

# Wellspring Newsletter

January 2021

## Mark Wilson's Message

Mark Wilson, CEO



WELLSPRING  
ACADEMY TRUST

We Make A Difference



### Welcome to the January Newsletter.

Our newsletter is a wonderful celebration of the great things that are going on throughout our community. You will see great ideas and new inspirations. The idea is that we share and that we learn from one another.

**The best communities give freely. They learn from one another. They inspire one another to new levels of excellence. This is an important role that our newsletter fulfils. I warmly welcome your news, stories, ideas and examples.**

**We can be reassured from this month's newsletter that we have opened a communications channel direct with the Prime Minister. My thanks to Andrada at Littlecoates for securing it.**

We will be channelling our helpful suggestions and feedback on the performance of his government to the Prime Minister via Andrada. I am looking forward to that opportunity.

Best wishes,

**Our newsletter is a wonderful celebration of the great things that are going on throughout our community.**

# Train To Teach With Us

Positive  
Regard   
Teaching School Alliance  
Relationships Make The Difference

To book a place please  
see details right:

Visit the Positive  
Regard TSA website  
Speak to our team on  
01226 720758

Contact us on schooldirect@  
positiveregardtso.co.uk

Follow us on  
@PosRegardTSA

## Why now?

We have amazing opportunities to train to teach in our Primary, Secondary and Special school settings from September 2021.

## What about the costs?

There are many financial options and bursaries available for trainees. We can point you in the right direction and explain how you can train with us and once qualified, **earn a starting salary of over £25K.**

## What's next?

**Recruitment is open NOW.**

Come and talk to us and find out more or alternatively, share this information with your friends and family and help us build our school communities.

**Our next virtual information events  
for February are: Friday 5th (10-11am) or  
Thursday 25th (4.30-5.30pm)**



We can point you in  
the right direction and  
explain how you can  
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qualified, earn a starting  
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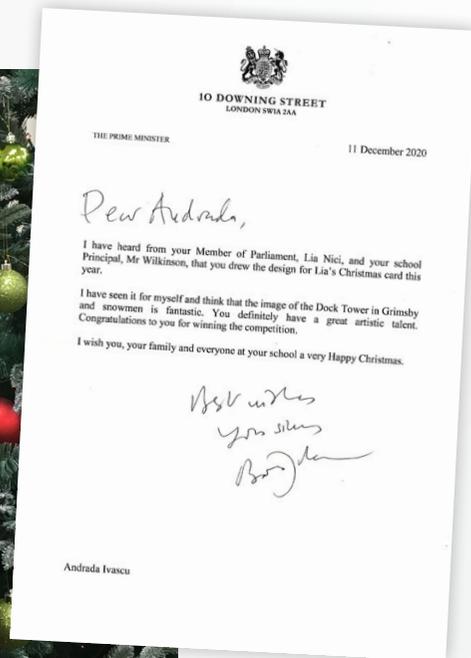


# Andrada receives letter from the Prime Minister about her Dock Tower drawing

Featured in Grimsby Telegraph 20/12/202



Mr Johnson said the design was fantastic and praised Andrada's artistic talent.



A Year 5 pupil from a Grimsby school has received a letter of congratulations from Boris Johnson after winning a competition to design her MP's Christmas card.

Children at Littlecoates Primary Academy were given the chance to design Grimsby MP Lia Nici's card and were encouraged to take inspiration from Great Grimsby landmarks.

Andrada Ivascu's depiction of the Dock Tower surrounded by festive themes was judged the winner from 103 entries by nurses and staff at St Andrew's Hospice on Peaks Lane. 'Merry Fishmas' was a popular headline, causing a few chuckles at the hospice asked to judge the competition on behalf of Ms Nici. Christina Cook, Communications and Marketing Manager at St Andrew's, said: "We were over the moon to have been asked to judge the competition, although it is always difficult to choose a winner when they were all so good."

"We had to choose a winner and a runner-up from each year group and an overall winner. "Students from Reception through to Year 6 participated in the competition which gave us a whole range of abilities to admire."It was tough but we finally came to a decision and think that the winning entry looks brilliant on the front of the card."

Ms Nici said: "I wasn't allowed to see the entries until they had been judged, so I was really keen to see the pictures when they arrived. Each and every one of the children has gone to great lengths to create a picture showcasing our wonderful town and its history – of course, with a festive theme!

"I wish I could have had them all on my card as they were so good, but there had to be a winner and I think Andrada's bright, colourful and happy picture is perfect for 2020."

