

MARCH 2024 NEWSLETTER

Introduction

Richard Chapman, CEO



Welcome to the latest edition of our Thrive newsletter, packed with exciting news and updates.

Firstly, a huge welcome to Baginton Fields Academy in Coventry, the newest member of the Thrive family. In this issue, we're also sharing inspiring career stories from our team, wonderful feedback from parents, and updates on our charity fundraising efforts.

I'd also like to give a special mention to the positive feedback received from our trustees after their recent school visits. They were impressed by our leadership, staff, and the wonderful students.

Most importantly, I'm excited to announce the Thrive Conference, taking place on Friday, 3rd May at the CBS Arena in Coventry. It's a key event for us to share ideas, learn, and grow together. I encourage everyone to register as soon as possible. It's going to be an enriching experience you won't want to miss.

Enjoy reading and thank you for your unwavering commitment.

Register for the Thrive Conference



Scan with your
phone camera or visit
conference.thrive.ac



Welcoming Baginton Fields Academy

On March 1st, Baginton Fields, a respected school for special education in Coventry, became part of the Thrive family.

The school stands out for its great support for students from 11 to 18 years old who face various learning challenges. The addition of Baginton Fields to the Trust is a big step forward in our goal to make special education better in the West Midlands and Warwickshire.

Alison Francis, the school's headteacher, along with her fantastic team, have done an excellent job, earning a 'Good' rating from Ofsted. Alison is just as excited as we are about joining forces, especially because of the new growth opportunities for staff and the chance to help improve educational outcomes for students.

Bringing Baginton Fields into Thrive is a perfect match. It strengthens our dedication to special education, allows us to share knowledge, and opens up new opportunities for professional growth. The whole team at Baginton Fields shares our passion for making a real difference in education, and our values align perfectly.

Let's give a warm welcome to Alison and the Baginton Fields team. We're enjoying working together, learning from each other, and continuing to provide exceptional education and support to our students.



Conference 2024: Thriving with Thrive

We're excited that our second Trust annual conference, "Thriving with Thrive," is taking place on Friday, 3rd May at the CBS Arena in Coventry. This special day is an opportunity for staff across our six schools and our valued partners to come together, learn, and connect.

This year's event is shaping up to be unforgettable, with an agenda packed with notable speakers including Professor Steve Peters and Dr Nerina Ramlakhan. It's not just about presentations and workshops, though; the conference is a chance for you to dive into a day filled with learning opportunities, inspiration, and the chance to network with colleagues and partners alike.

Our aim is clear: to create an environment that fosters connections, encourages the exchange of ideas, and helps you form meaningful relationships within our Thrive community.

From thought-provoking discussions to hands-on activities, there's something for everyone. Mark your calendars for 3rd May. We can't wait to see you there and experience the power of "Thriving with Thrive" together.

Register to attend, learn more about the day's workshops and keynote speakers by visiting conference.thrive.ac

Katie Greenwood Head of Therapeutic Services

"I've been with Thrive for six months now, having moved over from the mental health sector last October. My primary focus has been understanding the mental health and wellbeing needs within our school communities. I've been spending time in each school, meeting with staff and students to grasp the unique fabric of each academy. The conversations I've had have been insightful and thought-provoking. It's important to me to learn what makes each school special; what's your identity? what are you proud of? and what are your aims to further develop provision in mental health and wellbeing? Though it's early days, I'm enthusiastic about the collaborative opportunities ahead, both within and between schools.

"In January, I attended the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement (ICSEI) conference, where the theme of staff wellbeing in education was prominent. Discussions revolved around the impact of the work on staff, and the teaching profession. This highlighted the importance of compassion, something I've continued to contemplate. I've been considering what compassion is, why it's essential, and how even small shifts in this area can positively impact how we feel, how we work, and our relationships with learners, families, and colleagues. Studies consistently show that self-compassion makes us happier, healthier, more connected, more resilient, and more successful. Using the analogy of oxygen masks on an aeroplane, it seems we need to prioritise self-compassion before assisting others with theirs. So, in the name of compassion, I am compassionately making a compassionate commitment to myself to be consciously more self-compassionate! In doing so, I am minded of the words of Maya Angelou: 'People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel' ...and that includes how we are towards ourselves."

