



Vanguard Learning Trust Newsletter

Edition 14: December 2023

Staff conference

On Friday 24th November 2023, staff from across Vanguard Learning Trust's five schools and central team came together at Ruislip High School for the third Trust-wide staff conference, which was based on the theme of inclusion. They were joined by Oak Farm Primary School as associate members of the Trust.

The first part of the conference was hosted by Dr Martina Lecky, the Trust's chief executive officer (CEO), with all delegates in Ruislip High's sports hall. This part of the conference included information about the Trust's new staff charter; two keynote speakers, Leora Cruddas, Chief Executive of the Confederation of School Trusts (CST), and Margaret Mullholland, policy specialist for the Association of School and College Leaders and SEN/inclusion consultant; and student videos from all Trust schools discussing what inclusion means to them.

Leora Cruddas talked about her paper: '*A good life: Towards greater dignity for people with learning disability*', outlining CST's recent thinking on the five principles for inclusion.

Margaret Mullholland, who is leading the Trust's project on adaptive teaching, focused on how schools can use everyday evidence to inform teaching practice. She also shared experiences of schools on their journeys to adopting a whole-school approach to SEND and inclusion.

The second part of the conference involved nineteen different workshops on a variety of subjects based on the conference's theme of inclusion as well as its objectives. Staff were allocated to the workshops in advance based on the relevance to them in terms of

their roles within the Trust. The feedback from the conference has been extremely positive with staff being inspired and motivated by both the keynote speakers and the workshops.

'Inclusion is essential in our schools to ensure all pupils receive a high-quality and ambitious education. The conference provided an excellent opportunity to work collaboratively with colleagues from across the Trust, in order to reflect on and share best practice. The workshops were insightful, inspiring and sparked lots of thought-provoking discussion, which has continued back in our schools.'

Sarah McGee, Assistant Headteacher, Ryefield Primary School

'Margaret is inspirational. She is not only an engaging speaker but her strategies are useful and easily implemented. I have found working with her the best professional development I have had in relation to adaptive teaching.'

Louise Ware, SENCO, Ruislip High School



Staff in the workshop on inclusion: How schools and alternative provisions/pupil referral units work together



Staff in the sports hall for the keynote talks



Staff taking part in the adaptive teaching workshop

Student activities

Student awards

Each school in the Trust selected students, one from each key stage, except for Field End's who were all in KS2, to receive an award for demonstrating the Trust's value of 'Aspiration - Endless possibilities with limitless boundaries'.

The recipients received a certificate and a Trust pin badge, and a postcard was sent home to their parents/carers.

The recipients were as follows:

Field End: Chloe, Beau, Farrin, KS2

Hermitage: Rai, EYFS, Darcie, KS1, Zayd, KS2

Oak Farm: Parthivi, EYFS, Dhiyan, KS1, Lian, KS2

Ruislip High: Lorcan, KS3, Zoey, KS4, Alisha, KS5

Ryefield: Amelie-Shola, EYFS, Arjun, KS1, Poppy, KS2

Vyners: Zach, KS3, Naiomi, KS4, Lenai, KS5



Members of the winning team with their trophy

form helpers, to deliver another successful Trust maths challenge. It was a pleasure to see the levels of engagement and excitement on students' faces as they tackled challenging maths problems. A huge congratulations to all the Trust schools' students for taking part, and a special commendation to Hermitage for being the first primary school to receive the coveted trophy! I am already looking forward to next year's challenge.'

Bhavik Joshi, second-in-charge of maths department, Ruislip High School

Carol concert

The concert was held at the Most Sacred Heart Church in Ruislip for the first time on Wednesday 13th December 2023 in the afternoon. Oak Farm Primary School also attended and performed in the concert. Vyners' brass ensemble played the music for each carol; it was uplifting for everyone to sing together some of the well known ones, including *O Little Town of Bethlehem* and *Hark the Herald Angels Sing*. Each school had its own musical performance as well as one student giving a reading. The event was supported by community members, in particular parents of the performers. Dan Cullum, Director of Music at Vyners, has organised all four Trust concerts and commented afterwards: 'It was a pleasure to see

Maths challenge

The third annual Trust maths challenge, hosted by Ruislip High School, took place on Wednesday 18th October 2023. There were five rounds, including questions on the popular 24 game, problem-solving, UKMT, a national competition, and financial maths. The new round for this year's challenge was inspired by the TV show, 'The 1% club'.

The winning team of this year's challenge was Hermitage Primary School, group A; this is the first time a primary school has won the challenge. In second place was Ruislip High's group B, and in third place was Field End Junior's group A.

Khaleel Ladhani, Director of Mathematics at Ruislip High, thanked all staff, student participants and student volunteers who helped to make the event a success.

'It was a privilege to be a part of the team alongside Khaleel Ladhani, as well as the Year 11 and sixth



Vyners' brass ensemble

School improvement work

what musical quality we have in our Trust schools and I am grateful to all the music leads from each school for the help and support in organising such a wonderful event.'



Students singing at the carol concert

VLT reading group

As part of the Trust's reading group, the focus this term has been on phonics, in particular intervention. Teaching children how to decode using phonics has a secure evidence base in terms of early reading success.

