



# Newsletter for Staff

Spring 2025

## CEO's Welcome

As we step into the vibrant season of spring, I am delighted to welcome you to the second edition of our Trust staff newsletter. Spring is a time of renewal, growth, and fresh opportunities – themes that resonate deeply with our mission and the incredible work happening across our Trust. Over the past few months, I've been truly inspired by the dedication and passion of our staff. Your unwavering commitment to providing the very best for our pupils continues to make a profound difference in their lives, and I want to take this opportunity to personally thank each and every one of you for your hard work and dedication.

In this edition, you'll find updates on key projects, success stories from across our schools, and insights into how we are collectively driving our strategic priorities forward. As always, your wellbeing and professional development remain at the heart of our vision, and we are excited to share some of the ways we are striving to support you in these areas.

Spring reminds us that small changes can lead to big transformations – whether in our classrooms, our teams, or within ourselves. As we continue on this journey together, let's embrace the opportunities ahead and celebrate the positive impact we are creating each day.

Thank you for all that you do. Your passion and dedication are what make our Trust such a special community. Wishing you a successful and energising term ahead.

Kim Payne  
(Interim CEO)

**'So let us not become tired of doing good; for if we do not give up, the time will come when we will reap the harvest'** Galatians 6:9

As we journey through Lent, I want to take a moment to reflect on this sacred season and what it means for us as a Catholic community. Lent is a time of prayer, sacrifice, and renewal—a season to pause, reflect, and draw closer to God in preparation for the joy of Easter.

In our daily work, we are called not only to educate but to nurture the hearts and minds of the young people in our care. This Lenten season invites us to deepen our commitment to service, kindness, and compassion—values that are at the very core of our mission. Whether through small acts of generosity, moments of patience, or a renewed dedication to our vocation, we can all embody Christ's love in our schools.

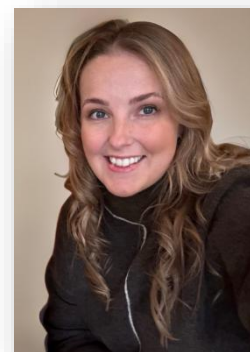
This time also encourages us to reflect inwardly. In the business of school life, I encourage you to take moments of stillness and prayer, to find strength in faith, and to support one another in community. As we guide our pupils in understanding the significance of Lent, may we also be reminded of the power of hope, renewal, and grace in our own lives.

May this Lenten season bring you peace, hope, and spiritual renewal as we prepare to celebrate the joy of Christ's resurrection at Easter.



# Spotlight on Staff

Amber Brooks is EYFS Lead at St Mary and St Peter. She is incredibly passionate about the teaching of Phonics and Early Reading. This encouraged her to study for the NPQ in Leading Literacy. This year, she is chairing the Trust EYFS PLN, which she is thoroughly enjoying. She says: "I have been extremely fortunate in collaborating with and supporting Early Years colleagues across the Trust. By enabling this collective effort and shared responsibility, we can provide all children with the best possible start". Over the past year, Amber has shared her expertise working with the Trust to carry out EYFS reviews in schools. As a STEPS Lead Professional, she works closely with school colleagues to support pupils' behaviour. Amber's passion, support and hard work are much appreciated.



We would also like to shine a light on Carolyn Mann, Behaviour Lead and Reception teacher at St Mary's RC Primary School, Lowestoft. Also representing St Mary's on the Trust Wellbeing Steering group, Carolyn is always striving to make things better and perhaps doesn't realise how much people value her. At a recent Trust Surgery, colleagues came forward to praise Carolyn for always making time for people, supporting them in both personal and professional matters. A truly valued colleague!

## Growing Our People

Following the launch of our [People Directory](#), it has been great to see many schools across our Trust taking advantage of the apprenticeship opportunities to support Professional Development of their staff. For further information about apprenticeships, please consult the Trust's People Directory or speak to your Headteacher. We will hear about two of our colleagues below who are currently completing apprenticeships, each of whom would be very happy to discuss their experience further. If you would like to be put in touch with one of them, please get in touch with Ben Serruys.

