

## MARCH 2026 NEWSLETTER

### From **Richard Chapman, CEO**

As we come to the end of the spring term, it feels as though the weeks have passed very quickly. That may be because we have packed so much into them, although in truth, last year's spring term was even shorter.

I would like to warmly welcome everyone who has joined Thrive this term. We are very pleased to have you with us.

**World Book Day** was a particular highlight across the trust, with schools throwing themselves into the celebrations wholeheartedly. From granny-themed fancy dress at **Mary Elliot Academy** to storytelling sessions and parent workshops, it was a joyful reminder of the power of reading and the vibrant communities we have built in each of our schools.

We are also delighted to share that two of our schools, **Corley Academy** and Mary Elliot Academy, have received **Ofsted** visits this term. Corley Academy received a very positive report, with Strong standard ratings in behaviour and attendance, inclusion, and personal development and wellbeing. Expected standards were achieved across the remaining areas. At Mary Elliot, inspectors left feeling positive and we are looking forward to sharing that report once published. **Rebecca Davies**, Headteacher at Mary Elliot, reflected that she was particularly proud that inspectors could clearly see the ethos of the trust reflected in the school, feeling it was a real recognition of everything staff and pupils have worked so hard to achieve. I could not agree more, and I want to say a huge well done to everyone at both schools. These outcomes are thoroughly deserved.

We are also looking ahead to our annual conference and the opportunity to come together once again as a Trust. We are delighted that

**Fatima Whitbread** will be joining us as keynote speaker. This is also the first year that the conference has been supported by sponsors, helping us to deliver an inspiring event without the full cost falling to the Trust. My sincere thanks go to **The Edwin Group, The Busy Group, Magmamaths, Be Ready, and Bellrock** for their support.



While I am thanking those who contribute to the life of the Trust, I would also like to recognise **Tesco, the National Trust, Birmingham City Council, Willmott Dixon, West Midlands Police, HS2, Leonardo Hotels, EVTEC, Stellantis** and the **Herbert Art Gallery**. Their support has helped our learners explore careers and gain insight into the world beyond education.

It is wonderful to see construction now under way at **Baginton Fields Academy**, with work beginning on the new buildings.

As we head into the Easter break, I hope every member of our Thrive family takes time to rest, recharge and reflect on everything they have given this term.

Thank you, as always, for everything you do.



“At **Corley Academy**, every pupil belongs, is valued and heard”

**Corley Academy** has received a glowing **Ofsted** report following an inspection in January 2026, with inspectors awarding Strong standard ratings in three key areas: behaviour & attendance, inclusion, and personal development & wellbeing.

It is the school’s first inspection since joining **Thrive Education Partnership** in 2022, and the results reflect the sustained and constant progress made in the years since. Attendance has risen from below to above national averages for pupils with SEND over the past three years, a remarkable achievement that speaks to the school’s proactive and deeply personal approach to supporting every pupil.

Inspectors were particularly struck by the care and creativity with which Corley adapts the environment for its pupils. From weighted cutlery and partitioned plates to flexible sensory spaces, these help students feel secure, access learning and develop independence. The school’s expertise in supporting autistic learners was formally recognised as a significant strength, with inspectors noting that Corley actively shares its practice across Thrive and with the wider sector.

Lead inspector **Gareth Morgan** said: “To be a pupil at Corley Academy is to know you belong, are valued and heard.”

## The journey continues at **Mary Elliot Academy**

**Mary Elliot Academy** has been on a remarkable journey since joining **Thrive Education Partnership**, and this term that journey reached an important milestone.

**Ofsted** visited the school in February, and inspectors left feeling genuinely positive about everything they saw.

While the report is still pending publication, Headteacher **Rebecca Davies** was particularly proud of one piece of feedback that stood out:

“One of the things I was really proud of was that inspectors could clearly see the ethos of the trust reflected in who we are as a school. That felt like a real recognition of everything our staff and pupils have worked so hard to achieve.”

We look forward to sharing the full report in due course.



## An exciting new chapter for Baginton Fields Academy

**Baginton Fields Academy** is on the cusp of a significant and exciting period of development.

An £8.5 million expansion project is now underway, combining a new build, a full refurbishment of the existing school building, and the reprovision of the hydrotherapy pool. In the past week diggers have arrived on site and construction has commenced.

The new build will bring much-needed additional capacity to a local SEND system that is under real pressure, while the refurbishment will modernise classrooms and create a fresher, more contemporary learning environment for pupils and staff.

Particularly significant is the inclusion of hoists throughout the new build, ensuring that pupils with complex physical needs can be supported safely and with dignity, removing the demands of manual handling and making a real difference to the day-to-day experience of both pupils and the staff who care for them.

The hydrotherapy pool, a vital resource for pupils with profound and complex needs, will also be fully modernised and brought up to date, ensuring it remains a first-class facility for the young people who rely on it most.



