

# Wellspring Newsletter

September 2019

## Mark Wilson's Message

Mark Wilson, CEO



WELLSPRING  
ACADEMY TRUST

We Make A Difference



**My thanks for the contribution that you have made and continue to make to our brilliant community. The last school year was another very successful year for us.**

In it, we opened four new schools. We welcomed six more Academies into our community. We took decisive action to address our financial effectiveness for the long term and had eight Ofsted inspections in the period since January.

**All eight Ofsted inspections returned endorsements of the effectiveness of leadership and management and of the Trust's role in supporting that.**

We have now undergone thirteen Ofsted inspections in total, with thirteen endorsements of the effectiveness of leadership and management, twelve Good or Outstanding overall grades and just one overall Requires Improvement judgement. We have taken three Academies from Inadequate to Good in the period and we look forward positively to further inspections in the coming months.

These statistics are an able demonstration of the effectiveness of our community overall. Your individual contribution every day in your setting is crucial to its success every day and to our communities' success every day.

These quick headlines (because there are many, many more successes that I could list) provide a basis for our confidence in the quality of our organisation and in our ability to look forward with great optimism towards this new school year and towards what is ultimately achievable for us all, individually, in your school, and across our entire community.

**Please do take the time to read some of the brilliant stories from around our exceptional community.**

**Your contribution in your setting is crucial to its success and to our communities' success, every day.**

# Directors of Learning

By Chris Jessup and Dave Whitaker, Directors of Learning



**We are incredibly proud and excited to have been appointed as Wellspring's Directors of Learning. Our role is to support leaders in the pursuit of their vision for schools, secure excellent outcomes for pupils and develop the wide range of talent that exists throughout our school communities.**

Above all, it is to celebrate, promote and encourage the 'everyday magic' that occurs in our diverse settings and demonstrate that our values and ethos make us individually great and collectively exceptional.

The role is designed to provide a link between schools, the Executive Team and the Trust Board. We understand that the best way to support and encourage colleagues is to be in schools - listening, talking and learning. That is a very clear commitment to the wider system.

**There are five main overarching areas that make up the role - System Influence, Impact and Value, Leadership Development, Academy Development and Quality Assurance.**

Collaboration between colleagues and the varied communities that make up Wellspring will be a feature of the roles. We have exciting and innovative plans for Centres of Excellence, for Expert Practitioners and for Leadership modules that will be part of an ongoing professional entitlement that will add value to the wider system as a whole.

We are committed to embedding our assurance frameworks and we will be at the heart of these self-improving systems throughout the year. We will also play our part in developing new relationships and deepening existing ones with the wider local, regional and national picture - being the 'outward face' of the Trust in dialogue with external partners, like-minded colleagues and statutory regulators.

We have taken up the post at an incredibly exciting time for the Trust. We are growing in terms of schools and also in reputation. We have exciting plans for our digital presence, to encourage innovation in curriculum design, to build capacity with leaders at all levels and to act as a voice of social responsibility within the sector.

The values, attitudes and dispositions that attracted us to work for the Trust in the first instance are the ones that we daily see in our schools, our Support Centre, our governors, our staff and - above all - our pupils. We are constantly reminded what a privilege it is to be a part of this wider movement and are determined to ensure that the role of Director of Learning will strengthen Wellspring as a Trust that is truly determined to make a difference.

# Springwell Leeds South Residential 24th-26th June

By Ann-Marie Walker, Associate Principal



**'Yes that is right – a residential' I explained to colleagues. To be met with 'for SEMH pupils?! Are you sure about this' and 'you must be mad'. For a split second I doubted myself... then pulled myself together. I have seen year on year success on residential trips, all in SEMH settings.**

**Our pupils often have had no experience of a family holiday so this was our remit to recreate a family holiday and what better place than Flamingo Land. Roller coasters, a zoo, restaurants, arcades and cabaret.**

The next job was to get staff to trust me that this would be a fun, safe, rewarding and positive bonding experience. Luckily, my staff team got on board and on Monday 24th June 4 adults and 7 children set off for their caravan holiday.

Despite lots of initial anxieties, the pupils soon settled in. Two of the boys (both 12 years old) had never spent a night away from their parents before and did amazingly well.



Night one saw half the boys tucked up in bed after a hot chocolate by 9.45pm. (For those who have ever done a residential you will know this is good work!).