### Ellie Kelf

School: St Mary's

Apprenticeship: Level 4 Sports Coach

Provider: Inspire Education Group

Start and end dates: Aug 24 – Feb 26

Ellie was keen to begin a sports coaching course so she emailed local schools in the hope of finding a host. St Mary's were delighted to help and are so glad they did- Ellie was voted Apprentice of the Month in October!

In school, Ellie runs a variety of activities including Breakfast Club games and group activities in P.E. lessons. She works closely with the school's P.E. teacher who is also her in-school mentor.

In terms of course learning, Fridays are college days and comprise of a mix of Face-to-face training and independent tasks via an online platform. Ellie says the provider is very supportive, providing regular progress reviews and 1-2-1s with her course Tutor.

Ellie loves her role and speaks highly of opportunities like these to support career progression.

### Lynden Dixon

School: St Martha's

Apprenticeship: Level 6 Teacher

Provider: Coventry University

Start and end dates: November 2024 – March 2026

Having achieved a degree in Sports Journalism and worked as a teaching Assistant in St Martha's for 3 years, Lynden decided to pursue his next challenge: teaching.

Pursuing the Teacher Apprenticeship means that Lynden can continue to work in school and earn a salary whilst studying to achieve the qualification.

4 days each week are spent in school, working with children and gradually building up the amount of teaching. At the moment, his role involves working in a Year 3 class where he shadows the class teacher and regularly takes out groups of children to work on specific areas of the curriculum. By Easter, 50% of his time in school will be spent teaching while the other 50% will be spent observing other teachers or preparing for lessons.

1 day per week is spent completing study activities. While there are occasionally face-to-face training events, most of this takes place online and Lynden tends to complete this during the working day whilst in the school. Course materials cover a broad range of topics and Lynden is currently studying behaviour management. These modules are designed to relate to school practice so apprentices can relate theory from the learning with what they see in the classroom.

Lynden is very pleased to have chosen this route and really enjoys coming into work each day.

# Flourishing in Our Schools

## Advent at St Augustine's

During Advent, we were filled with JOY to welcome Bishop Peter to our school for the first time. Our children excelled in their respectful behaviour and glorious singing for our special visitor.

It was a wonderful day, celebrating our fabulous school and parish community spirit!

We held a craft evening for staff. A range of craft resources were provided, which we used to create decorations and gifts. There were also refreshments and treats for everyone to enjoy. The event was very successful, and more craft sessions will follow.

Our Mini Vinnies led a Christmas Tree Tin Can appeal, collecting donations to build a Tin Can Christmas Tree. The generous donations were passed on to the SVP group at St John's Cathedral to be distributed to those in need.



## Earthwake at St Edmund's

At St Edmund's school in Bungay we have introduced a new 'Earthwake' after-school club as part of our commitment to offering wider enrichment opportunities and developing stewardship as part of our Catholic Social Teaching.

Earthwake is run by an experienced environmental educator and Forest School leader. Children are invited to a forest school and eco-focused club after school in the school and church grounds. The children take part in art, crafts, making shelters, bush craft, wildlife and nature discovery and supporting natural habitats. Each session ends with a campfire, snacks and hot chocolate.

As part of these sessions, the children will be cultivating the gardens in the church grounds and developing the space as a prayerful and meditative space. These grounds have not been used for many years, and we felt this would be an amazing opportunity for the school and church to work together for the good of the whole community. The space, when finished will be open to the parish and school community to use.

Lorna Collins who runs the group has said 'It has been a great experience for all of us involved. The children are a delight to be with, interested, helpful and curious.'





# Fundraising at St Francis of Assisi

Pupils, parents and staff at St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School in Norwich have been busy raising money for good causes as part of their commitment to Catholic Social Teaching.

