

DECEMBER 2025 NEWSLETTER

From **Richard Chapman, CEO**

As we come to the end of the autumn term, I want to thank colleagues across Thrive for the continued care, commitment and professionalism you bring to your work. This has been a busy term for the Trust, and I am grateful for the way people have supported one another through a period of change.

As the Trust has continued to grow, we have taken the opportunity to formalise aspects of our senior leadership structure. **Craig Bennett** and **Dominic Broad** now both hold the title of Deputy CEO. Dominic joined Thrive as Director of Education, and the change in title reflects how his responsibilities have developed since joining the Trust. Craig and Dominic will continue to work closely with me as we lead Thrive together.

This term we also welcomed **Kitts Green Academy** into the Thrive family. Alongside this, we have been pleased to welcome new colleagues who have now completed their first full term with us. I hope you are already seeing some of the benefits of being part of Thrive and the shared support, values and ambition that come with it.

We are also marking an important transition at **Baginton Fields Academy**. **Alison Francis** retires from her headship at the end of this term, and I would like to thank her for the thoughtful, inclusive leadership she has given to the school community over many years. We wish Alison every happiness in her retirement. At the same time, I am delighted to welcome **Vikki King**, who will be joining Baginton Fields as Headteacher in January.

There is much to look forward to in the new year, including the annual conference in May and this year we have secured some external sponsorship.

Obviously, we're not a commercial organisation, but sponsorship does help us to minimise the costs of getting everyone together. If you know of any business that may be able to come on board as a sponsor, please do get in contact with me.



You will be able to read more about the Trust's progress and direction this year in our report and accounts, which will be published shortly.

Thank you again for everything you have contributed this term.

I wish you a restful break and Merry Christmas - and look forward to what we will achieve together in the year ahead.

In This Issue

This issue brings together a wide range of stories from across Thrive, offering a snapshot of learning, enrichment and partnership in action.

From careers and leadership opportunities to wellbeing, sustainability and community engagement, the pages that follow highlight how our schools continue to create meaningful, inclusive experiences for learners.

There have been so many fantastic Christmas activities across the Trust, that there isn't space to include everything. So, thank you to everyone who has given our students such a fun festive time.



Isu's Journey from Calthorpe Pupil to Award-Winning Employment

We are proud to share the success of **Isu**, a former learner at **Calthorpe Academy**, whose journey shows the impact of the Trust's approach to preparing young people for adulthood.

Isu was supported through Calthorpe's careers model, gaining valuable experience with a range of partners including the **NHS** and **Tesco**. These opportunities helped him build confidence, develop workplace skills and understand the expectations of employment.

Isu secured paid employment with **Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust** and in October 2025, was recognised as the winner of the **Rising Star Award** at the Trust's Spirit Awards - a testament to his determination, resilience and positive contribution in the workplace.

This achievement reflects both Isu's hard work and the sustained support he received along the way. It is a powerful example of what can be achieved when meaningful partnerships and personalised support come together.

We congratulate Isu on this outstanding accomplishment and wish him continued success in his career.

Corley Inspires Through Storytelling

Corley Academy welcomed Year 1 pupils from **Keresley Grange Primary Academy** as part of its ongoing partnership and Reading and Leaders initiative - a project designed to bring younger and older learners together through the enjoyment of reading.

Corley's cosy library - stocked through generous wish list donations and funds raised from its book fair - provided the setting as older students read aloud, asked questions and shared conversations about favourite characters and new discoveries. Reading together plays an important role in building confidence, empathy and strong connections across our school community.

The day continued with a walk around Corley's grounds, where pupils demonstrated the school's core value of inclusion - engaging with Keresley students and being encouraging mentors.

Both schools are already looking forward to their next Reading and Leaders trip - a visit to Keresley Grange next half term, where reading will once again take centre stage.



Baginton's Got Talent for Children in Need

Baginton Fields Academy came together for a joyful Baginton's Got Talent event in support of **Children in Need**, with pupils firmly at the heart of both the performances and the judging.

Learners took to the stage to perform for the whole school, sharing a wide range of talents and clearly enjoying the chance to perform in front of their peers. A pupil judging panel, styled very much in the spirit of Simon Cowell and friends, added humour and excitement, with confident commentary and enthusiastic applause helping to build the atmosphere.