"I hope the recipients enjoy looking at it as much as I do. Thank you to Neville Wilkinson, Principal at the fabulous Littlecoates Primary Academy, and his team for running the competition at the school, to all the children for taking part and to the staff and nurses at St Andrew's Hospice for their judging efforts."

Ms Nici visited several schools in her first few months in the role and came up with the idea of having a festive picture created by a pupil on her card.

Littlecoates was selected in a draw of those schools and the competition was launched at the Harlow Street academy in October.

Andrada Ivascu in Year 5 learned about her success in a video call from Ms Lia Nici to the school and was "very happy" to win.

School principal Mr Wilkinson said: "The children loved taking part and the excitement building up to Lia's announcement revealing who had won was palpable. A huge amount of thought and care went into each design and the judges did well to pick one out. The pupils and the school were all winners."

The winner and runner up pictures went on display at Freeman Street Market over the Christmas period and St Andrew's Hospice will be auctioning A4 card prints of the winners and runners-up, along with an A3 print of the overall winning picture.

# 12 Days of LaceyField at Christmas

By Charlotte Briggs



Throughout the 12 days of Christmas, LaceyField delivered Christmas cheer across Louth.

Determined the pandemic was not going to stop charity efforts and festive sparkle, children, families and staff at LaceyField took part in a “12 Days of Christmas Kindness” campaign. Generosity from our LaceyField community enabled us to:

- 🌲 Deliver eight Christmas hampers to local care homes
- 🌲 Hand out more than 120 food parcels to LaceyField families
- 🌲 Create Christmas cards for patients across Lincolnshire hospitals
- 🌲 Delivered two Christmas hampers to EDAN Lincs (Women's refuge)
- 🌲 Create 'hearts for homes' – artwork and decorations for care homes
- 🌲 Make 'hearts for heroes' – decorations for local emergency services
- 🌲 Formed a new partnership with Trinity Centre Food Bank
- 🌲 Virtual Christmas Concert shared with local care homes
- 🌲 Raised over £800 for St Barnabas Hospice through Rudy's Run.

After a year of uncertainty, we were not going to let COVID-19 stop us from celebrating, spreading kindness and creating Christmas memories.

After all, it's what our children, families and staff deserve! For each of the 12 days leading up to the Christmas break, we took part in an act of kindness for the local community. With one aim, to spread a little kindness! The 12 days added up to the most exciting and magical end of term for the LaceyField community.



Our LaceyField Christmas Advert, released on the final day of term and highlighting the campaign, can be found by scanning the QR code.



# Why exclusions are no answer to bad behaviour in class

By Dave Whitaker, featured in the Yorkshire Post 05/01/2021

**We all know schools have been under tremendous pressure since the start of the Covid pandemic – managing disruption, trying to keep students and staff safe, and continuing to teach to the standards we all expect.**

**In such trying circumstances, we have had to accept that the old ways of doing things won't necessarily work in this changing world we find ourselves. Disruption of course brings with it opportunity for change, but we must ensure any change is in the right direction.**

That is why I was so dismayed to read in a recent Ofsted briefing that fixed-term exclusions are rising in some schools, though thankfully only a small number to date. The briefing attributed this rise to schools "not being able to put in place their usual layers of sanctions before exclusion, such as putting pupils who were disrupting learning into another lesson or into isolation".

It is disappointing that even when children have been through a very difficult period, some schools' first port of call for unwanted behaviour is sanctions like isolation, and when that isn't available, they up the ante to fixed-term exclusions.

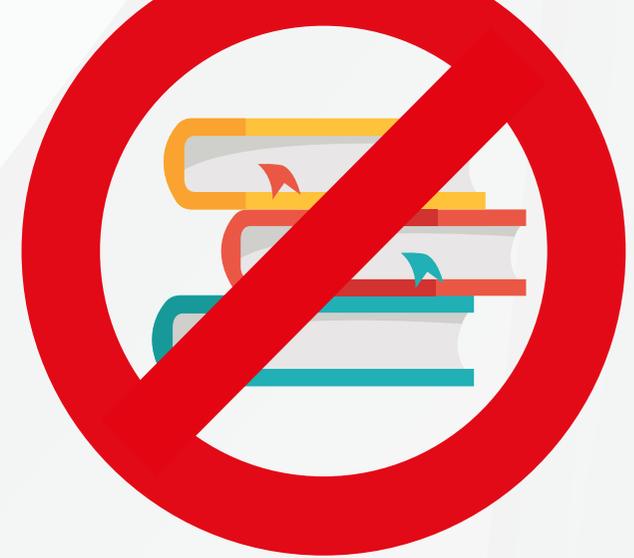
As Director of Learning in a multi-academy trust, I see the inability to use usual sanctions as a perfect opportunity to rethink how we handle poor behaviour – and not by doubling down with

ever harsher punishments. We must remember that children have experienced trauma and anxiety over the course of this year. Even for children with stable homes and parents who have done their utmost to support their education and wellbeing, living through a pandemic with all the anxiety and stress that entails will have had an impact.