**And so we start planning for next year! I am not crazy, it really does work! I hope I can inspire other schools to take the plunge.**



**Two of the boys (both 12 years old) had never spent a night away from their parents before and did amazingly well.**

# Teaching Leaders

By Amy Brook, Assistant Principal, Victoria Primary

**At the end of August, I was fortunate enough to be one of 500 colleagues from across the country beginning my two-year leadership learning journey.**



As I got in my car, ready to make the two and a half hour drive down to Warwick University, I had absolutely no idea what to expect and my nerves were starting to get the better of me. However, as I sat in the lecture hall listening to the first keynote speaker, surrounded by like-minded people, those nerves soon disappeared and I knew I had found my place and my people.

The week was more intense than I could have possibly imagined, with some days consisting of almost 10 hours of lectures and seminars but every last second was worth it.

**The facilitators were experienced, knowledgeable and inspirational and I left every session with a new bit of knowledge that would support me when I returned to school, as well as a list of new books, papers or blogs that I wanted to read.**

We covered a variety of informative sessions throughout the week, including the science of learning, culture and climate, effective curriculum design, setting a vision, implementation and how to lead change within a school setting. Whilst many of these topics were things I had

some prior knowledge of, the information had such relevance to my context and the knowledge shared gave me a much deeper understanding than I had before.

Beyond the small group sessions, we were privileged enough to listen to a variety of keynote speakers who had a wealth of experience. We listened to a head teacher who had discovered the value of instructional coaching; a new head teacher who was part of the Teaching Leaders training 8 years ago, who explained how the training had supported her on her journey and a public speaker who shared the value of debate in bringing higher expectations than ever before for our pupils.

**By the Friday I was both exhausted and inspired, but most importantly, I felt like a leader ready to make a change.**

Ambition Institute say we should 'Keep Getting Better' and Wellspring Academy Trust say we should 'Make A Difference'. Both of these values ring true for me and I am full of hope that over the next two years I really will keep getting better and the impact I have will make a difference for our pupils. Watch this space!



# Outdoor Developments

By Jessica Jenkins, Head of School, Oakwell Rise



**OAKWELL RISE**  
Primary Academy

**As part of the school improvement journey at Oakwell Rise, we always knew a town centre school with limited outdoor space would prove a challenge.**

A space which was once described as a tarmac jungle (due to zero green space) is now a place which is layered with opportunities for children. As a team, we have carefully planned the outdoor provision to meet the needs of our pupils and our local community groups. We are proud to say we have embedded spaces which develop motor skills, collaboration, imagination, language, relaxation, resilience and exploring the world, such as gardening and much more.

**Each year we have injected colour and resources to the outdoor space. Everything from the floor to the walls have been considered to ensure the children feel it is a safe, special and enjoyable place to learn. A provision they, alongside their families, are proud of.**

This year feels like our 'big bang' moment. After a long period of planning, fundraising and placing applications for new funding streams - all our wishes have come to life! This academic year we kick start with a new sports court, a pirate ship, a new 'pick up sticks' play area, an EYFS outdoor learning classroom and a 'bike library' for the children to enjoy during core learning time and as part of our extra curricular offer.

On behalf of the children, we would like to say a huge thank you to the community, local charities and businesses for their kind contributions. Watch this space, we have more in store in the future!



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# Joseph Norton Open Farm Sunday

By Sarah Willson, Headteacher



Well, after a week of sometimes torrential rain, we could not have been luckier with the weather and staff, parents and governors pulled together to deliver another fantastic Open Farm Day.

Over 300 visitors joined us to feed and learn about our animals, roast marshmallows on the fire, play crazy golf and bounce on the bouncy castle.

KS2 made some fantastic items to sell and KS3 hosted fun garden games. Pupils helped on the BBQ and supported staff with refreshments.

Friends of JNA organised a huge tombola and raffle, which included some of Sarah T's wonderful knitted sheep and bookmarks. Our face painters were relentless! The coffee and tea never stopped pouring.

We'll be taking a break for 2020 but will be back in 2021... we're sure the time will fly!



