



Welcome to the White Woods Primary Academy Trust

# WRITE UP

## AUTUMN TERM



KATE DAVIES, CEO

### 'You can't pour from an empty cup'.

The Trust Board and I are eternally grateful that we have such a fantastic team of colleagues working together across all of our schools. It has been another incredibly challenging term. I hope that you will all be able to get some much needed downtime over the Christmas break. Put your laptops away and spend some quality time with family, friends and loved ones.

#### Thank You and See You Later...

We say goodbye to Andrea Barker, the Head at Wentworth CoFE Junior and Infant School today. Anyone who has met Andrea will know what a talented, warm and passionate leader she is. The whole school and Trust community will miss Andrea but I know you will join me in wishing her the very best of luck as she starts a new adventure in LA - as in Los Angeles not the Local Authority! Good luck and please stay in touch. Gemma Platts will be the Acting Head during the Spring term, Andrea's replacement will take up post after Easter.

#### Ofsted

The resumption of inspections since September hasn't gone unnoticed and we have been thrilled with the outcomes for Anston Brook, Woodsetts, Whiston Worrygoose and Dinnington.

The level of scrutiny of curriculum design and approaches to early reading was forensic in all 4 inspections, with a particular focus on the progress of the bottom 20%. What was really impressive and reassuring was the validation given to the approaches that have been developed across the Trust around curriculum design and our increasingly developing expertise in the teaching of early reading, supported so well by Nikki and Vanessa's work with the English Hub.

We have communicated some of our Trust 'observations' of the 4 inspections and Phil, Chair of the Trust Board, has had a constructive dialogue with Helen Lane, Ofsted Regional HMI.

#### Geography and History Driver Groups

Pete Cotton, Headteacher at Swinton Fitzwilliam and Ross Gardner, Trust Pedagogy/Curriculum Lead led two brilliant sessions with History and Geography Leads in November and December. Feedback from the sessions was incredibly

positive and it was great to see some of our subject leaders in a room together collaborating and sharing good practice.

The sessions focussed on the key principles underpinning curriculum design at White Woods, exploring the 'why', cognitive science and the identification of subject key concepts. Some of the emerging work from across the Trust is incredible!

#### Effective Adult Interactions

It has been fantastic working with support staff across our Trust on the two effective adult interaction days we have held. It is important that we offer opportunities to further our training and develop our understanding of our roles and how we can best support the children across our Trust. The collaborative two day programme was an excellent way to link colleagues in both similar and different settings, share ideas and build a network of people that can support and challenge each other.



## MAT Review Outcomes and our 5 Year Strategic Priorities

The Confederation of School Trust undertook our MAT review during the Summer Term. Thank you to everyone who took the time to contribute to the process.

The review recognised the significant journey that the Trust has been on over the last 2 years and the progress that has been made, despite the additional challenges of the pandemic. The Trust Board met to interrogate, discuss and synthesise the findings during a session hosted by Kilnhurst Primary School in September and then a similar session was held with Heads and Chairs of LGBs at Woodsetts. Huge thanks to Rachel Nash from Learners First for her facilitation.

The dialogue and feedback from these sessions has been used to formulate our 5 Year Strategic Priorities/Plan which will be published fully in the new year.

**Overarching Ambition:** To harness the power of education to enhance the life chances of children and to positively impact on the communities which we serve.



### Objective 1:

To continue to develop effective leadership and governance.



### Objective 2:

To ensure the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and curriculum is exceptional in all of our schools.



### Objective 3:

To continue to develop effective partnerships to provide further opportunities for our children, staff and communities and ensure we continue to be a 'capacity giver' to the whole education system.



### Objective 4:

To maintain and further develop the business and operation essentials of the Trust, to develop an enabling environment in which T and L can flourish.

## ENGLISH - Phonics and Early Reading - NIKKI O'LOUGHLIN, TRUST ENGLISH LEAD



It has been a hugely busy but successful first term for our schools, all of which have received validation through inspections, external reviews and AIP visits on the work that has been done around phonics and early reading. Our knowledge, understanding and skills around this as a trust are fantastic and it is rewarding when that is acknowledged by those both within but also beyond our own settings. It is something we should all be incredibly proud of.