For more information on compassion, see:
www.compassionatemind.co.uk
www.self-compassion.org



Christina McLaughlin
Assistant Headteacher, Kingsbury Academy

Celebrating thriving careers

We're shining a light on two of our fantastic Thrive Colleagues, Christina McLaughlin and Lara Latham, who have developed their careers within the Trust.

Christina, Assistant Headteacher at Kingsbury School, started with Thrive as a classroom teacher at Calthorpe Academy back in January 2017. Her passion saw her become the specialist subject lead for communication, interaction and literacy at the school in 2020. In 2023, she was successful at interview, and took on a new challenge as an Associate Lead for Autism within the Trust, providing a platform for her to have a wider impact on the quality of lives of children and young people with an autism diagnosis.

When an Assistant Headteacher opportunity came up, Christina knew this was the natural next step to be able to grow and develop professionally. She was successful and became Assistant Headteacher at Kingsbury Academy in September 2023. Leading the Aspire pathway, she's helping to develop and coach her team to be the best they can be, with the ultimate goal of providing better outcomes for pupils.

Speaking of her journey, Christina said: "For me, having the opportunity to develop my own skills as well as share my knowledge and pedagogy with a whole new set of teachers who can provide an environment for pupils to flourish, gives me great job satisfaction.

"The opportunities I've had to progress my career have all come at a point in time where I have wanted a new challenge. It's very clear that Thrive's core values are to foster an environment of growth and development as well as the retention of staff, which I feel is clearly signified through the number of opportunities that are available."



Lara Latham
Assistant Headteacher, Mary Elliot Academy

Lara, Assistant Headteacher at Mary Elliot Academy, began her career as a mainstream primary teacher. Her interest in special needs education was sparked during her university days, despite the lack of direct placement opportunities in SEND schools. Driven by this passion, she sought out visits to several special schools, with Calthorpe Academy making a lasting impression.

Her primary subject focus was mathematics, a discipline she would come to revolutionise at Calthorpe. Lara joined Calthorpe in 2014 as in a Maths Subject Coordinator role, a position that oversaw maths across the entire school.

In 2020, her leadership skills and dedication saw her appointed head of the secondary Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) department. Following maternity leave, and with her success in leading maths and the secondary SLD department, she was appointed Quality of Education Coordinator in 2021 where she was tasked with developing the literacy programme.

Lara's commitment to advancing within the Trust was evident when the Assistant Headteacher role at Mary Elliot Academy became available. Having started her National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL) course in 2023, fully supported by the Headteacher at Calthorpe and the Trust, she was able to seamlessly make the move to Mary Elliot and transfer her skills to this new role.



A Pretty Huge Deal (PhD) at Calthorpe

We are thrilled to share that Gemma Nicholls, Deputy Headteacher at Calthorpe Academy, has secured her PhD, graduating this summer.

Gemma's journey began in 2017 when she embarked on her PhD while serving as Assistant Headteacher at Calthorpe. Balancing her studies with her professional responsibilities, Gemma's dedication has been inspiring. Sponsored by Thrive, she pursued her PhD in Education and Psychology at the University of Warwick's Centre for Research in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, which has a leading reputation for research in addressing the needs of children and adults with intellectual disabilities.

Throughout her PhD, Gemma's role at Calthorpe was instrumental. She oversaw behavioural support and strategic development of the autism provision during a critical period of transformation for the school. At a time when Calthorpe was reshaping its culture and ethos, Gemma's research focused on the prevalence and associated risk factors of behaviours that challenge in a special school setting. Her aim was to draw on her research to develop evidence-based strategies that could be implemented in school, including a Positive Behaviour Support approach.

Gemma's dedication to her PhD was driven by her commitment to supporting the Trust and the unwavering support she received from Thrive. Her research has not only enriched her own knowledge but has also had a profound impact on our school community.

We extend our congratulations to Gemma and express our gratitude for her contribution to Calthorpe Academy and Thrive.



Hitting a High Note for Red Nose Day

Baginton Fields Academy celebrated Red Nose Day with flair, hosting an X Factor-style singing competition that showcased the talents of its students. The event was a success, with students outperforming the leadership team and capturing the hearts of the audience.

The judging panel, composed of the Student Council and supported by the lively cheers of pupils, selected the winner based on the most enthusiastic applause. The competition reached a crescendo when one student's rendition of Take That's "Let It Shine" was crowned the winning performance.

Amid the excitement, the academy has raised over £200 so far, thanks to the generosity of those who participated and purchased red noses. The competition proved to be an uplifting event, bringing together students, families, and staff in a celebration of talent and generosity, all while contributing to a worthy cause.