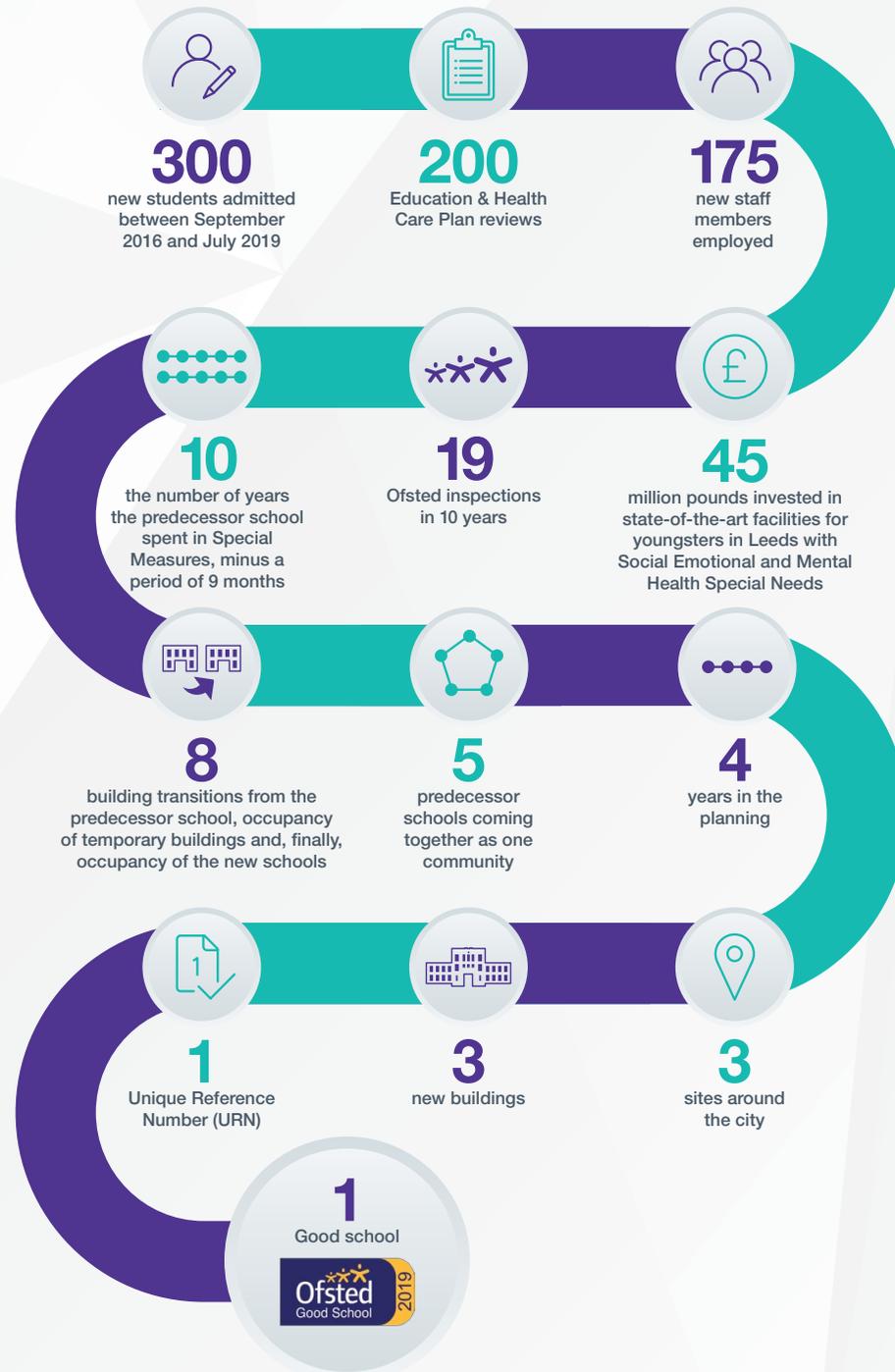
We are so grateful for the support of the JNA team who gave their time and energy to help host this fantastic community event.

# Transformational Journey



A Good Ofsted judgement at Springwell Leeds Academy completes an extraordinary journey from Special Measures.

Springwell Leeds, replaced the predecessor Elmete BSD Special School. The numbers involved tell the tale of the journey.



# Busy Being Brilliant

By Emma Beveridge, Executive Principal  
@EmmaJBeveridge



Two academies, almost 100 staff, over 600 children; on September 2nd this created ONE awesome team.

Eastfield Infants' and Nursery Academy and Lacey Gardens Junior Academy are two large academies in Louth, Lincolnshire who joined the Wellspring family in November 2018. But most importantly, they are two wonderful academies in which children are at the heart of all that they do. Having been lucky enough to be appointed as the executive principal for #LaceyField, September marked the beginning of an amazing journey. Just one week in and mountains have already been moved. Working together for the first time, the LaceyField team started with a white blank page.