Following on from last years' impressive CAFOD fundraising total of £2,139.10, CAFOD Club members and the wider school have already raised £334 since September to support those in need around the world. This year, walking as Pilgrims of Hope in celebration of the Jubilee Year, they will be aiming to complete a 1000km whole school sponsored walk in Lent to beat last years' total.

In December, accompanied on the piano and organ by St John the Baptist Cathedral's Director of Music David Grealy, classes performed individual carols and sang together at the school's annual Christmas Carol Service to raise money for The Priscilla Bacon Hospice. The children chose this charity in memory of Mrs Sue Spooner, their long-serving dinner lady, who had died earlier in the year. With parents and guests donating an impressive £615.45, this week Year 6 Junior Chaplains visited Priscilla Bacon Hospice for a tour of the beautiful site and to present a cheque.

Fred and Milena explained: 'We loved the way that people have privacy with their own little garden areas but are also part of a community in such a peaceful setting' and 'Our money will be spent on therapies and family craft activities to help people feel relaxed and comfortable in the place that they are in'.



## St Martha's Achieve Gold

St. Martha's have achieved Gold in our recent Arts Mark application. This demonstrates just how much we do for the Arts in school and we are now keen to get working on achieving Platinum. Mary Landles along with Sarah Chapman lead on Art in the school and spend a lot of time planning opportunities for the children to experience Art in a variety of ways.

We have introduced the role of Art Ambassadors and two children from Year 6 have been selected for this role from their dedication to Art and who are keen to support the development of Art in school for all children. A massive thank you must go to Mary Landles and Sarah Chapman for everything they have done for Art, especially all the hours that went into the application.

The feedback from the application was very positive and truly reflected St. Martha's:

*'You clearly have a long-term commitment to arts and culture which is having measurable effects on staff and pupils. All pupils can access an established range of arts and cultural provision through work with local and national arts and cultural organisations, in school and on visits outside of the classroom, which leads to showcasing in school and the local community.'*



# Rocking St Mary's

Since September 2024, our school is lucky to have *iRock School of Music*, which is very popular with the children, offering them a range of musical experiences and a feel of actually being in a rock band. They play various musical instruments from electric guitars and drums, to singing and keyboards. Each year group band performed in front of the whole school, and it was a wonderful moment for the children to realise their potential and how much they had progressed only in one term.



Christmas time at St Mary's is very special. During a highly anticipated and popular Christmas Fayre, our Y5 children sang for the whole school community various traditional Christmas Carols. Minnie Vinnies from Y5 also performed a little Christmas Carol service at our local Care Home, which we have very strong links with. As part of our annual *St Mary's Christmas Giving Tree*, we teamed up with Salvation Army to organise presents for children in need. This year we focused on sensory and baby toys and toys for the teenage children. We are very blessed, that all our school community comes together to spread the Christmas joy!



## NDHS Compete in F1

In January, a group of our talented students from Years 7, 9, 10, and 11 took part in the regional F1 in Schools competition. This exciting STEM challenge saw students design, build, and race miniature F1 cars, competing against 27 teams from across the region in a highly competitive field!

Throughout the competition, students were expected to set up a pit display, present their projects to engineering professionals, produce detailed portfolios, and race their cars which they had designed, CNC-machined, and 3D-printed down a 20-meter track powered by CO<sub>2</sub> cartridges.

All our students did a fantastic job, demonstrating great teamwork, problem-solving skills, and resilience. With 27 teams competing, the competition was incredibly tough, making our results even more impressive. HorsePWR (Year 11) and Echo (Year 9) both secured third place in their categories, a fantastic achievement!

Although no teams progressed to the national finals this year, they have gained invaluable experience and are already looking forward to coming back stronger next year. The students can be incredibly proud of your hard work and dedication!

