

NEWSLETTER

The latest news from South Bank Academy Trust

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Welcome to the first South Bank Academy Trust newsletter

Mrs Anna Cornhill
Trust Principal



As you know, it's now a year since our conversion from three separate schools into one MAT and it is time to look back and celebrate some of the things we have achieved together.

I would like to use this first MAT newsletter as a chance to share some of those success stories with you—some will relate to things you already know a little about, while I hope that others will be complete news to you.

I intend to publish regular issues of this newsletter as a key element of our ongoing communication with staff, parents and governors. This will help us to keep everybody informed about the work of

the MAT.

Staff in the two Primary Schools (Scarcroft & Knavesmire) are now regularly meeting up and planning activities for children across the two schools. There are details of two of those projects on Page 2. I will share more about these activities in each issue of this publication.

There have been some changes to our Trust Governance (see Page 3) and a change in Trust Principal (see Page 4). I have set out the background behind these changes within this issue.

I look forward to sharing with you more success stories as the year progresses, while keeping you up to date about some of the challenges we face.

Kind Regards *A.T. Cornhill*

Working together... Improved finances

£3.2m additional funding

There is a national funding crisis in Education and the overall picture for school budgets is a depressing one, but here in our MAT there are a few bright spots. We have received the funds for four separate projects: two for our schools and one for the MAT itself.

A NEW MUGA

We have bid for and received £1 million to provide a brand new MUGA (Multi-Use Games Area) on the Millthorpe School site. This will provide high quality sports facilities to benefit not only Millthorpe students, but also pupils at Scarcroft Primary (who currently have no access to green space). The facilities will also be offered for community use, as there is a real lack of appropriate

spaces in our locality. A feasibility study is already complete, but there is work to be done now in deciding on its location and on where to put additional parking facilities. These can be used during the day by staff at both Millthorpe and Scarcroft, and by community users in the evenings. Watch this space as plans progress.

SCARCROFT SCHOOL EXPANSION

Funding of £250,000 has been bid for and received from the City of York Council, in order to allow Scarcroft Primary to move from a 1.5 form entry school to a 2 form entry school. This will mean that the school takes 60 pupils each year, instead of 45, moving it to a 14 class school with no split year

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groups. Internal alterations should be complete in time for the new school year in September, with final alterations to parking and playing space during the autumn term.

REPAIRS FOR MILLTHORPE

A grant of £1.9 million has been received to enable repair and replacement of roofs and windows at Millthorpe school. This work will ensure that the building is maintained to a high Standard and the funding was only available to us as we are a MAT.

CAPACITY GRANT FOR CENTRAL STAFF

We have successfully bid for a grant to support a centralised finance team, together with a new part-time Trust Principal. You will hear more about them in the next newsletter.

Working together... **Better facilities**

Catering control



The link between children's food intake and educational outcomes is well documented and under the MAT, Scarcroft and Knavesmire will now be organising their own school catering provision.

The current catering contract organised by the City of York Council with ISS is coming to an end in July 2017. Each school is now expected to sort out their own catering arrange-

ments for School Dinners. Scarcroft and Knavesmire staff have drawn upon expertise from Acomb Primary, who already provide their own in-house catering. Staff from all three schools have met and a plan is in place for Scarcroft and Knavesmire to launch new in-house catering services from September 2017.

Existing catering staff will retain their posts through the TUPE process, be-

coming members of staff in each school rather than working as contracted staff as in the past. There will be regular opportunities to involve the pupils in the menu-planning process and the aim is to use local produce from local businesses, thus reducing the carbon footprint.

Working together... **Better education**

Music partnerships

Our aim during this first academic year of the MAT is to ensure that a range of activities take place involving our pupils, so that they can experience some benefits that have come about as a result of our new partnership. The first of these events took the form of a Musical Performance.



Pupils performed to each other and an invited audience of family members on Ukuleles, Clarineos, Violins and Brass instruments. Each group performed a series of individual items, followed by a set of combined pieces which involved all 120 pupils at the same time. The final piece of 'Blues in F' certainly got everybody's feet tapping!