- Be brave
- Be kind
- Be in charge of myself
- Be honest
- Be curious
- Be on the team



And that's when we found the mission... we're 'Busy Being Brilliant' of course!

## Paradigm shift

When I got the call and was offered the job, other than being in total disbelief, my mind immediately started to dream. To dream about what this academy could do for the staff, the children and the community it serves. Never in my wildest dreams could I have imagined how incredibly hard the staff would work and, as a result, the rapid culture shift that would follow. Standing in front of the assembly hall on day one is always my favourite moment but the magic came when we used our BEEhaviour for learning language and it worked. 'Show me in charge of you' and they rose. 'Thank you for being brave' and they were courageous. We have found the magic.

## Watch this space...

We are brave and we are kind and we know that we have a journey ahead. LaceyField is an incredibly special place that is going to continue to move mountains.

Please follow @LaceyFieldLouth to see our journey or pop and visit us. We're 'Busy Being Brilliant' and we invite you to do the same.

## The mission?

Back before Apollo 11, a researcher entered Houston to find out what makes a system work. He asked the top dog, 'what is your mission', his response, 'to put a man on the moon'. The researcher asked that question of everyone else in the building from analysts to cleaners to astronauts. He asked the guy who mopped the floors on a casual contract for an hour a day, 'what is your mission?', his response, 'to put a man on the moon of course!' 'Culture eats strategy for breakfast' and systems work when everyone knows the goal. LaceyField started life by developing the mission. We looked at WAGOLLS, we talked, we mused, we came up with one and scrapped it. A mission has to be right and you know when you've found it...

## The tools to learn

With the mission in debate, we turned to the tools to do the job. Some use BLP (Building Learning Power), some use Find the Leader in Me, some the 5Rs but what makes these initiatives for culture and ethos work is that they are tailored to the needs of the academy in which they live. The LaceyField team designed the Bs! We decided that in order for children, families and staff to be successful in education and beyond, you need to;



# Internationalism wins top accolade



**A prestigious award has been given to Littlecoates in recognition of its work to bring the world into the classroom. The British Council's International School Award, which celebrates exceptional work in international education, delighted Principal Neville Wilkinson.**

“It's recognition of the work we have done to give an international dimension to our curriculum. We have welcomed visitors from Poland and Morocco this year as part of our efforts to give children an insight and appreciation of the wider world. Projects across the school have been given an international flavour,” said Neville.

**The British Council has paid for a teacher exchange with a school in Agadir, Morocco. English teacher Aatifa Elouarit has already spent two days in Grimsby with Littlecoates' Year 2 teacher Tom Cadman visiting during October half term. Each school is looking at plastic waste.**

Neville said, “We're both interested in what happens to recycled material once we have thrown it in the bin and where it ends up. It fitted in with the United Nations' goals around sustainability and reducing waste. We will share the outcomes from each school via email and our children will also be exchanging letters.”

Sir Ciarán Devane, CEO of the British Council, said: ‘The school's fantastic international work has rightfully earned it this prestigious award. Embedding an international dimension in children's education ensures that they are truly global citizens and helps prepare them for successful lives and careers in an increasingly global economy.’

The award, which celebrates its 20th Anniversary this year, is now available worldwide in countries such as India, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Lebanon, Nigeria, and Pakistan.

**More than 6,000  
International School  
Awards have been  
presented to successful  
schools in the UK  
since the scheme  
began in 1999.**

# Pupil Premium Workshop – system-led school improvement in action

By Chris Jessup

**Friday 20th October saw colleagues from across Wellspring meet in Doncaster for the first Pupil Premium Workshop.**



Feedback included:

“An effective use of our colleagues time to share good practice and ideas”

“A good opportunity to network and a pause for thought and reflection”

“A very useful day - we need to do more!”

**We certainly do and we certainly will.**

Reflecting the large element of Pupil Premium Grant funding that supports our work, the event was organised in direct response to requests from leaders in the system - an example of how we all can influence the shape and direction of the Trust.

Featuring expertise from within our community of school, the day gave the opportunity to think again about the purpose and provision of Pupil Premium spend, highlighted examples of excellent practice within our schools and gave the opportunity to network with colleagues from other settings, sectors and phases. There was also an opportunity to work through management information systems and drill down into how our digital infrastructure can support the work that goes on in the classrooms.