For children in homes with poverty, abuse or neglect, their experience of lockdown may have been unbearable. This is where we need to start when considering how to manage challenging behaviour. We have to look at the why, not what, when tackling challenging behaviour. Behaviours are driven by emotions and feelings – they are what we need to understand. Understanding what drives behaviour is how we change it long term. Whilst I understand the appeal of quick fixes like isolation booths and fixed-term exclusions, it's often the same kids that end up back in the isolation booth over and over again. It doesn't really fix anything; to encourage long term behaviour change and stop the merry-go-round of ongoing punishments, we have to put the work in.

**And it is hard work. Digging deep to find out what the causes of behaviour are, and then supporting children so they can learn to manage their behaviour takes time, knowledge and effort.**

At Wellspring we have vast experience in caring for children who have social, emotional and mental health needs, and that practice is now embedded in all our schools. We are proud of our record. We have never permanently excluded anyone, and we regularly receive praise for the behaviour within our schools from Ofsted.



Contrary to widespread belief, adopting a relational approach that focuses on trauma and understanding does not mean being 'soft' or accepting poor behaviour. Far from it. We have consistently high standards and expect the best from our pupils, and this hasn't changed as a result of the pandemic.

We just choose to see our role as enabling children to behave better and giving them the skills and understanding to do so. It doesn't just feel ethically right. It's proven to work. In our specialist Social, Emotional and Mental Health schools, which typically cater for the most challenging behaviours, we measured how long it took a young person to return to learning after an incident requiring adult intervention.

After following a relational approach for two years, the percentage of incidents which took five minutes or less to resolve in a return to learning doubled from eight to 16 per cent. In the same period, incidents which took more than 60 minutes to return to learning dropped from 25 to nine per cent.

**As educators, we play a role that goes far beyond teaching the curriculum. We have a responsibility to the communities we serve, and in communities suffering high levels of deprivation and the worst effects of the pandemic, zero tolerance approaches and exclusions will do little to support them.**

# Science STEM Challenges at Bramley Park

By Emily Brady



As teachers, we all know that children benefit from exploring their learning in a variety of ways. At Bramley Park Academy, we always strive to provide our children with hands-on, engaging and purposeful learning experiences.

Despite the current lockdown restrictions, we are adamant that this will not stop for our children and their families. We have been working hard to find ways to encourage children to engage with the whole curriculum - as normal - even if that is from behind a computer screen (for now).

One of the ways that we have done this so far is with the introduction of a weekly STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) challenge. These challenges have been designed so that they can easily be carried out at home with the whole family. The challenges include building the tallest free-standing tower out of everyday objects; making your own

musical instrument; creating a collage from 2D and 3D shapes and creating your own mini habitat. Rather than focusing on just subject knowledge, these challenges encourage children to develop their skill set by finding out about the world around them. Inquiry learning is made more relevant throughout the real-life links and self-led problem-solving projects.

To encourage children and parents to take part a winner from each Key Stage will be chosen and prizes will be awarded when all children return to school. We have had an excellent response to the challenges so far, both on Google Classroom and on our schools Twitter page (@bramley\_park).



If you would like to look into this further then I would recommend looking at the following websites as a starting point: [www.stem.org.uk](http://www.stem.org.uk) and [www.allaboutstem.co.uk](http://www.allaboutstem.co.uk)



# Learning from Springwell Barnsley

By Sam Walker



**Taking the curriculum outdoors can have a considerably beneficial impact on the learning and development of our pupils.**

The pupils have had lots of fun in outdoor learning this term enhancing their problem solving skills as well as developing their communication and resilience. Outdoor learning provides our pupils with endless opportunities for exploration, experimentation and contextual learning.