The event was brought to a rousing finale with a joint song, aptly chosen for its title "Stronger Together". The sound of the four classes massed together was a wonderful tribute to the children's enthusiasm and joie de vivre. A special mention goes to Jane Woolgar (from Knavesmire) for organising this successful event.

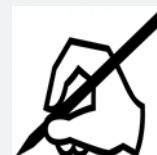
Year 2 writing

Staff at Knavesmire and Scarcroft met at the start of the Spring term to agree a series of projects with pupils of different ages. Year 2 teachers decided to use Letter Writing as a way of connecting the pupils with their counter-parts in their partner school.

Teachers paired up the pupils and asked them to write to their pen-pals, telling them a little about themselves and asking for some information in return. Craftily, the teachers decided that the letters could also provide evidence of independent writing for the Year 2 SATs process.

This 'real reason for writing' went down a storm with pupils, who were clearly fired up to send off some of their best work. Teachers discovered that they are far more motivated to show their best handwriting to their peers, than to their teachers! The children couldn't wait to get their replies back and there was a real buzz in the room when they appeared.

The project will end with an opportunity for the pupils to meet up on The Knavesmire during the summer term, so that they can meet their pen-pal face-to-face over a picnic.



Our Members

We started out life as a MAT with three Members. These were the three Chairs of Governors of the three founding schools. However, shortly afterwards, the DfE issued revised guidance that Members should not be Governors, to allow for greater accountability. This meant that we needed to make changes promptly.

The DfE agreed that it would be appropriate for the Chair of the Board of Trustees to be a Member, but then stated that their preferred model was to have five Members instead of three.

So, Edwin Thomas, our Chair of Trustees, was duly made a Member. Adverts went out to recruit four other new Members, after which the three Chairs of Governors stepped down. Our current 5 Members bring a wide range of skills to the Trust and they are:

Edwin Thomas (author)

Dr Claire Antrobus (arts professional)

Dr Alison Birkinshaw OBE (College Principal)

Shauna Finch (solicitor and tribunal judge)

Peter Quinn (education consultant)

Our Trustees

How things change in a short space of time! We began our life as a MAT with a Board of 10 Trustees. This was made up of the three founding Headteachers; three governors (one from each of the founding schools); three skilled professionals from our local community; and a representative of the City of York Council.

Not long after we were up and running, the DfE's newly issued revised guidance stated that Headteachers should not sit on a Trust Board. The reason for this was that the Board's duty is to hold the Heads to account, so it would not be possible for them to be a part of it. With reluctance, Trustees agreed that the three Heads needed to step down.

The other new regulation was that no

governor should sit on the Board, as another of its duties is to hold the Local Governing Boards to account. It was agreed that the three Trustees who were governors would each step down from their governing role, in order to remain on the Board of Trustees.

The Council Executive then made the decision that it was not appropriate for any of its Officers to sit on the Board of any MAT and so Jon Stonehouse also stepped down.

This leaves us with a Trust Board of six, with three current vacancies for people with experience of senior leadership in education. These cannot be people who are employed by the Trust, but if you know of anybody suitable, do tell them to get in touch with our Chair, Edwin Thomas.

And then there were six?

Our three founding schools are Knavesmire Primary, Millthorpe Secondary and Scarcroft Primary. The MAT grew from a desire to join together in partnership to provide good quality education for local pupils.

As education funding continues to be squeezed, it becomes ever clearer that a MAT of more than three schools will give us greater financial security and more opportunities to make savings through economies of scale. It will also generate further opportunities for increased collaboration and provide us with a wider pool of expertise at all levels, upon which we can draw. For these reasons, it is excellent news for the MAT that both Woodthorpe Primary and Acomb Primary are currently seeking to join us. Due Diligence reports are currently being received by Trustees and announcements will be made shortly about next steps.