## A year of firsts at The Warwickshire Academy

For the first time in **The Warwickshire Academy's** history, a Year 11 cohort is sitting GCSEs and a range of qualifications.

Many of those pupils have been with the school since Year 7, and watching them reach this moment after a five-year journey together is something the whole community is proud of. As Headteacher **Paul Hostead**, puts it, the goal has never been to hit a percentage or a target. "All of our young people will achieve at the level that's best for them. What we want is for every young person to achieve the very best they can, for them, not for us."

One of those young people is **Braydon**, a Year 11 pupil sitting maths, English, science, computing and two sports qualifications. He is nervous about exams but clear-eyed about what comes next: a plumbing apprenticeship, inspired by working alongside his uncle last summer. Asked why he likes school, his answer was simple: "Just coming in and getting help from all the teachers and doing the lessons. All the staff like to spend time with you."

And there is more to look forward to. From September, the school will open a brand new Post-16 centre, initially supporting up to eight students and growing to sixteen the following year. It is, as Paul says, just the latest chapter in a school that has never stood still.



## Kitts Green Academy expands to Key Stage Four

From September 2026, **Kitts Green Academy** will extend its provision to include Key Stage Four, welcoming Year 10 pupils for the first time.

The expansion has been agreed with the local authority and marks a significant milestone in the school's development as part of **Thrive Education Partnership**.

The move means that pupils who have thrived at Kitts Green will no longer need to move on at the end of Year 9, with the school able to support their continued progress and preparation for adulthood into Key Stage Four.

In agreeing to the expansion, the local authority confirmed that the school will take Year 10 pupils only to begin with, ensuring the transition is managed carefully and that the high quality of provision Kitts Green is known for is maintained.

It is an exciting next chapter for a school that has come a long way in a short time, and a real vote of confidence in everything the team has built.

## Young people's voices shape the Local Offer

**Calthorpe Academy** was pleased to welcome **Lakhvir Sahota**, Participation and Co-Production Officer from the Children and Families Directorate at **Birmingham City Council**, for a session that put students' voices at the heart of something that really matters: making the Local Offer website work better for everyone who needs it.

During the session, pupils spoke openly and confidently about how websites could be more accessible, calling for more symbols, pictures and voice support, simpler video guides, clearer navigation and more interactive content. Their feedback was direct, thoughtful and rooted in real experience. One young person summed it up perfectly: "If you can't use it, why have it?"

Lakhvir was full of praise for both the school and its pupils: "I was super impressed with all the really good work that is happening at Calthorpe. Please pass on my thanks to the young people who shared their thoughts and experiences."

The feedback gathered will now be used to improve the accessibility of the Local Offer so that it is easier for children, young people and families to understand and use. We are incredibly proud of Calthorpe learners for engaging so positively and for helping to shape change that will benefit young people far beyond our school community.





## Real-world skills at Tesco Express

Finding meaningful work experience for pupils with complex needs is no small task. **Mary Elliot Academy** has been writing to local employers for years, navigating insurance requirements and the pressures facing businesses, often with limited success. So when a governor who manages a local **Tesco Express** offered to take students on a regular placement, it was an opportunity the school seized with both hands.

Students are rotating through the store on weekly Monday placements, building skills and confidence in a real working environment close to home. Staff had planned to ease pupils in gently but the students had other ideas. On day one, one pupil headed straight to the checkout, greeted customers, asked for their club cards and scanned every item without hesitation. His fellow pupils were equally impressive, with another stepping up when the till prompted for age verification and calmly confirming that yes, the customer could indeed have their beer.

For many of these pupils, a busy supermarket is an unfamiliar and overwhelming environment. The placement is not just about work skills; it is about confidence, independence and the chance to be part of the community in a way that many of our learners rarely get to experience. Staff were, in the words of Headteacher **Rebecca Davies**, simply blown away.

The school hopes to build on this success by developing a profile of what its learners can do, making it easier to approach local employers with something concrete to offer. Because for Mary Elliot pupils, the opportunity to build skills and relationships is what opens doors for the future.

## Inspiring connections at Kingsbury Academy

**Kingsbury Academy** has been quietly establishing itself as a destination for schools seeking to learn from exceptional specialist practice. This term, colleagues from across the region and beyond have visited the school for learning walks, dialogue, and shared reflection, and the feedback has been remarkable.

Visitors have praised the calm, purposeful environment, the confidence and happiness of pupils, and the deeply considered approach to behaviour, communication and learning. One visiting headteacher noted that the relationships between staff and students meant behaviour was handled in a way that many mainstream schools could learn from. Another described Kingsbury as a very special place, leaving with a wealth of ideas to develop their own practice.

Beyond individual visits, Kingsbury's partnership with **NHS Coventry** and **Warwickshire Speech and Language Therapy Service** has seen the school's Universal Communication Expectations shared as exemplary practice with schools across Coventry. It is a genuine example of what it looks like when a school leads with generosity, openness and confidence in what it does.