Sarah Jones, Executive Vice-Principal at Spalding and Grantham Alternative Academies, spoke passionately and informatively about how research and curriculum vision led the introduction and evaluation of additional interventions funded via the grant. She also made a plea that tracking and analysis of outcomes should be as effective and slimline as possible - have a purpose to the collection of data and don't track for the sake of it.

Todd Cheetham is Assistant Headteacher at Greenacre and is a designated SLE for Pupil Premium. His engaging and knowledgeable presentation took elements of highly effective practice recognised by Ofsted but which, more importantly, worked incredibly well for the pupils at Greenacre. Thoughts on research, the importance of high expectations for staff and pupils, and a focus on quality first teaching were all discussed. A particularly striking section was the precise detailing of barriers that were preventing achievement that the school identifies.

Chris Jessup, Director of Learning, gave a brief history of the purpose and impact of the Pupil Premium, along with current evidence based research from the EEF on best practice. He finished with next steps in terms of the new Ofsted framework and current DFE thinking around the future of the Grant.

**Colleagues were given the opportunity to reflect on the impact of the Grant in their own settings and were able to access case studies and best practice. A practice network has been set up to share on going resources and all participants valued the time to think and the contributions available.**

# Littlecoates Skip It



**Community-minded Littlecoates Primary partnered with the local council in a clean up of its local area.**

Residents in Grimsby's West Marsh were given the chance to get rid of junk and household waste in the Skip It campaign run by North East Lincolnshire Council.

Littlecoates promoted and helped with the day-long event at the nearby Duke of York Gardens.



The council had linked up with a series of community groups and organisations to host the pop-up recycling centres.

Principal Neville Wilkinson said, "The event was a success and it was great to be part of something which benefited the wider area. People brought all sorts of items that the council teams recycled. We're keen the school is fully engaged with its community and our pupils take responsibility for their environment very seriously. As well as leaflets to parents, we also promoted the event through social media and I'd like to thank North East Lincolnshire Council for involving us."

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# Professional Learning – The Wellspring Book Review

By Dave Whitaker

**Reading is also a great way of developing our thinking, generating curiosity and fuelling our enthusiasm for school and personal development.**

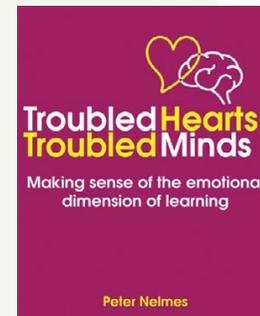
Finding time to read books can be so difficult but, if you find the right one, immersing yourself in a great book can be a great way to really motivate yourself and stimulate those learning muscles that may have been relaxed for a while.

Over the summer two things happened to me that I would like to share with you now. Firstly, I was asked to review a book. Secondly, I got some reading glasses to help me! One of the problems of getting old is the need to get readers. However, they have changed my life and I no longer see blurred words. Colleagues, I highly recommend a visit to Spec Savers if you are in denial.

I would like to propose that we use the Wellspring Newsletter to share great books we have read. Signposting colleagues to books, nudging principals to develop their CPD library and making sure we don't waste time reading rubbish publications we could have written better. Time is precious so let's help make sure it is used well.

**I'd like to invite you to share books and a short review in the newsletter. I'll start with 'Troubled Hearts, Troubled Minds'.**

As professional educators we are always learning. We should never think we know everything and always be willing to learn from our colleagues and our peers. Visiting our academies is always a pleasure and every time I step foot in a school there is something to learn. Every conversation with a school leader, a teacher or a teaching assistant is an opportunity to learn. Never underestimate the power of professional conversations and informal chats about work and school.



*This book gives us a refreshing perspective from a teacher who has actually walked the walk and doesn't just talk the talk. A true expert! Drawing from years of experience working with 'troubled children', Nelmes is able to use anecdote and real examples that focus on the reasons why children challenge teachers and the education system. Without making excuses he skillfully explains how children's anxiety, their environments and trauma can manifest itself in seriously challenging behavior. He then helps explain how, after years of reflection, learning and soul searching, he is able to deal with this and make a real difference to the lives of the children he has taught. He cleverly manages to explain how, in education, we focus too much on behavior and not enough on emotion. He describes how, when trying to win the hearts and minds of children, we sometimes focus too much on minds and not hearts. Using real live stories and examples from schools where he has worked, Nelmes draws upon the 'nitty-gritty of practice' that so brilliantly frames the work of teachers in SEMH schools.*

This is a book that should be read by any Ofsted inspector charged with the challenge of inspecting a SEMH school, PRU or Alternative Provision. It should also be read by every teacher who works in one of these schools. In fact, this book should be read by any teacher who has ever encountered challenging behavior in a classroom or school. This book will restore your faith, help explain those dark moments, encourage you to continue and reinforce the reasons why you chose to do the job you do.