The performances were strong and pupils in the audience were fully engaged throughout, offering cheers and encouragement. The event built to a memorable finale from the Senior Leadership Team, who took to the stage with a high-energy K-pop performance.

This was followed by a much-anticipated moment: the chance for pupils to "pie" Headteacher **Alison Francis**. Dressed for the occasion in wellingtons and standing in a paddling pool, Alison took the jelly-and-custard pies in good humour. Pupils showed impressive accuracy as the audience erupted in laughter, cheers and playful catcalls.

As well as raising money for a great cause, the event was a great example of community building at Baginton. Pupils spoke positively about being trusted to judge, perform and take part, and the shared excitement created a memorable experience for everyone involved. It was also a fun moment in Alison's final term at the school - and likely the last opportunity for pupils to pie a teacher at Baginton.



Laying the Foundations for Future Careers

Kitts Green Academy hosted its first Constructibility Day, welcoming **Marie Wilkes**, Community Manager at **Willmott Dixon**, to work with Year 8 and 9 pupils. The day opened students' eyes to the breadth of careers within construction.

Using real examples from the **Birmingham Commonwealth Games**, pupils explored how major structures are planned and delivered before putting their own ideas to the test. Working in teams, they designed and built structures using straws and tape - a challenge that demanded teamwork, problem-solving and careful thinking. The 'no sabotage' rule was impressively well-followed... right up until it was time to dismantle the towers at the end.

Marie commented on how engaged the students were, noting that there were already several potential future constructors in the room.

Opportunities like this reflect the trust's commitment to giving learners real-world insight and the confidence to see themselves in a wide range of future careers.

Alongside this work, all Year 9 pupils have taken part in one-to-one careers interviews with an external adviser from the **Birmingham Careers Service**, supporting them to explore Post-16 options and plan next steps.



Careers Week Brings Learning to Life

Kingsbury Academy's annual Careers Week gave students the chance to step into a wide range of working environments - from witty salespeople at **Audi** in Halesowen, to exploring life on a farm, and welcoming police and paramedic teams into school to talk through their roles and equipment.

Learners travelled to **Spencer's Retreat Farm** for a muddy but memorable morning with pigs, sheep and a particularly curious llama, happily settled among the goats. Students fed the animals, learned about their care and diets, and even helped with cleaning. The hands-on aspect of the visit offered a valuable tactile experience, particularly for students with sensory needs.

Back in the community, the school's **Tesco** stars pulled on their uniforms for a festive carol-singing shift, spreading Christmas cheer to shoppers. This forms part of Kingsbury's ongoing partnership with **Coventry Arena Tesco**, whose continued support gives students valuable, real-world workplace experience.

Careers Week is a brilliant opportunity for learners to explore what the world of work can look like, and it reflects the commitment of staff who invest time in building local partnerships and experiences that help young people picture what might be possible for them in the future.

Corley's Four-Legged Wellbeing Champion

Molly, a four-year-old Cavapoo, has become a much-loved part of life at **Corley Academy**. Spending one day a week in school, Molly supports pupils at playtime and during the day - and her wagging tail is proof that she enjoys it just as much as the students and staff do.

Often found in the library, Molly proved so popular with pupils that she was offered extra "shifts". She takes her role seriously, guarding the yellow box filled with students' names which decides who gets to spend time with her.

She comes into school with her mum, **Caroline Dyson**, Corley's counsellor and hypnotherapist, and plays a key role in supporting wellbeing across the school.

Molly works alongside Caroline during group and individual interventions, helping students manage their emotions, build confidence, develop social skills and strengthen communication. Molly provides gentle, reassuring support when it's needed most.

She is particularly loved by Year 7 pupils and is a natural at helping new cohorts settle in each September. Molly is just one of the furry friends across the Thrive family - and who knows, a future newsletter animal round-up may be on the cards.





Celebrating Rights Respecting Schools Success Across the Trust

We are pleased to congratulate **The Warwickshire Academy** on being awarded the **UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Silver Award**, following a successful assessment just before the summer.

This award recognises the school's ongoing commitment to placing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child at the heart of school life, culture and practice.

During the assessment, the UNICEF representative commended The Warwickshire Academy for the enthusiasm and dedication shown by staff and pupils alike. Pupils spoke confidently about their rights and responsibilities and were able to describe how these are reflected in everyday life at the academy - from classroom behaviour to decision-making and mutual respect.