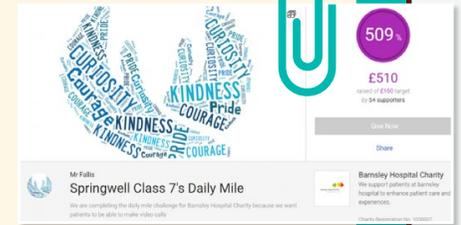
# Fundraising in Year 7

By David Fallis



At Springwell Barnsley, the pupils and teaching staff in Year 7 have been completing a daily mile to raise money for Barnsley Hospital Charity during the second lockdown period. Starting on November 9th the pupils have been walking, running and jogging a mile every day, regardless of the weather.

Barnsley Hospital Charity will use the money raised by Year 7 to buy technology, which will enable patients to video call their friends and family while visitation is suspended. The fundraising has been a great success and we are extremely proud of Year 7 for all their dedication and hard work.



# Kindness Week 2020

By Christine Britton KS3 Teacher



For Kindness Week 2020, pupils at Springwell Barnsley wanted to focus on helping families who may be less fortunate provide a good Christmas for their children. All classes collected toys and they were all donated to the Westfield Resource Centre in South Elmsall, where members of Just Homes Care boxed and prepared all the toys to be distributed to families struggling this Christmas. They were very touched by our generosity. We would like to thank all members of the school community for their generosity and for making our Kindness Week another great success.





# Wellspring Wellbeing



## Well@Work Awards Winner – Best Education Establishment



We are really proud to share that the Wellspring Academy Trust has been selected as the winner of the Best Education Establishment category.

The panel recognised “**excellent examples of good practice particularly referring to the development and implementation of your trust wide health and wellbeing strategy and how you have built on staff engagement through the wellbeing champions across each site.**”

This award is a great recognition of the Trust’s wellbeing journey over the past couple of years and a real testimony to the commitment and engagement of our Wellbeing Champions, who are the driving force behind the Wellbeing Strategy.





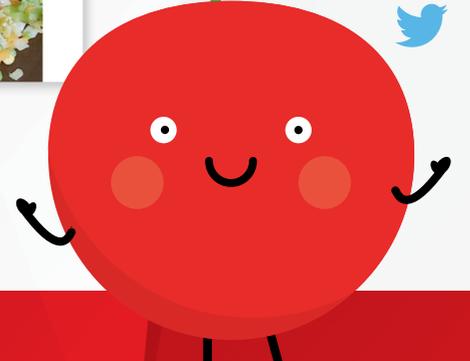
# Wellspring Wellbeing



## #Eatyourselfwell



Our Trust-wide January wellbeing initiative #Eatyourselfwell was a success. Look at all the nutritious food, fuelling our colleagues for their busy days!





# Wellspring Wellbeing



## Get to know our Wellbeing Champions better...

By Dom Fenner



**Alison Gordon**  
Springwell Lincoln

**Q Why be a Wellbeing Champion?**

**A** I believe that the wellbeing of staff should be paramount in every work setting. I have always had an open-door policy where staff could drop-in and chat so being Wellbeing Champion seemed the obvious step for me. I enjoy promoting staff wellbeing and engaging staff in different activities.

**Q How do you make a difference to staff wellbeing?**

**A** I make a difference because I believe in positive mental health within the workplace and I would like to think I have a good relationship with the staff and I would like to offer the similar support and guidance to the staff, that we as a school offer the pupils.

**Q What's your favourite way of keeping yourself well?**

**A** Not living life on auto pilot, taking note of the little things, that would usually go unnoticed. I have just completed a mindfulness course that I will be qualified to teach in the New Year and this will help me fulfil my role as Wellbeing Champion.

**Q Describe yourself in three words...**

**A** Empathetic, Approachable, Determined.



**Katie Grainger**  
Elements Primary School

**Q Why be a Wellbeing Champion?**

**A** I enjoy that I can give back to my work colleagues and support them when needed, especially with the year 2020 has been.

**Q How do you make a difference to staff wellbeing?**

**A** I hope in my own way that I cheer staff up when they need it, support them where I can and they all know my door is always open if they want a cuppa and a chat.

**Q What's your favourite way of keeping yourself well?**

**A** Taking a little time for me, I enjoy walking our dog to clear my head and I have started reading more.

**Q Describe yourself in three words...**

**A** Fun, kind and caring.



**Jordan Vaughan**  
Springwell Learning Community

**Q Why be a Wellbeing Champion?**

**A** Wellbeing is more important now than ever before. Together, we can make a positive difference to enhance wellbeing across the trust. I think being a wellbeing champion allows myself to support colleagues to the best of my ability and promote the importance of self-care.

