



Summer 2019 - Issue 6

# SIGMA NEWS

For the Staff and Stakeholders of The Sigma Trust

**Greater than the sum of its parts**



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## Welcome...

This is the sixth edition of Sigma News and once again it is full of amazing achievements across all of our schools. In some cases, the dedication and commitment of colleagues

is celebrated, as in the Essex Teaching Awards, and in others the quiet professionalism of staff involved in the incident described on page 5, was truly remarkable.

When Sigma was set up in 2016, we consisted of six schools, four secondary and two primary academies. By the end of this year, we will have doubled in size, with eight secondary schools and soon, four primary schools. In terms of the number of pupils, we are now the largest multi-academy trust in Essex.

It is great to welcome staff from Alton Park Junior School and Holland Park Primary School to the Trust, even though they will not formally join until sometime next term. I am also very pleased

to see the number of primary schools grow, so we can build on the strong, collaborative approach now established among the secondary schools.

My huge thanks to Gavin Bradley and colleagues from the Learning Pathways Trust (LPAT) for the fantastic support they have provided to all the primary schools within Sigma.

A warm welcome also to Nicky Sirett, appointed as headteacher at Alton Park.

Last month, I had the pleasure of attending the handing over of Paxman Academy to Sigma.

Over the next few months, I am sure many of you will have the opportunity to visit the new school and I imagine you will come away envious of the fantastic facilities that have been created. Best wishes to Carol Anne, her new staff and the first 180 students who join in September.

Many congratulations for all you have achieved this academic year and I wish you a very relaxing summer break.

*Jeff Brindle, CEO The Sigma Trust*

## Primary schools join The Sigma Trust

**Alton Park Junior School and Holland Park Primary School have joined The Sigma Trust, bringing the number of schools up to 12.**

**The Trust began providing support to the schools in June, with the legal transfer due to be completed once all checks and consultations have been carried out.**

**The two schools, both based in Clacton, have been transferred from Premier Learning Trust. Sigma will work in partnership with Learning Pathways Academy Trust (LPAT).**

**Jeff Brindle, The Sigma Trust CEO, said:**  
**"We are delighted that Alton Park Junior School and Holland Park Primary School**

**will be joining The Sigma Trust.**

**"Both schools will retain their own individual identities and ethos, but will benefit from the extensive support and collaboration that can be achieved across all of our academies. This will enable us to obtain the best possible outcomes for all pupils.**

**"We are pleased to be working with LPAT who bring a wealth of experience in primary education to the partnership."**



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# New leadership appointments made

The leadership of two secondary schools has been strengthened with permanent appointments made.

Neil Gallagher was confirmed earlier this year as executive headteacher of both Clacton County High School – where he was previously principal – and The Colne Community School and College.

As a result, Chris Taylor has been appointed as the new head of school at Clacton County High. The former vice

principal, responsible for the day to day running of the school with Mr Gallagher steering the strategic direction, said: “Mr Gallagher and I have the same vision and ethos for all our students and are determined that the school remains focussed on moving forwards and improving the outcomes for the young people in our community.”

At The Colne, Steven Crane has taken on the role as head of school. He said: “I am very



Steven Crane.



Chris Taylor.

much looking forward to the challenge of driving The Colne forward and developing a school that will provide the best education for its students and one of which the local community will be proud.”

## Director of standards appointed



Lyn Wright joined the Trust in February as director of standards.

Having previously held the role as head of education and early years for Essex Local Authority, Ms Wright led the strategy

to ensure every child was able to attend a Good or better school.

She was also successful in securing the only Strategic School Improvement Fund for the east of England from the Department for Education, bringing £500,000 to Essex to improve boys’ reading.

Ms Wright, who taught for 22 years in secondary schools and pupil referral units, said: “Initially, I

focussed on working with headteachers to understand the context and uniqueness of every school, in terms of strengths and areas of priorities.

“I am also focusing on the immediate role of supporting and preparing those academies who are anticipating an inspection.

“I have commissioned Pupil Premium reviews across the secondary schools to look at the provision for our most disadvantaged students.

“I have also worked with the CEO and headteachers to recruit and strengthen leadership across the Trust. I am looking ahead and ensuring the Trust and school leaders are prepared for the new inspection framework.

“I am excited by the role and feel very privileged to work with such talented and experienced leaders.”

## Grade 9 maths masterclasses

Maths departments from across the Trust came together to help Year 11 students to reach grade 9 in their GCSE exams.

A group of 75 students attended the maths masterclass at The Philip Morant School to revise topics including differentiation, exponential growth and

decay, vectors and circle theorems and how it can be applied to real life situations.