This achievement adds to the growing body of Rights Respecting success across Thrive. **Calthorpe Academy** holds the Gold Rights Respecting School Award, the highest level of accreditation, reflecting deeply embedded rights-based practice. **Baginton Fields Academy** and **Kingsbury Academy** have also achieved Silver Rights Aware status, demonstrating strong progress in embedding children's rights throughout school life.

Being a Rights Respecting School supports inclusion, wellbeing and pupil voice and is a testament to the hard work of staff, learners and the wider school communities. We congratulate The Warwickshire Academy on this milestone and look forward to seeing its continued development on the Rights Respecting journey.

Macmillan Coffee Morning at Mary Elliot

Mary Elliot Academy hosted its annual **Macmillan Coffee Morning**, bringing together parents, carers, staff and students for a wonderful morning of coffee, cake and conversation - all in support of an incredible cause.

Guests were welcomed into school to enjoy a catch-up over a hot drink and a selection of cakes. Students from 6F1 did a brilliant job running the event, serving refreshments with enthusiasm and a smile.

They enjoyed it so much that they've already volunteered to host next year's coffee morning. Alongside the cake sale, there were fun games to take part in - including Guess the Name of the Bear and Guess the Number of Teacups - with some fantastic prizes up for grabs.

Thanks to everyone's kindness and generosity, the morning raised an impressive £192.86 for **Macmillan Cancer Support**. It was a fantastic event and a great reminder of the power of community spirit at Mary Elliot.





Calthorpe Connects Classrooms Across Continents

Calthorpe Academy was delighted to host **Ruby Hau** and **Tracy Luk**, senior leaders from **Chan Pak Keung Tsing Yi School** in Hong Kong, part of the Po Leung Kuk Trust. The visit provided a fantastic opportunity to share ideas and experiences across international borders.

Together, leaders explored approaches to curriculum design, teaching and learning, and held in-depth discussions around the use of the Engagement Model - reflecting on how it supports meaningful learning experiences for every pupil.

The exchange sparked valuable professional dialogue, encouraging fresh perspectives on inclusive education.

We believe that improvement thrives through openness and collaboration, and visits like this highlight the impact of connecting across schools and systems to strengthen practice for the benefit of all learners.

A huge thank you to Ruby and Tracy for their time and insights - we look forward to continuing to build these international links in the future.

Oakland School: A Growing Provision

Since opening earlier this year, **Oakland School** in Yardley has become an established part of **Calthorpe's** SEND provision, supporting autistic learners in a purpose-designed satellite setting.

Pupils arrived in February 2025, and the school now supports 48 learners across six classes in Key Stages 2 and 3. Students have settled well into an environment designed to support communication, emotional regulation and independence, following Calthorpe's Foundation for Life curriculum.

Earlier this year, Oakland welcomed **Helen Ellis**, Director for SEND and Inclusion at **Birmingham City Council**, to see the provision in practice and meet the team. During her visit, she praised the careful design of the setting and the way it supports learners to feel safe, supported and ready to learn.

The school benefits from specialist classrooms, shared learning spaces, and outdoor areas that support regulation and independence, alongside opportunities for community engagement and the development of everyday life skills.

Oakland's staff use a range of evidence-based approaches, including PECS, Makaton and Intensive Interaction, and remain closely connected to the wider Calthorpe community.



Mayor of Nuneaton and Bedworth Visits **The Warwickshire Academy**

The Warwickshire Academy was pleased to welcome the Mayor of Nuneaton and Bedworth, **Councillor Bhim Saru**, for a visit with pupils this term.

During the visit, the Mayor spoke to pupils about what a mayor does and why the role is important. He also shared something of his own background, including his time serving in the **British Army** as a Gurkha, helping pupils understand how different life experiences can lead to roles in public service.

Pupils then took part in a lively question-and-answer session, asking thoughtful and curious questions. One particularly enterprising pupil wanted to know how much the mayoral chain of office was worth, prompting a good-humoured and informative response from the Mayor.

The Mayor also toured the school alongside pupils, taking time to see lessons in action and talk with students about their learning. He told pupils that one of the things he most enjoys about being Mayor is visiting schools and organisations like The Warwickshire Academy and seeing the positive work taking place across the borough.