That is hopefully the first of many book reviews that we can share across our learning community. Beware, I may be asking you to choose a book and let everyone know what you think about it. So, get reading!

# Magic Breakfast



**Executive Principal Sam Bailey and CEO Mark Wilson formed part of a Parliamentary lobby of MPs in September aimed at securing free breakfasts for every eligible school child in the country.**

The group included representatives from academia, charities involved in Breakfast Club initiatives, healthcare and industry.

Wellspring were the only education provider represented, based on the strength of the Trusts' relationship with The Magic Breakfast charity.

Sam Bailey said "Magic Breakfasts are part of the magic that powers The Forest Academy, Oakwell Rise and Oakhill. A nutritious breakfast aids concentration, behaviour and mental processing skills. The research proves it. It's a no-brainer."

Many Wellspring Academies similarly provide and/or fund free breakfasts for students. We all recognise the immense difference it makes when children are well-fed and prepared for learning.

**CEO Mark said "These are crucial initiatives. Our duty is to ensure that our children's needs are met. The most basic of needs are actually the most important. Wellspring will always champion our children and advocate for their needs."**



**Many Wellspring Academies similarly provide and/or fund free breakfasts for students.**

# Oakhill's Got Talent!

By Lisa McCarthy, Head of School



**OAKHILL**  
Primary Academy

## Young Writers

Oakhill submitted creative writing for a competition in conjunction with Horrible Histories—Ancient Adventures. There were over 14,000 entries nationwide and we have had a number of students who were successful and their work has been chosen for publication. What a wonderful achievement!

**Well done to Millie F, Millie-Jo, Ruby, Millie G, Amelia, Ashleigh, Imogen, Jensen and Alfie. We are very proud of you.**



## Barnsley Boy's Make History

Jack and Alfie were thrilled to be selected for the Barnsley Boy's football squad.

Not only did they have the honour to play for the team but they made history too... their team went on to win the tournament for the first time! Well done – amazing news!



## Christmas Pantomime

One of our students has received the news that she has been successful in auditioning for the Christmas pantomime at Rotherham Civic Theatre.

**She will be performing in Sleeping Beauty. What fantastic news! Well done Maddie!**



## International Karate Championships

Matthew represented England last week in Dublin taking part in the Karate Championships.

We are all very proud of his amazing achievement well done!



# Summer Works

By Shaun Kiernan, Head of Capital

Over £600,000 has been invested into our Academies over the summer. Below are some of the fantastic projects that have been completed.



## Beacon House

As our community of Academies grows so too do the teams supporting the Academies. The Trust has invested in creating a space for the Support Centre team members in the East at Beacon Academy. **The investment saw a refurbishment of the old Caretaker's House to create offices and meeting spaces.**



## Beacon Academy

Beacon Academy has had an upgrade to windows through several areas of the Academy. The new double-glazed windows provide a much-needed update to the buildings, providing both protection from the elements, especially in those cold winters and creating a great visual impact on the building.



## Bramley Park Academy

Bramley Park Academy has lacked investment and had a poor layout. Under the leadership of Carrie Green some major refurbishments have taken place this summer. The existing entrance to the Academy has been moved and the space reconfigured to create a new library, new offices, a meeting room and a new staff area. The school has been redecorated throughout by the onsite estates staff and it's looking bright and fresh. **The Academy has benefitted from new windows and doors throughout and finally the Academy has invested in some brilliant new outdoor play equipment.**



## Forest Academy

The Forest Academy has seen a full replacement of heating pipework throughout the school. The team completed the replacement of hundreds of metres of pipework throughout the school which had its challenges. This investment will see the good operation of heating throughout the school for a further 30 years.



## Park House boiler

Park House Academy's boilers failed at the end of last year. The team were quick to react in installing a new boiler system over the 6 weeks holidays. **The new system should ensure heating for the Academy for another 25 years.**



## Oakwood Leeds

To ensure that we are working in the most efficient way the pupils at Oakwood Leeds were relocated this summer across the Springwell Leeds existing schools. Investment from the Trust has seen new Primary School pods created at all 3 three Springwell Leeds sites and the return of the Oakwood site to Leeds City Council.