As part of our outreach work with one of our feeder schools, St. Francis of Assisi, we were excited to support their first-ever attempt at the F1 in the Schools Primary competition this year. They performed brilliantly, bringing home a range of trophies for different aspects of the competition and, most impressively, securing a place at the National Finals! We wish them good luck!

We wish them the best of luck as they prepare for the next stage of the competition!





## CAFOD at Sacred Heart, Peterborough

We had an incredibly busy first term at Sacred Heart, Peterborough.

Our Year Four children enjoyed their two-day residential to Grafham Water where they participated in lots of different activities including bush craft, scaling the climbing wall, archery and tackling the high ropes. Our Year Six children also enjoyed their three-day residential to Caythorpe in Lincolnshire and enjoyed orienteering, abseiling and the zip wire to name a few! A huge thank you to the staff for giving up so much of their time and well done to our children who represented the school incredibly well.

As part of our ongoing commitment to Catholic Social Teaching, our CAFOD Club (made up of our School Council and School Chaplains) decided to collect food at harvest for our local St Vincent de Paul Group. They then invited members of the SVP Group back to school to lead an assembly on who this food would support and the work that the SVP Group do in the community. CAFOD Club also organised our yearly 'reverse Advent calendar', with children and staff bringing in donations during Advent that our Year Six children then took to the local foodbank. We have also continued to enjoy weekly Mass, led by our Parish priest, Father Seelan.



## Sacred Heart Swaffham Sing at the O2

We've had a busy start to 2025 at Sacred Heart, Swaffham. In January, a small group of our singers attended Young Voices at the O2 Arena in London. They left school after registration, complete with two dinners, sleeping bags, pillows and much excitement. Having spent the afternoon rehearsing with hundreds of other children from across the country, their parents joined the audience to watch the concert. They all arrived home after midnight, happy, exhausted and relieved it was Saturday!

Our pupils have also been involved with the Swaffham Youth Literacy Project. This is an annual event in the town, with this year's theme being 'Swaffham during the First World War'. The project explores who was present in Swaffham and what were they talking about during this time of hardship and change, encouraging pupils to think about what was on the minds of ordinary people.

The project began with a weekend workshop in the museum, followed up by a visit to our Year 3/4 class, Walsingham, by two actors to help our young people develop a deeper understanding of the different points of view of the Swaffham residents during this time. The children are now in the final stages of the project, where they draw on these experiences to write a monologue or dialogue, which will be submitted to the judges, who will consider each piece on the merits of their originality of idea/thought, rather than literacy skills in order for the project to be truly inclusive.



# St Mary & St Peter Scale Mount Snowden



It has been a wonderful start to the new year here at SMSP and we have been very busy building on our wellbeing goals from last academic year. We have assembled the SMSP wellbeing group, consisting of staff from across the school and covering all roles, to help us steer the wellbeing of our school. This is to make sure that every person has a voice and point of contact when it comes to wellbeing in our school. We have also freshly updated our staff wellbeing board to remind all staff of the perks on offer to them through the MAT and of any upcoming events or opportunities that may arise.

Our Mini Vinnies have been very busy arranging food donations and raising awareness for our Harvest Liturgy and attending mass at the Cathedral in Norwich. Our school football team has played their first game of the new season and it was wonderful to see so many parents and staff members out in the rain cheering them on. We look forward to many more events in the coming months (and hopefully some much dryer weather!)

We would also like to congratulate Miss Ellcome, who successfully climbed mount Snowden as part of a mental health group to prove to people that they can overcome any obstacle. It took 3.5 hours up and 2.5 hours down and she told us that she could not walk the next day but was absolutely worth it!

## GIFTing at St Thomas More

This term, staff at STM have ensured that our pupils have had a number of experiences to support and enhance their learning. EYFS have been walking around their local area, looking at where they live and the different types of houses on their local streets. They have also used this experience to learn vital road safety lessons.