We have held a English Lead meet for our Little Wandle schools and are due to meet with our Read Write Inc schools early in the next term. These days provide us with an opportunity to support and challenge each other, share best practice and keep abreast of the latest research and key messages. It is also such a powerful process having so many English 'experts' in one room that bring a level of 'cognitive diversity' unachievable in isolation. I am looking forward to both the Read Write Inc session but also the writing one planned for next half term.



The AIP process has been a huge success in developing a strong English team across our Trust and the importance of such a strong team has enabled us to challenge each other in ways that drive our own professional development and expertise, ultimately improving the early reading provision we offer to all children across our Trust. These are great opportunities to build a network but also opportunities to visit different settings. If you haven't but would like to take part in one of these in the Spring term, please don't hesitate to contact me.

## Early Career Teachers

We have had a number of ECTs join our Trust this term and we have some ready to finish their teacher programme.

What a fabulous start for those joining. The first term is always the most challenging term and yet all have reached the end relatively unscathed! It has been great to meet regularly and build a network of teachers still new to the profession. The new thinking and enthusiasm you have brought to ECT days held by our Trust has been fantastic and the next term will offer more opportunities for collaboration in which you can support and challenge not only each other but colleagues across our Trust. For those due to finish the programme, a huge congratulations. Your commitment to the profession during such a turbulent 2 years has been phenomenal.



## ICT News - ANDY BLATCH, ICT LEAD



What another busy term! During the Summer holidays a lot of work took place upgrading and replacing a lot of the older infrastructure hardware (servers, wireless access points, network hardware) at all of our schools which was a huge project in itself. Inevitably due to the type of work carried out there has been a few teething issues which have slowly been getting ironed out. I'd like to thank you all for your patience and understanding on this as I know how frustrating it can be when things aren't working as expected. On the plus side many of the wireless issues and lack of wifi signal in our schools seems to have been resolved thanks to the upgrades which took place and will allow us to further develop and enhance mobile device usage in schools.

During September, we had another big project installing 40 new 65" state of the art touch screens in some of our schools and this project was part of an ongoing replacement project to ensure that in every classroom the teacher and children have access to a working interactive screen. The feedback I've had from schools where these have been installed has been wholly positive and they have made a real difference to teaching and learning. I have also started to work closely with Mel Fisher who has joined the trust as ICT Teaching and Learning Development Lead who some of you may have met already. Mel has already started to make a positive impact on ICT across the trust and between us we already have a few things planned for the new year so watch this space!

Thank you all again for your continued help and support this term and I wish you all a lovely and well earned holiday and I look forward to working with you in the New year.

## Estates Apprenticeship

JOE HAWKINS - APPRENTICE ESTATES OFFICER



After working for White Woods Primary Academy Trust for just over 2 years, I have obtained a variety of different skills and also taken on many responsibilities in the last few months. After completion of my BTEC at college I achieved a Grade Distinction Merit, meaning I could focus a lot more on my professional career within education, construction and facilities management.

First of all, whilst working alongside David Fitzgibbons (Trust Building Surveyor) I have gained experience and knowledge in seeing how to manage, design and plan a large scale project. Woodsetts Primary School was one of my first major projects I've been actively involved in from conception to completion, this project had a final value of just under £400,000.00. Using my skills obtained from intensive training courses provided by Barnsley College and WWPAT, I successfully managed to design all building plans for this project to a good professional standard.

In the New Year preparations have already begun for our next large scale project. We have been out to tender for the full rewire and redecoration of Anston Park Infant School. Just like Woodsetts, I have been involved with this from conception and will be broadening my knowledge by taking on more responsibility this time. I hope to be making site visits and observations independently, whilst liaising with contractors on issues they may have whilst coming up with solutions.

New signage has been recently installed in several of our White Woods schools with the remaining schools being completed in January. It has been great to be involved in the organisation of this initiative.