The visit was an engaging and memorable experience for pupils, giving them a real insight into civic leadership and the role individuals can play in their local community.



Moonbeam Theatre Lights Up **Baginton Fields**

Students following the Discoverers and Explorers pathways at **Baginton Fields Academy** enjoyed a mesmerising performance from **Moonbeam Theatre** for the second year running.

Moonbeam Theatre creates immersive, multisensory productions designed for young people with complex additional needs. This year's show, *Exploshine*, transformed the school hall into a world of shimmering lights, gentle sounds and interactive props.

Each student was welcomed individually and encouraged to explore and engage in their own way.

The experience provided an inclusive opportunity to enjoy the arts in a setting that recognised and celebrated every learner's sensory needs.

Staff were delighted to see even the hardest-to-reach students fully engaged and captivated throughout the performance.



Kingsbury Learners Lead the Way

Learners at **Kingsbury Academy** have been busy exercising their right to vote as part of this year's Junior Leadership Team elections.

As **Rights Respecting** learners, they took time to consider the key qualities needed for effective leadership before casting their votes, following instructions carefully, and demonstrating a strong sense of responsibility.

Staff were impressed by how thoughtfully pupils engaged with the process, showing confidence in making their own choices and understanding the importance of having their voices heard.

It was a fantastic example of democracy in action and of learners contributing meaningfully to decisions that shape school life.

The newly elected Junior Leadership Team will soon hold their first meeting, where they'll begin planning exciting upcoming events and the school's fundraising activities.

Physical Wellbeing sessions at Mary Elliot

This term, students on the Endeavour (ASC) Pathway at **Mary Elliot Academy** have been taking part in a series of physical well-being sessions designed to support confidence, movement and sensory development. The programme combines sensory-based workouts with swimming activities, all tailored to meet a wide range of needs and abilities.

The sessions provide pupils with opportunities to follow structured, enjoyable routines that promote core motor skills such as balance, coordination, strength and flexibility. They also encourage cooperation and turn-taking through group games and partner tasks, while imitation skills are strengthened as pupils follow modelled actions both in the pool and in the classroom.

A strong focus on sensory integration underpins the offer. Each activity is planned to stimulate tactile, proprioceptive and vestibular systems, helping students to regulate, engage and feel secure within their surroundings.

Delivered in an inclusive and supportive environment, the sessions enable pupils to explore movement, build social connections and develop lifelong physical literacy. Staff at Mary Elliot have seen growing confidence, increasing independence and real enjoyment from all involved.





Sustainability in Practice Across Thrive

Over the autumn term, schools across Thrive have continued to strengthen their approach to sustainability by embedding environmental awareness into everyday practice. This work supports not only our responsibility to the environment, but also our wider priorities around wellbeing, community engagement and preparing learners for life beyond school.

At **Calthorpe Academy**, outdoor learning continues to be an important part of the curriculum across all pathways. Despite being an inner-city school, Calthorpe has developed and maintained valued green spaces that are used purposefully to support learning and wellbeing. Activities linked to National Tree Week reinforced learners' understanding of nature and environmental care, while providing meaningful, practical learning experiences.

Calthorpe also took part in Switch-Off Fortnight, encouraging staff and learners to reflect on energy use and everyday habits. Learners were supported to think about how small, realistic changes can reduce energy consumption, alongside participation in recycling initiatives that promote reuse and environmental responsibility.

For learners on the Engagement for Life pathway, sorting textiles for reuse and recycling has provided hands-on opportunities to develop practical sustainability skills.

At **Kingsbury Academy**, sustainability work has had a strong community focus. Pupils have been involved in the Crisp Packet Project, collecting and preparing used crisp packets to be turned into emergency thermal blankets for people experiencing homelessness. The project has helped pupils understand recycling in a practical way, while also reinforcing values of teamwork, empathy and social responsibility.

Kingsbury's Junior Leadership Team has also contributed to the school's energy-saving work by helping to shape a shared approach to reducing consumption.

Across the Trust, these examples reflect a consistent approach to sustainability: purposeful, inclusive and embedded in daily school life. This is an area we will continue to develop, ensuring environmental responsibility supports learning, wellbeing and our wider responsibilities as a Trust.