Year 4 visited Burghley house and learned all about Victorian ways of life and the difference between the lives of the poor and rich. They dressed as Victorians and spent time exploring the magnificent house. Year 5 went on a Space Adventure and visited Leicester Space Museum and Year 6 spent the day at Warner Brothers immersing themselves in the World of Harry Potter to support their writing.

Towards the end of term, Year 2 attended a pantomime at the Key Theatre and our choir visited local care homes and Peterborough Hospital and spread Christmas joy to our local community.

Our Growing In Faith Together (GIFT) Team have been appointed and we are proud to say that we now have 17 children who are very active members of our GIFT Team. They have planned and delivered assemblies, planned a foodbank collection and have worked with adults to plan future prayer and reflection areas around school. On 9<sup>th</sup> December 2024, some of the GIFT Team visited St John Fisher High School and spent the day with Sister Judith Russi, who visited the school on behalf of Caritas and trained the students to become Caritas Ambassadors. They enjoyed the day tremendously and found it incredibly inciteful and inspiring. They have come back to school with plenty of ideas for 2025!





'In a Catholic School, the true development of the person, pupils and staff, takes precedence over all other things.'

Archbishop Vincent Nichols

## Staff Charter

When we re-launched our [Staff charter](#) last September we described it as our commitment to you, our most precious resource:

- **Evidence-based, holistic appraisal** matters. Thank you to everyone who has engaged in the new appraisal process on Perspective. We know that there is a cost to change and are grateful to line managers for leading colleagues through the new system, and to everyone for engaging with the new way of working.
- We continue to **focus on eliminating unnecessary workload**. Headteachers met before Christmas to revisit the DfE's Workload Reduction toolkit and identify school-specific foci going forwards. More recently we have looked at the use of GenAI in schools to reduce workload. For those already [using GenAI, please read this guidance](#). We are now piloting the use of a Closed Gen AI tool in two of our schools.

## Staff Wellbeing

We have continued to implement our response to last year's review of staff wellbeing. The Wellbeing Steering group has now met for a second time, forming a strong line of communication between the Trust central team and schools' local wellbeing committees / forums / teams. The group has so far discussed the Trust staff charter; communication mechanisms; wellbeing support mechanisms and new staff induction. Do reach out to your local representative if you would like to know more:

Name	School	Role
<b>Ali Wakefield</b>	St Francis	Year 5 Teacher. wellbeing Lead
<b>Carolyn Mann</b>	St Mary's	Reception Teacher / Wellbeing Lead
<b>Christine Rogers</b>	St Benet's & St Edmund's	HLTA
<b>Gloria Boulton</b>	Sacred Heart Swaffham	Office worker
<b>Heather Buddle</b>	St Augustine's	Reception Teacher / Wellbeing Lead
<b>Izzy Patmore</b>	St Martha's	Year 4 Teacher, ECT
<b>Louis Rebecca</b>	St Mary's and St Peter's	Year 2, Ks1 Lead, Wellbeing Lead
<b>Lynn Harvey</b>	St Thomas More	Safeguarding and Family Engagement Officer
<b>Shane Winters</b>	NDHS / SJB Central	IT Manager / NDHS Wellbeing team
<b>Sharon Stokes</b>	Sacred Heart Peterborough	TA / Pastoral Support



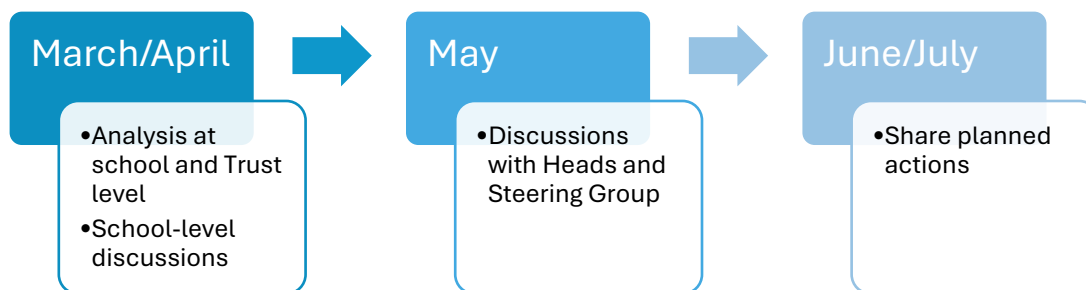
## Staff Wellbeing continued

We recently repeated the Edurio staff survey. We are thankful to everyone for their time completing the survey. We received a similar number of responses to last year – *an excellent response rate* - including lots of valuable feedback and comments.