Changing lives a parent's perspective

"We had the wonderful opportunity to attend the superhero games in London in July. This opens up amazing opportunities for Keira and gives us the opportunity to share with the nation what an amazing little girl she is.

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff at Kingsbury Academy. We were unsure of what life would be like when Keira left mainstream education, but from the moment we walked through the door on our first visit and were met by the lovely pastoral lead, we knew not only would she be ok, she actually may be given the opportunity to thrive. When we came to meet her teacher, Miss Parveen, she addressed Keira directly. The thrill from Miss Parveen when another (very shy) student spoke to Keira was beautiful to see. Keira has continued to be given such respect every day since, and now she receives this amazing praise constantly and it's really helping her to thrive.

"I was incredibly impressed with how many staff were encouraged and offered to undertake the training for her medical needs, this is a massive responsibility but so many staff offered and attended training (6x the amount of staff at her old school), each and every one of them from the PE staff to SLT were amazing, they couldn't do enough to help both myself and Keira through all her medical times - and there have been a lot. This fantastic skill set has meant that

Keira has gone from being admitted every 3-6 months to only needing one admission in the last 24 months. Her HB1AC has also reduced meaning she is less likely to experience life long complications.

"The communication from the school is faultless. For me as a parent with a SEN need myself, the text reminders are a lifesaver. The daily information and regular emails really help us to know how her day has been.

"We love the extra events you host such as fetes in the summer and Christmas. This has helped us to build a parental friendship group of people living similar lives to us caring for a disabled child. I was worried this wouldn't happen due to being a special school and minibuss pick ups etc, but in fact due to the effort and encouragement from the school, only last weekend Keira was able to attend a basketball event with children she knew - we never expected this from her but she smashed it.

"Everyone at Kingsbury is amazing. I cannot mention you all but I would like to thank everyone from the caretaker and reception staff to the head and deputies for helping Keira become the amazing young girl she is. I am so thrilled that she will be remaining within your trust when she moves to secondary school, as I know she will be in the best place possible helping her to thrive- physically, mentally, socially as well as academically.

"Please can you share this message of thanks to everyone, I cannot show you thanks enough - but hopefully this message is a good start."

Carol & Matthew Head
(Keira's parents)





Kingsbury Academy welcomes Coventry's Lord Mayor

This week, Kingsbury Academy hosted the Lord Mayor of Coventry, Councillor Jaswant Singh Birdi, along with the Lady Mayoress, and Sarah Moore, CEO of the Muscular Dystrophy Support Centre. Their visit celebrated the incredible £329.79 raised by our students through their Christmas sale project hosted at Tesco, Coventry Arena.

Kingsbury students crafted and sold a variety of festive items, showcasing not only their creativity and entrepreneurial spirit but also their desire to make a meaningful difference outside the school walls.

The Lord Mayor and Sarah Moore expressed deep admiration for students' initiative and the impact of their contribution to the charity. This effort aligns perfectly with Thrive's mission of fostering community engagement and preparing our learners for meaningful futures.

Bebeanna Woo, Thrive's Vocational Inclusion Manager, extended her thanks to Tesco for supporting our students' venture, highlighting the broader goal of integrating young people with special needs into the workforce. This initiative underscores Thrive's commitment to collaboration with businesses and organisations, aiming to enhance opportunities for our learners across the West Midlands and Warwickshire.

Corley Academy unveils new music room

Corley Academy has recently unveiled a new music room and studio. Creatively using funds received from COVID-19 testing, the school invested in transforming old, unused staff accommodation into a functional music space.

Initially lacking a music department and teacher, the school was inspired to establish one by a student's interest in playing the bass guitar. This led to the hiring of a temporary music teacher and eventually culminated in the creation of a comprehensive music programme.

The academy now boasts a music house complete with a studio and performance space, under the guidance of a full-time music teacher. This allows music to be offered as an exam subject, accommodating students with a keen interest or talent in the field.

Mark White, Headteacher at Corley Academy, said: "Adapting to our students' needs and interests is at the core of what we do. The music room project, originating from one student's passion for bass guitar, has evolved into a broad programme that offers all students the opportunity to engage with music, whether casually or more seriously. It's about providing avenues for our students to excel in their own unique ways."

Thrive has further supported the new space by funding air conditioning and heating in the music room.