The DfE has just agreed that the South Bank MAT can sponsor other schools in difficulty and we have been approached to take on York High, which has recently been placed into Special Measures. A detailed Due Diligence process is now underway, looking at the school's educational standards and also its financial position. An announcement will be made shortly about the way forward.

We will keep you informed about progress in the next newsletter.

Get in touch if you know of anybody with experience of senior leadership in education who might be interested in sitting on the Board of Trustees.

Who's steering the ship?

You will know from Page 1 that the MAT has appointed a new Trust Principal. Anna Cornhill has taken over from Trevor Burton in this role. Interviews took place on April 24th and Anna was appointed as from 1st May 2017. She will initially work 1.5 days per week, increasing to 3 days per week from 1st July. She will fulfil this role while continuing as Headteacher of Scarcroft Primary School for the remainder of the week.

The Trust and its schools are extremely grateful to Trevor for the sterling work he has carried out in this role during the MAT's first full year. He has put in a huge amount of hard work above and beyond the call of duty. He has now decided that other duties must take precedence and for that reason, is stepping down from this role.

All MATs are required to have an 'Accounting Officer'. (see Q&A right). This person is responsible for the successful financial management of the Trust and also its academic standards. They work in partnership with the Trustees. In our MAT, this person is the Trust Principal. A conscious decision was made not to create a CEO role, to ensure that there is no direct Line Management of the Headteachers.

Trustees are looking forward to working with Anna to build on the successes of our first year, and embed a strong culture of collaboration across the MAT.'

Q&A

When will we find out what's happening about York High?

Trustees have approved a three-year Plan aimed at ensuring financial stability at York High. A plan for Trevor Burton to take on the role of Executive Headteacher across both Millthorpe and York High has also been approved, outlining the leadership structure required to embed the necessary school improvement. The plan is subject to two conditions:

- 1) Funding streams from both the Local Authority and the DFE are confirmed in writing.
- 2) Suitable candidates are recruited to take on the role of Head of School in both Millthorpe and York High, under the strategic leadership of the Executive Headteacher. These interviews will take place at the end of May.

We will of course be able to update you about the outcome of these negotiations in the next newsletter.

There is a lot of publicity about how poorly schools are being funded—how is this affecting our MAT schools?

There is no doubt that life is difficult in all schools at present, with real-term cuts, increased costs and significant financial challenges. There are some gains we can make as a MAT that go some way toward helping:

- 1) We can purchase goods and services together, negotiating a saving due to economies of scale—companies like the fact that we represent three schools and not just one. We have saved £62,000 over the MAT in our first year.
- 2) We can apply for additional grants—you can see from Page 3 of this newsletter that we have already successfully bid for a grant to support the central posts and a grant to support capital repairs.

Why do we need to have a Trust Principal?

There is a legal requirement for each MAT to have a senior employee (the 'Accounting Officer') who will have personal responsibility for oversight of the public funding received by the organisation. They will also be the direct liaison with the DFE and will be held accountable by Trustees for the financial and academic success of the MAT.

In capable hands

Meet the Chair of Trustees Edwin Thomas



Edwin became involved in the MAT as the Vice-Chair of governors at Knavesmire, where he has two sons; in Year 4 and Year 2. He led Knavesmire's working group on academy conversion, and then stepped up to become Chair of Trustees when the MAT was formed.

He says, 'Establishing the Trust has been more work than any of us ever expected. But it's been hugely rewarding, particularly collaborating with such talented staff, governors and trustees. It's great to see real benefits already emerging from the schools working together.' Edwin has lived in York for 12 years in South Bank and Dringhouses. He works full-time as an author, and has written a dozen novels under the pen-name Tom Harper. His book *The Orpheus Descent* was chosen as York's Big City Read in 2014. He has also served as Chair of the UK Crime Writers' Association, and the Harrogate History Festival.

In his spare time, Edwin enjoys hiking, cooking, playing squash, binge-watching Netflix and building things with his children.

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