**A huge thanks goes to all the Estates Team that work so hard over the summer holidays getting projects done and ready for the new term.**

# Training Opportunities



## School Direct

Positive Regard are excited to be offering School Direct places for 2020/2021 with Bishop Grosseteste University, Leeds Beckett University and Sheffield Hallam University. UCAS opens on Tuesday 8th October.

If you are interested in taking a trainee, or if you have staff who are interested, please contact Theresa Di'Iasio – [director@positiveregardtsa.co.uk](mailto:director@positiveregardtsa.co.uk)

## Teacher Apprenticeship

Following our internal recruitment and selection process we are delighted to confirm that three Wellspring Academy Trust colleagues have secured a place on the Level 5 Learning & Skills Teacher Apprenticeship Programme in conjunction with Leeds City College.

## Courses and programmes this term:

- Level One and Level Two Leadership Development
- Raising Achievement Writing Programme (CLPE)
- Trauma Awareness Conferences in Lincoln, Barnsley & Leeds
- Wellspring NQT CPD Programme
- Safer Recruitment Training
- Pupil Premium Conference
- Arbor Training

Further information regarding the courses/ programmes, please contact Amy Hinchliffe – [admin@positiveregardtsa.co.uk](mailto:admin@positiveregardtsa.co.uk)



# Apprenticeship Updates



## Teaching Apprenticeship Programme

This September saw five colleagues from Wellspring Academies commence a two year teacher training apprenticeship programme.

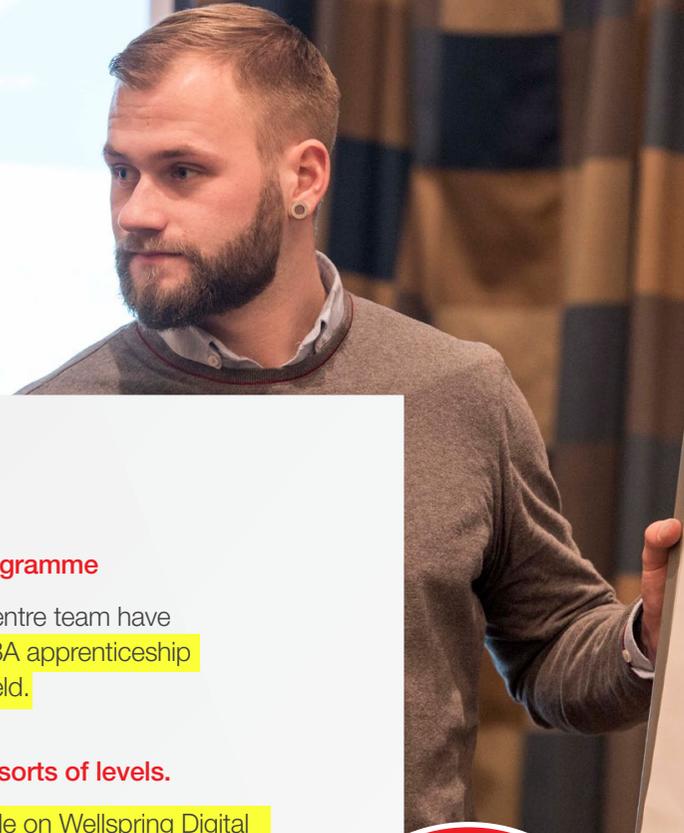
Training will be provided by Leeds City College and provides an opportunity for classroom practitioners to achieve a L5 Learning and Skills Teaching Apprenticeship before completing professional formation to gain QTLS status.

## Executive MBA Apprenticeship Programme

Three colleagues from the Support Centre team have commenced a two year Executive MBA apprenticeship programme at the University of Sheffield.

Apprenticeships are possible at all sorts of levels.

An apprenticeship area is now available on Wellspring Digital providing step by step guidance on how we can make the most of our Apprenticeship Levy contributions to develop our people.