We wanted to share a glimpse of the results; here's a word cloud of what we all appreciate most.



## Some next steps:



## Managing our Resources

### New finance system now fully implemented

In response to the Trust growth and the need for a more agile system, in January 2025 we have successfully launched a new finance software called Sage Intacct.

Sage Intacct is a cloud-based accounting software used by many academy trusts and other companies in the UK and beyond. The system will provide more automation, better reporting and budget holder monitoring as well as the flexibility to onboard new schools as and when the Trust grows.

Training, implementation as well as the ongoing support is provided by a company called ION. It took over 12 months of hard work from the initial tender phase all the way to the 'go-live' date.

While we are still learning how to use the system up to its potential, we would like to thank all the finance staff across the trust for their resilience, expertise and dedication throughout the process.

# Trust Priorities – Writing

It has been fantastic to hear your feedback about the positive impact you have seen on pupils' learning so far through participation in the Trust Writing Project. So much has been achieved through schools' engagement and purposeful collaboration, including:

- Updated KPI assessment grids are now being used in all our schools. Staff have been positive about these and are finding them useful to inform their planning and assessment.
- Our Trust team has created Writing Progression Handbooks for Year 3 and 4 teachers. Year 3 teachers across our schools have shared samples of writing, which the team has used to create exemplification packs. Year 4 exemplification materials will be developed during Spr 2/ Sum 1.
- In consultation with schools, we have collaborated with VNET to offer schools tailored training pathways to develop practice in Modelling, Spelling, Sentences or Editing or Revising & Publishing.
- Thank you to schools for hosting the termly Trust Writing Moderation sessions for Years 2, 4 & 6. Teachers have appreciated the opportunity to explore common issues together and collaboratively plan the next steps needed to improve pupils' writing.
- In the Autumn term, we held a Year 4 CPD Day in Hubs. Staff found this helpful and practical, with the opportunity to collaborate on their writing planning and to explore using the new Trust documents. A Year 5/6 day will be held this summer: 2nd July – Eastern Hub; 3rd July – Western Hub.

## Trust Priorities - Inclusion

Our Trust-wide focus on inclusion continues:

- Teachers and Teaching Assistants across our schools have completed online training units from Whole School SEND.
- VNET-chaired Primary Professional Learning Networks (PLNs) for 5 subjects have now met for the second time, with a focus on adaptations for SEND.
- VNET-led Inclusive Teaching training has proved a poor fit, and we have therefore switched to a focus on using the [Engagement model](#) with children working below age-related expectations. This Primary-specific training will be in two parts with the first part running in the April twilight slots already shown in school CPD calendars.
- Schools continue to make use of the online Provision Map platform, with most using it or piloting its use for the Assess Plan Do Review cycle.
- We are moving towards all our schools following the Norfolk STEPS approach to behaviour management.



**We would appreciate it if Teachers and Teaching Assistants could spend 10 mins to tell us about the impact of this work, to inform future plans for this multi-year priority.**

Go to: <https://forms.office.com/e/aJ5ACDjThY>

**This survey will close on 28 March 2025.**

**Thank you!**

## Final Thoughts

We welcome your feedback and suggestions on how we can improve our communication with you and support for our schools. For any questions or contributions for the next newsletter please contact us: [secretary@sjbcmat.org.uk](mailto:secretary@sjbcmat.org.uk)