Finlay Ridgwell, mathematics strategic lead, said: “All students showed excellent maturity and exceptional subject knowledge to apply their understanding of mathematics to complicated topics also taught at A-level.

The work shown by all was wonderful to see and students felt they were challenged and extended in their pursuit of a grade 9 in mathematics.”

The Sigma Trust is looking to hold maths masterclasses each year to ensure Year 11 students achieve their full potential.

## Devoting a week to science

Secondary schools within The Sigma Trust spent British Science Week indulging in the subject.

A range of science related events were held, including –

- At Clacton County High School, Year 7 and 8 took part in virtual reality workshops on planets
- At The Colne Community School and College, Year 7 took part in the I'm a Scientist event and Year 8 rose to the Build a Car Challenge
- At Harwich and Dovercourt High School, students took part in the Big Bang Fair competition

• At The Stanway School, lunchtime demonstrations included heart and lung dissections

• At St Helena School, lunchtime experiments included the elephant's toothpaste and methane bubbles

• At Philip Morant School, students researched famous scientists

• At Thomas Lord Audley School, Year 8 and 9 students took part in forensic workshops

Each school also took part in a competition for Year 8 students run by the Smallpiece Trust, with

students designing, building and testing aerodynamic gliders. The winners attended the Sigma Trust Day in June at The Stanway School.

John Knights, strategic science lead, said: "British Science Week is an important aspect of the curriculum as it gives students and teachers the opportunity to experience real science from the world around us.

"The aim is to get as many people talking about science as possible and open eyes to possible future career paths."



The annual science photography competition took place this term with many entries from across the Trust.

After much deliberation, the overall winner was Cassy-Rose, Year 8 from Clacton County High School.

John Knights, strategic science lead, said: "Her photo, and explanation of how it linked to science, was outstanding."

Each school had their own runner-up.

## Sigma Poetry Slam



Young poets performed in front of a live audience at the first Sigma Poetry Slam.

Students from across the Trust's secondary schools came together at Clacton County High School to perform an original poem

they had written themselves, inspired by other poems they also read.

Poems focussed on topics including image and identity, difference, sexuality, loss and Brexit.

Paige Oldfield, from The Thomas Lord Audley School, was the overall winner, having been inspired by Maya Angelou's anthem I Rise. In response, she wrote a poem about hope and self-belief.

She said: "It was an amazing event and I still can't believe I won! The standard of poetry and the confidence of the performances was so high from all of the performers and I hope that everyone continues writing and performing poetry."

Fiona Cook, English strategic lead and judge, said: "The issues raised by this year's competitors and the power, confidence and composure with which they were delivered was incredibly impressive."



# Brand-new school prepares for opening

Paxman Academy is preparing to welcome its first students.

The school, in Colchester, has been built for The Sigma Trust on the site of the former Alderman Blaxill School.

The 900-place school opens in September 2019 - with 180 Year 7 students from 27 primary schools - to cope with the anticipated increase in demand for secondary school places. It is already oversubscribed with a waiting list of children keen to enrol.

Headteacher Carol Anne Moffat has been joined by deputy Nick Mussett and two assistant heads to form a strong and experienced leadership team.

Mrs Moffat said: "The building takes my breath away; it's stunning.

"We have a very strong leadership team, as well as our core teaching staff. I am really delighted we have a team of staff who are talented in lots of different areas, which will be great for our extra-curricular provision. The staff we have coming in are fantastic and are keen to embrace our ethos, vision and values. Just being able to sit down together to create that vision has been inspirational."

Mr Mussett said: "We want Paxman Academy to be at the heart of the community and are looking at various opportunities for our neighbours to come in to school and be a part of it.

"We have so many ideas about giving our students plenty of exciting opportunities; there will be lots of enrichment, clubs and fixtures for our students to give them a wide range of experiences.

"We have the capacity and the experts among our staff to provide such variety. We want children to enjoy school, to engage and progress; they are going to have a great experience with us at Paxman."



## Defibrillators for all Sigma schools

Life-saving defibrillators are being installed in all Trust schools over the summer.

The investment comes after trained staff at Clacton County High School used the equipment to save the life of a student who collapsed.

John, Year 9, suffered a suspected cardiac arrest while at school. Staff were quickly able to revive him using the school's defibrillator

before he was rushed to hospital.

Jeff Brindle, The Sigma Trust CEO, said: "We wish John a speedy recovery and congratulate the staff who responded so effectively to help to save his life - Gary Winterford, Rachel Blastock, Amanda Dullage, Nicola O'Shea and Lisa Bareham.

"All schools within The Sigma Trust will now be fitted with defibrillators by the start of next term."