Despite everything going on in the world, it's full steam ahead at White Woods and we are well underway with planning for many more exciting things to happen within the new year.

Best wishes for Christmas and have a Happy New Year.

## Buildings and Premises - DAVID FITZGIBBONS, TRUST BUILDING SURVEYOR



The Autumn Term has been a very busy term for the Premises Team with lots of changes, some positive, and some challenging. Projects completed this Term include the MUGA at Wentworth, the EYFS Library and EYFS external improvements at Dinnington as well as plenty of skips for 'spring cleaning' and decluttering.

The centralisation of the Premise Function has continued to evolve and as we move into the Spring term I hope we will start to see a greater focus on school improvement and premises school on school support ensuring every pupil and employee in our Trust have equality of access to the best facilities.

Planning is well underway for the completion of this year's Library Premises AIP Projects at Wickersley Northfield, Anston Brook and Brinsworth Manor Junior School. It's anticipated that the work will be undertaken in-house by the Premises Team with completion during the Spring term.

The refurbishment of Anston Park Infant

School begins on the 4th January and is anticipated to take 16 – 20 weeks. The works include the full rewire of the school building including new fire alarm & detection system, lighting, small power, electrical and IT distribution and new floor, wall and ceiling finishes. In addition, we will be undertaking some minor remodelling to form a new secure main entrance, admin office accommodation and library spaces.

The flood reinstatement project at Kilnhurst Primary School continues to be the project that keeps on giving with approximately £250,000.00 of playing field reinstatement works scheduled to start and be completed during the Spring term.

Other projects being progressed over the Spring term include the refurbishment of the pupil toilets at Dinnington Community Primary School, the demolition of the temporary classroom and external landscaping works at Whiston Worrygoose, accessibility improvements and the construction of dedicated accessible

hygiene facilities at Whiston Worrygoose and external improvement works at Anston Brook. In addition, and building on the success of the works undertaking at Kilnhurst, Woodsetts and Anston Park project planning for Phase 1 of the refurbishment of Wickersley Northfield will be in full in the new term with an anticipated on-site commencement date of Spring Bank 22.

As the Autumn term comes to a close and a new Spring term begins we will say good bye to two members of the Premises Team, Adam Narejko our HFO for the Central Hub and Academy Caretaker at Canklow Woods and Brian Simpson our Academy Caretaker at Woodsetts Primary School. I would like to say thank you, good luck and wish Adam and Brian all the success for the future.

Finally I would like to thank you all and the Premises Team for your patience, hard work and support during what has been another memorable year and wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

## Finance Update - DEBBIE SAMWELL, CFO



It always amazes me how quickly each term flies by and particularly the Autumn term. Whilst we enjoy working with our statutory auditors it is always nice when they complete their work so that we can continue to focus on working with leaders and admin teams on current year improvements and hopefully more face to face meetings (fingers crossed!).

At their meeting in December, the Trust Board approved their Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ending 31 August 2021. If any staff member wishes to look at this report, it will be uploaded onto the Trust's website where previous year reports can also be found. It gives a good overview of the Trust so is worth a look. The Board also approved updates to the Financial Regulations and Scheme of Financial Delegation. These updates were made to reflect updated requirements from the Government and also changes in our own financial management arrangements. This document sets out what authorities and responsibilities staff have in relation to financial and contractual decisions, and also what procedures should be followed. All Headteachers and admin teams will be given the opportunity to attend a refresher training session in the Spring.

The Statutory Auditors have now completed their work and have identified a significant reduction in their recommendations. It feels like we have all come a long way since this time last year. The help of leaders and admin teams across the Trust in implementing updated procedures and controls is greatly appreciated. It hasn't been easy but it feels like we are getting there.

A big thank you to the admin teams across the Trust who have had their full first term operating on a cashless basis. This has had to be carefully navigated with parents/carers and is not an easy task particularly in our most deprived communities - well done all! A particular thank you to those who have gone over and above to provide administration support in schools where there have been vacancies in the school administration team. You've done a marvellous job!