of the agenda is current in our thinking.

Our conference with its abundance of speakers and workshops provides an opportunity to identify key areas that might need revisiting, a refresh or just a slight refocus.

Event Programme

Your choice of incredible workshops and speakers.

Dumbing Down or Levelling Up?

Tammy Mitchell, CEO EKC Schools Trust

Unlocking the Language of Learning for Disadvantaged Pupils

Jason Howard, Deputy Headteacher and Teaching School Director

Promoting Proactive Practice

Paul Owen, Dover Principal

Different Families – The Language of Inclusion and Equality

Garry Ratcliffe, CEO The Galaxy Trust

Developing Emotional Resilience

Clare Bush, Counsellor and Well-Being Lead

Celebrating Neurodiversity

Jo Campbell, Director of SEND Development

Trauma-Informed Practice

Steve Wickenden, Drama Coach & Wellbeing Support Mentor

Creating Communication Friendly Classrooms

Susan Murray, Senior Speech and Language Therapist

Creating an Inclusive Learning Culture

Tammy Mitchell, CEO and Summer Macer, Director of Operations EKC Schools Trust

Date:

Wednesday 19th May 2021

Time:

9.30 - 3.30

Location:

Online - Microsoft Teams

Cost:

£45 EKC Group & KMA Partners

£55 Other schools and settings

Further information

To learn more and book your place visit [EKC Schools Trust](https://ekcgroup.ac.uk/ekc-schools-trust).

JOIN US THIS SUMMER FOR OUR

ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE IN PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

This two-day course will ensure your leaders have a deep and accurate understanding of how to ensure Ofsted Outstanding for Personal Development in your next inspection.

Through a series of workshop sessions leaders will explore every aspect of their Personal Development offer to pupils through;

- Promoting and evidencing the inclusive and unique ethos of your school
- Reviewing how your school context is reflected in your values and ethos
- Embedding the statutory SRE curriculum within your whole school curriculum approaches
- Ensuring clarity around your purpose and core offer in a succinct and effective way

Unpacking what you do brilliantly every day in a deliberate and meaningful way. Ensuring your intent and implementation has tangible impact.

This event is delivered by Tammy Mitchell, CEO EKC Schools Trust and partners.

Date:

Friday 25th June AND Friday 2nd July 2021

Time:

9am for 9.30 start, finishing at 3.30pm

Location:

Ashford International Hotel,
TN24 8UX

Cost:

£190 EKC Group & KMA Partners
£217 Other schools and settings

Further information

To learn more and book your place visit [EKC Schools Trust.](https://ekcschoolstrust.org.uk)

LOVE YOUR WORLD SOCIAL ACTION PROJECT

Each year, the children and young people of EKC Schools Trust and our partners the EKC Group deliver a social action project, inspiring and developing them as individuals and positively impacting the community.

This issue we'd like to share with you the LOVE YOUR WORLD project and invite all schools and settings to take part.

Hosted by the Canterbury School of Visual Arts (CSVA) at Canterbury College LOVE YOUR WORLD asks schools and students to design a card that shows what you appreciate and love about our perfect world.

Prizes will be awarded for the best card entries at the CSVA End of Year Show.

Shortlisted designs will be exhibited on their CSVA instagram page
www.instagram.com/csvacantcol

They will also be part of a collaborative exhibition in June 2021 AND a selection will be printed and sold as charity cards through Rock Paper Scissors, Canterbury.
www.rockpaperscissors.co.uk

The winning designs will be a panel made up of professional artists and designers.

All age groups are invited to take part the age categories are:

- Years 1 – 3
- Years 4 – 6
- Years 7 – 9
- Years 10 - 11
- Years 12 - Adult



Clare Owen



Andrew Lebedinsky



Competition Rules

The design must be inside a square, and can be made in any medium or technique such as painting, drawing, collage, digital illustration, photography or even made from waste or recycled materials.

To develop your designs, learn new creative skills and engage with CSVA, check out their public online artistic resources at www.facebook.com/CSVACantCol

Be creative, and share the project to spread a little love.

Deadline for entries is Midnight Friday 30th April 2021.

To Enter

Take a good photograph of your finished design and email it to

csvafe@gmail.com

Please also include your name, age and school..

GOOD LUCK EVERYONE!

LET'S ALL SAY A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR SCHOOLS

The national THANK A TEACHER campaign recognises all staff working in schools; school leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, and all support staff such as lunchtime supervisors, caretakers and cleaners. It celebrates the professionalism, passion and commitment of our schools.

Parents, colleagues and partners please take 5 minutes to thank an individual, team or school in our Trust (or other school/setting) for their hard work with a FREE Thank You e-card.

Not only is it lovely to receive a thank you but a card can be a springboard to entering the prestigious Pearson National Teaching Awards.

Please THANK A TEACHER today, it's simple, it's free and will make someone's day.

The THANK A TEACHER campaign is run by The Teaching Awards Trust and supported by Department for Education.



Simply go to www.thankateacher.co.uk

and they will send a FREE personalised ThankATeacher card on your behalf

If you're feeling shy you can send a card anonymously!