- \* Stance, Bo
- \* Language
- \* Opportunity ->
- \* Early Interven
- \* Staffing

Visit  
[www.wellspringacademytrust.co.uk/digital](http://www.wellspringacademytrust.co.uk/digital)

app.livestorm.co/arbor-education-1

Looking for a refresher course ahead of the forthcoming census returns?  
Sign up for the [Arbor Webinar https://app.livestorm.co/arbor-education-1](https://app.livestorm.co/arbor-education-1)

If you have that in hand... what how about other webinars in the series:

- ✓ Census Day - Wednesday 2nd October at 10:00am
- ✓ Intro to the Group MIS - Monday 7th October at 11:00am
- ✓ Preparing for the Workforce Census - Thursday 24th October at 11:00am
- ✓ Card Payments in Arbor - Tuesday 29th October at 11:00am
- ✓ Workforce Census Day - Wednesday 6th November at 10:00am
- ✓ Making the most of the Behaviour module - Thursday 21st November at 11:00am
- ✓ Analysing your Summative Assessment data - Wednesday 4th December at 11:00am
- ✓ Using Interventions to boost Assessment results - Monday 9th December at 11:00am

# Wellspring Blog

## #WellspringTalks

By Sarah Wilson



**According to my phone, I spend too much time on Twitter. When I say too much time, I'm not vying for a place in the Tweetwasters hall of fame or in fear of hitting Twitter's technical limits.**

**I just mean more than the average user, longer than it takes Delia to boil an egg and enough time to manage a couple of accounts, gaze longingly at a Model S and 'like' a couple of cat memes.**



Twitter was conceived by an undergraduate at New York University in 2006. It's original name was twtr and it's purpose was to support an individual to communicate with a small group. Fast forward 13 years and that small group consists of 319 million monthly visitors, over 14 million of whom live here in the UK. **And Twitter is brilliant.**

Where else could I have discovered tea that changes colour, supported Kenton Cool on his 14th ascent of Mt Everest or repeatedly watched a gentleman from Yorkshire politely ask our PM to "Please leave my town"? It's also great for work. Through EduTwitter my colleagues and I have promoted our school, communicated with parents, developed our practice and stumbled across some fantastic resources. A quick scan of the well established hashtags #wemakeadifference, #jnavalues and #teamspringwell reveals some of the fantastic work that goes on across our Trust.

The thing is, despite the above, over the course of the last few years, I've enjoyed my time on Twitter less and less and it seems I'm not the only one. Writing in Forbes magazine, Curtis Silver opines, "Twitter, rather than being a place for social sharing and conversation ... has become a ball pit of cobras [and] towels soaked with kerosene." Writing for NewStatesman, Sarah Manavis refers to Twitter as "the hellsite" and reflects on the difficulties associated with this "toxic internet habit." Indeed, as I scroll through my feed at the end of the day, the Twittersphere seems less interested in healthy debate and more concerned with political one-upmanship, mudslinging and blocking.

**That is why, I'd like to advocate talking. More specifically, I'd like to advocate face-to-face discussion with those whom we disagree.**

In Spring this year, [Jochen Wegner](#), editor-in-chief of Zeit Online, established Europe Talks, a project that instigated

one-to-one conversations between complete strangers. Described as Tinder for politics, volunteers completed an online questionnaire before an algorithm matched them with someone from a different country with opposing views. **Then, on Saturday 11th May, over 17,000 Europeans crossed borders to have an argument with someone they had never met.**

Wegner tells of Joanna, a university employee from Poland, who got up at 3am and travelled 1000km to wrangle over the pros and cons of migration with Christoff, a customer service manager from Germany. He recounts the story of Tom and Nils who met on a football pitch in Cambridge to share their opposing views on Brexit. And they argued. And they disagreed. On some things they changed their minds a little. On others, they did not. But, importantly, they listened. They communicated. There was no online finger-pointing, no anonymous trolling, no sarcastic emojis and no-one was blocked. In fact, despite their differences the vast majority of participants "enjoyed every single minute of it!"

Wellspring is a unique organisation with a unique set of values. We are socially responsible. We are caring. We are ethical. We are inclusive. We have strong views and we want to share them. But how we share them matters. We can shout into the void, Tweeting views that are misunderstood, ignored and lost or we can get together, put the kettle on and have a chat.

So, for 2019-2020, let's do two things. Let's flood the Twittersphere with the joy in our schools and let's talk. Let's bring people together. Let's listen. Let's test and scrutinise our views and opinions and attempt to see things from a different perspective. You never know, perhaps the education community is not as divided as Twitter suggests.

**And, of course, if you don't agree, pop round for a natter and remember... I have colour changing tea!**