## Innovation in action - AV1 at Corley Academy

**Corley Academy** has been pioneering the use of AV1 telepresence robots to ensure that pupils who cannot be in school in person are never truly absent from it.

The robots allow pupils to join lessons, take part in school life and stay connected with their teachers and peers from wherever they are, whether that is at home, in hospital or managing a period of reduced attendance. Crucially, the technology puts control firmly in the hands of the pupil. They can see the classroom, follow the lesson and signal when they want to contribute, all without a camera pointing back at them or school entering their personal space at home.

For autistic learners in particular, that sense of control and clear boundaries makes all the difference. At Corley, AV1 has opened doors for pupils whose anxiety or medical needs might otherwise have left them isolated, giving them a way to remain part of their school community on their own terms.

It is a thoughtful, pupil-centred approach to one of education's biggest challenges, and another example of Corley Academy's commitment to finding creative solutions that put every learner first.

## Careers come to life at Baginton Fields Academy

**Baginton Fields Academy** brought careers education to life this term with two imaginative and hands-on events that gave pupils the chance to explore the world of work.

The first, an interactive session called What is the Job?, saw pupils exploring a selection of objects of reference, from props to dressing-up items, and using them to identify the job roles they belonged to. It was a brilliantly simple idea that sparked curiosity and conversation, with pupils trying on different roles, quite literally, as they worked out the connections.

Later in the week, a careers-themed treasure hunt took pupils on a journey around school, using key book titles as clues to explore different jobs and the skills they require. The hunt encouraged pupils to think about the everyday skills that underpin working life and to recognise those skills in themselves.

Running through both activities was something particularly special: Key Stage 5 pupils supported their younger classmates throughout, acting as guides, encouragers and role models.

Together, the two events reflect Baginton Fields' thoughtful and creative approach to preparing every pupil for the future, whatever that future holds.



## The Warwickshire Academy attends the Skills Show

Pupils from **The Warwickshire Academy** in Years 9, 10 and 11 had the fantastic opportunity to attend the first ever **Warwickshire Skills Show** this term, a dedicated careers event for young people aged 11 to 18 organised by **Warwickshire County Council's Skills Hub**.

TWA pupils were among over 1,500 young people from across the county who came together to meet more than 80 local employers, get hands-on experience and start exploring the range of industries, roles and routes into employment available to them. Throughout the day, learners engaged directly with employers, building confidence and practising positive interactions in a supportive environment.

A dedicated SEND hour made the event particularly accessible for our pupils, with quieter conditions and additional support on hand from the Skills Hub team to help young people connect with employers at their own pace and in a way that worked for them.

For students, days like this are invaluable. Meeting employers face to face helps break down barriers, broaden aspirations and open eyes to the opportunities that lie ahead.



## Putting down roots with the National Trust

**Kitts Green Academy** has been building something special with the **National Trust** this term, quite literally. Working in partnership, pupils have been taking part in a tree planting project in Stechford, getting their hands in the soil and playing an active role in caring for their local green space.

For many of the boys at Kitts Green, who live and learn in an urban environment with little access to green space, the opportunity to get outdoors and connect with nature is meaningful.

The project began with a competition, and while Kitts Green did not take the top prize, their entry was highly commended - a proud result given how few SEMH schools took part. The recognition was a testament to the effort and enthusiasm the pupils brought to the challenge.

The work continues, with pupils now tending to trees and planting bulbs, including some lovely new growth at the front of school. For a school that moved from a large green site to a much more urban setting, every bit of nature matters.



## The Kingsbury Academy Garden Project

**Kingsbury Academy** is developing an exciting new outdoor learning environment, a sensory-rich garden space designed to support pupils' communication, emotional regulation and wellbeing.

The project is being led in partnership with the **PTFA** and the **Chair of the Local Governing Body**, whose fundraising efforts have already secured just under a third of the total required.

**Kingsbury Garden** will offer pupils meaningful opportunities for sensory exploration, shared activities that support communication and joint attention, and calming spaces where they can regulate and recharge.

It is a thoughtful investment in the whole child, and one the whole school community is behind.

Fundraising is ongoing and the school would welcome any support. Stay tuned for updates as the project takes shape.

## Levi Could Be **Kitts Green Academy's** New Top Dog

**Kitts Green Academy** may soon have a new four-legged member of staff in school.

**Levi**, the black labrador belonging to **Bella Fleetwood**, is now nearly a year old and in the final stages of his therapy dog training with **Pets As Therapy Dogs**. He has just one assessment left to pass.

Pupils are already excited about the prospect of Levi spending time in school, and it is easy to see why. Therapy dogs can bring a calm presence to the school day, helping children feel settled, supported and ready to engage.

For some pupils, that kind of support can make a real difference to confidence, emotional regulation and wellbeing.

Watch this space for the official announcement, which we are reliably informed may arrive on a very significant day in the school calendar this August - GCSE results day.