# Teaching awards success for Sigma



Colleagues from across The Sigma Trust schools have once again been successful in the Essex Teaching Awards. The winners and runners-up were:



## Governing Body

*Highly Commended:*  
**The Stanway School** and  
**Thomas Lord Audley School Federation**



## Secondary School Headteacher of the Year Award

*Highly Commended:*  
**Neil Gallagher** -  
Clacton County High School



## Lifetime Achievement Award

*Highly Commended:*  
**Ann Bryant** -  
Thomas Lord Audley School



## New Teacher of the Year Award

*Winner:*  
**Dr Dan Brown** -  
The Stanway School



## Secondary School Teacher of the Year Award

*Winner:*  
**Rebecca Reilly** -  
The Stanway School



## Student Choice Award

*Highly Commended:*  
**Kerry Rowland** -  
Thomas Lord Audley School



## Student Choice Award

*Highly Commended:*  
**Andrew Chitsakamile** -  
Clacton County High School

# TRAINING OUR PEOPLE...

## A Trust with reading at the centre

The Sigma Trust has partnered with The Professional Learning Network to develop support of students' reading comprehension skills.

The project has identified reading champions in each school to attend a four-day training programme to explore ways in which students' reading fluency, resilience and their understanding of vocabulary can be supported.

Teachers will spend time reflecting on the latest research, embark on their own action research and share best practice.

Scott Holder, director of education, said: "Studies show that reading is central to a child's educational performance and therefore we are committed to each of our schools developing students' reading skills and comprehension, as well as engendering their love of books and reading."

## Trust Thursday - SigmaEd

The final Trust Thursday of the year was our own SigmaEd where colleagues had the opportunity to share research and projects they have been working on.

Colleagues from the Challenge For All lesson study programme joined the session,

as well as graduates of the North Essex Teacher Training courses.

The thought-provoking end to another year of sharing best practice across the Trust was hosted by The Philip Morant School in June.



## Sigma INSET day

The Sigma Trust held its second annual Trust INSET day in February.

The Trust is keen to support each academy to develop the best provision and outcomes for its young people through high quality CPD.

The aim of the day was to provide an opportunity for colleagues to meet each other, share professional dialogue and ensure best practice becomes

shared practice.

Charlie McCarthy, strategic facilitator, said: "Sigma has a great pool of talented staff and it was wonderful to see a number of colleagues running sessions during the day.

"We were also joined by a number of national speakers, including Martin Robinson, Mary Myatt, Chris Runeckles, Rob Eastaway and Dr Gianfranco Conti."

# Sir David Carter at leadership and governance conference

The growth and future of multi academy trusts was the subject of discussion at the Trust's leadership and governance conference.

Sir David Carter was guest speaker at the event, giving a talk to trustees, members, headteachers, senior leaders and local governing body members at The Philip Morant School.

He was appointed National Schools



Commissioner in 2016 and led a team of Regional Schools Commissioners who oversaw 8,000 academies in England, intervening to accelerate improvement.

He is now executive director of system leadership at Ambition School Leadership, leading CEO training programmes and launching a new model of reviewing and assessing multi academy trusts.

## MFL CPD with Dr Gianfranco Conti

Modern foreign language colleagues welcomed Dr Gianfranco Conti for a full day of professional development training.

Dr Conti is an applied linguistics MA and PhD graduate with vocabulary acquisition, listening skills, metacognition, error correction and learner autonomy as his main research interests. He has been teaching MFL for more than 20 years, both at secondary and tertiary levels, and was head of MFL at various schools in England and abroad.

The CPD event included workshops on strategies to break the sound barrier, approaches to teaching grammar and writing



as well as identifying universals within schemes of work to support learning routines within the classroom

Amy Nundy, strategic lead for MFL, said: "Although a very intense day of training, staff commented on how it was beneficial to have a subject specialist deliver the content and how it has given them a lot to think about within their own teaching.

Staff went away from the session with plenty of ideas, which were easily implemented the very next day. The majority of staff commented how the day has encouraged them to reconsider how they teach certain elements within MFL."



# Update on...our trainees

north  
essex  
teacher  
training

Trainees are in the final stages of their practice and preparation to become qualified teachers.

Many have secured positions ready for their start as NQTs in September 2019.

The Stanway School hosted two conferences for NETT this year; the first with Sue Cowley presenting on behaviour and differentiation, the second with Martin Illingworth presenting on teaching and learning.

Next year, NETT will be running further conferences on behaviour and learning technologies. These conferences are free to NETT NQTs and Internship trainees. Other

partnership school staff are welcome to attend for a small contribution – posters will advertise the events soon.