What happens, though, with older readers who have either not been able to use phonics confidently, or are new to the country, and still need structured support to use phonics as a way into reading?

Mrs Hope, a literacy specialist from Ryefield Primary School, has recently introduced Read Write Inc's (RWI) Fresh Start phonics programme to Year 6 pupils. A planned Fresh Start session will take place at Ryefield Primary School next term which members of the VLT reading group will be invited to observe. Following this, the group will join Mrs Hope for a focused discussion on what works best with older pupils who are finding reading challenging.

'The VLT reading group is currently investigating successful approaches for teaching phonics to older learners, learners identified as having special educational needs and learners who speak English as an additional language, who are falling below national expectations. As part of this investigation, I am currently trialling Ruth Miskin's RWI Fresh Start programme with Year 6 children at Ryefield. The programme is a fast-track catch-up scheme which has phonic decoding at its core but also develops the follow-on skills for comprehension, spelling and punctuation. I have high hopes that the programme will unlock our children's ability to process letters

and sounds so that they can enjoy reading and share in my passion for books.'

Керrie Hope, literacy specialist, Ryefield Primary School

Let's Think

The Trust's ongoing relationship with the Let's Think Forum has continued this academic year; this has included a session on Wednesday 1st November 2023 for the senior leaders in each school who have responsibility for teaching and learning. The presentation was led by Michael Walsh, Let's Think English tutor, and Martina Lecky, our CEO, who is a Let's Think science tutor. Following this session, audits were completed so that bespoke training can be provided for each school. Next term's plans include half-day school visits where tutors can model LT lessons for teachers involved in LT; this will provide further pedagogical development as well as identify actions to focus on between sessions. A different Trust school will host each visit providing an opportunity to see how LT is developing in different settings.

'It is very exciting to be joining the existing 'Let's Think' programme. I have only begun to dip my toe in, but it has already piqued my interest as it has proven results and is based on well-respected pedagogy.'

Jamie Shelley, Assistant Headteacher, Ruislip High School

'The theory of Let's Think has enabled me to stretch and challenge all pupils, regardless of their current level of cognition. The nature of cognitive conflict and the social construction through dialogue ensures that all pupils are exposed to a higher level of thinking that is built on peer relationships, rather than teacher talk. Pupils' eagerness for challenge and shared meaning have become a part of our classroom ethos.'

Morgan Casey, Year 6 teacher, Ryefield Primary School



Michael Walsh at the meeting for senior leaders

Governance day

Schools in the Trust have an annual school-based governance day in the autumn term; this provides governors with an opportunity to observe the school in action and meet staff and students.

This year's governance day was held on Wednesday 29th November 2023 at Ruislip High and Vyners, and on Tuesday 5th December 2023 at Field End. Ryefield and Hermitage's governance days will take place in the spring term.

At Ruislip High, some of the lessons governors observed included Spanish, graphics and history, as well as English and mathematics intervention classes. They also spent time in the learning support faculty and observed break and lunch times.

'What was abundantly clear was that students were excited to learn from subject specialists who were ready to give exceptional lessons in their specialist subjects to support students to reach their full potential.'

John Garner, chair of governors, Ruislip High School

'It was a really informative day. Seeing the school in operation was a real privilege and it was also insightful to meet with students. It is clear that students feel safe, are proud of the school and are happy.'

Charlotte Moore, community governor, Ruislip High School

Field End governors had an immersive day focusing on the school's priorities. Governors explored three key focus areas in depth: curriculum provision; IT resourcing and development; and behaviour/safety of pupils. Governors each spent time considering one focus area in depth through pupil-led school tours with the Year 6 junior leadership team. There was also a guided grounds tour by the premises manager, classroom visits, briefings with key staff and discussions with groups of pupils. Together, the local governing body provided feedback on key findings from the morning sessions with the headteacher and deputy headteacher and had the opportunity to



Field End Junior School governance day

spend time with staff, sharing lunch in the staffroom.

'It's always great to be able to spend time at the school, hearing from the pupils and walking around the various facilities. What strikes me is the passion and pride the children have for their school, reinforcing the importance of our collective roles.'

Pritak Patel, community governor, Field End Junior School

'The FEJS governance day provides the opportunity for governors to see the role we play in shaping our school community. It is great to see the skills each governor brings whether in finance, technology, compliance, or safeguarding and how our input and collaboration with the headteacher, members of the school's senior leadership team, teachers and most importantly pupils, contributes to the overall growth and potential of the school.'

Raj Pragji, community governor, Field End Junior School

Vyners' governance day provided a timely reflection on the school's work in relation to safeguarding. Governors spent time with the safeguarding team and met with students to talk about the culture of the school. The careers-link governor met with the careers team to discuss their work in relation to gaining the Careers Mark. Governors also met with a variety of staff throughout the day to gain their perspective on the workings of the school and combined this with visits to a number of classrooms to engage in learning walks.

'It was really useful, if not essential, to meet the staff and pupils in this way. It enabled them to meet us, and for governors to get a better idea of what goes on in a school on a day-to-day basis. Thanks to the staff and pupils who gave up their time to talk to us.'

Alan Ginman, community governor, Vyners School

'Being in school for most of a day allows a real insight into the everyday life of the school.'

Claire Clarke, vice-chair of governors, Vyners School



Ruislip High School governance day