Primary and secondary NETT trainees are becoming more active in developing research in teaching and learning. Six trainees presented at the University of Suffolk Education Conference in July. Florence Pullen and Dr Sarah Alix have also had joint work published within the Chartered College of Teaching Impact Journal.

Dr Sarah said: "Recruitment is healthy for September 2019. However, we are continuing to take applications, therefore if anyone is interested in teacher training, do get in touch with us or come to one of our open events to find out further information."

# Update on...data protection

The data protection teams across The Sigma Trust schools have had a busy year.

Data protection officer Julie Eldridge and colleagues within Trust schools have worked on –

- six Freedom of Information and ten Subject Access requests. Parents and pupils have become more aware of their rights to ask about and access the personal data held on them.
- seven data breaches. Lessons have been learnt from the reported breaches and procedures improved to avoid repeats.
- adopting the Essex IGS GDPR compliance framework to enhance data tracking.
- data awareness training. All staff have been asked to complete the Handsam's GDPR E-Training course. The short course walks through the key aspects of the GDPR legislation and tests participants' knowledge of data law and best practice.
- data sharing agreements. The team continues to process many of these formal written agreements on your behalf.

**EMAILS CAN BE REVEALING**

Do you know that email is one of the most common sources of accidental personal data disclosures? Protect your mail content and data with these tips:

- 1. CHECK**
  - ✓ Review your recipient list to ensure there is no unintended recipient.
  - ✓ Mask or remove any personal data not required for the intended recipient.
- 2. PROTECT**
  - ✓ Encrypt attachments containing personal data with password-protection.
    - Ensure a strong password is used.
    - The password should be communicated to the recipient separately.
- 3. SCHEDULE**
  - ✓ Opt for delayed delivery in case you need to rescue any would-be accidents.

# Introducing...the HR team

The HR team of ten helps The Sigma Trust colleagues with every aspect of their journey.

The team, based at Tendring Education Centre in Clacton, includes Helen Hobbs, Trust HR manager; Nigel Sawyer, Trust employee relations manager; three HR officers; four HR assistants and a project officer working on the implementation of a new HR platform for the Trust.

The HR team advertises vacancies, organises interviews, carries out the Safer Recruitment checks and issues contracts of employment. Throughout someone's employment, the team can action contract changes, assist with Occupational Health referrals, help with tenancy/mortgage references, send salary statements to all staff annually, provide information and assistance for family leave, such as Maternity Leave, and process resignations.

The HR team contributes to the maintenance of each school's Single Central Record – a key document required for Ofsted inspections and keeps employee information up to date to ensure an accurate Workforce Census – an annual census required by the DfE.

They also run training sessions, hold HR surgeries for staff to seek advice or ask questions, attend monthly meetings with headteachers and support school teams.

If you have any HR related queries, contact your school-based HR link or contact the central team on 01255 750913 or [hr@sigmatrust.org.uk](mailto:hr@sigmatrust.org.uk)



## Understanding your pension

Teachers' Pensions are responsible for administration and to help you to understand your pension. In the Members Hub, you will find links to support, tools to help you to manage and plan your pension and all the latest news.

Visit <https://www.teacherspensions.co.uk/members/member-hub.aspx>

## Are you a member of My Pension Online?

If you have not registered for My Pension Online (MPO) already, provide an email address to [anna.day@sigmatrust.org.uk](mailto:anna.day@sigmatrust.org.uk) or visit

<https://www.teacherspensions.co.uk/members/member-login.aspx>

The online, personalised PIN protected portal gives you instant access to the latest view of your Benefit Statement, the ability to update your personal details and access to a range of forms and resources. This is the most efficient function to process forms, such as opt outs and retirement requests, and have access to a range of factsheets, forms and guides to help you to manage your pension.

## LGPS - Essex Pension Fund

The Essex Pension Fund is one of 101 in the UK which make up the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

Their primary responsibility is to ensure pension benefits are calculated and paid correctly.

Payments are made in a variety of circumstances, including retirement, redundancy, ill health, on death or transferred to other pension arrangements.

Email [anna.day@sigmatrust.org.uk](mailto:anna.day@sigmatrust.org.uk) to understand your options.

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\*\* Call costs from mobiles may vary according to the provider.  
Services delivered directly via the EAP are free. There may be  
charges for services we signpost to such as long term or open-  
ended support.

# Have you thought about a career in teaching at a primary, secondary school or special school?

We are now recruiting for **September 2019**

Alternatively, consider the Internship  
programme to gain experience of working  
in a school before training.

For further information on a career in teaching or the  
Internship programme contact:

Jane Adamson/John Morgan/Sarah Alix  
Programme Directors

E [teach@nett.org.uk](mailto:teach@nett.org.uk)  
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