**Q How do you make a difference to staff wellbeing?**

**A** I am always available to have a chat and a cuppa with my colleagues, to offer my support if they need to offload the pressures of the day. As a team, myself and Abby offer whole school wellbeing meetings and wellbeing activity days. We are looking forward to developing the wellbeing offer within our centre.

**Q What's your favourite way of keeping yourself well?**

**A** My favourite way of keeping well is to be outdoors, either walking in the hills, swimming in lakes or out for a ride on the push iron.

**Q Describe yourself in three words...**

**A** Approachable, Dedicated, Trustworthy.



# Wellspring Wellbeing



## Our next Trust-wide Wellbeing Initiative... WAT are you reading?



**Read** a book of your choice



**Share** pictures of what you are reading or your favourite quotes from the book on Twitter using #WATareyoureading



**Like** each other's posts on Twitter



## Starts Monday 1 March 2021



Supporting  
WORLD  
BOOK  
DAY  
4 MARCH 2021



## #WATareyoureading 1-7th March 2021

Reading stimulates our imagination and expands our understanding of the world! Help us promote the love of reading for pleasure and become a role model to our students and wider community by joining us in this week-long initiative!



**Read** a book of your choice



**Share** pictures of what you are reading or your favourite quotes from the book on Twitter using #WATareyoureading



**Like** each other's posts on Twitter



### Why reading is good for you?

- ✓ Promotes mental health
- ✓ Reduces stress
- ✓ Improves memory
- ✓ Improves focus and concentration
- ✓ Boosts sleep
- ✓ Improves writing skills and conversations
- ✓ Increases knowledge



# Wellspring Wellbeing



The #30DaysofWellbeing idea came about to give people simple hints, tips and reminders of what we can all do to support ourselves and others with our wellbeing.

With so much content being shared over social media, people can often get overwhelmed and with January seeing so many people kick-starting new habits and resolutions, the idea was to simplify things within 140 characters or less.

The tips, hints and ideas focused on little wins and considerations, whether that being a reminder to take a breather, have a drink of water or to limit the amount of social media use as well as supporting others around us.

It shared how we can support other people and that, by taking the time to call or text a friend or colleague and check in with them, we can have a massive impact on both theirs and our wellbeing.

## #30DaysofWellbeing

By Ash Lucas (Wellbeing Champion at Sevenhills & Phoenix Park)



The collage displays several tweets from the #30DaysofWellbeing campaign, each with a tip and a GIF:

- Day 3:** "Sleep! Remember the feeling of waking up when you had a long and restful night sleep? How amazing is it! You should get that feeling more often." Includes a GIF with a "DAILY SCHEDULE" and tips like "TURN OFF THE COMPUTER OR TELEVISION", "DON'T GO TO BED ON AN EMPTY STOMACH", and "REDUCE YOUR DAILY CAFFEINE INTAKE".
- Day 7:** "Check in on a friend. When was the last time you spoke to one of your friends? Drop them a call, video call or a text. Relationships fuel connection and the power of connection can never be underestimated." Includes a GIF of a man saying "OOH, FRIEND!".
- Day 8:** "Switch Off! The first week back to school is never easy, especially in these circumstances. Use today to switch off from work, do things you enjoy, do things that relax you and enjoy that calm." Includes a GIF of a hand flipping a light switch.
- Day 10:** "Mindfulness. Don't let the word put you off! You don't have to sit still and meditate, although there are so many benefits of it, just being present in the moment can help." Includes a GIF titled "Mindfulness activities" with the tip "1. KNOW YOUR EXISTENCE".
- Day 11:** "Gratitude. Before you go to sleep tonight, write down three things you were grateful for today." Includes a GIF of a man saying "GRATITUDE".
- Day 13:** "Treat Someone Else. Yesterday you did something for yourself so today, do something for someone else. It could be for a loved one or just a random act of kindness. Make it personal. Make it meaningful." Includes a GIF titled "RANDOM ACT OF KINDNESS DAY".
- Day 5:** "Listen to your favourite album, or better yet, make yourself a playlist of your favourite music; play and it full blast!" Includes a GIF of a person listening to music.

# Springwell Spalding – FEA intrapreneurship award winners

By Sarah Jones



Springwell Spalding have won a prestigious award from the Fair Education Alliance for their “Intrapreneurship” project of introducing an EYFS room at an Alternative Provision school.

## The problem

There are increasing numbers of very young children being excluded from mainstream schools. Permanent exclusions of children under 7 have almost doubled since 2010. In 2019-20, there were 156 children aged 0-3 in AP settings, and 149 children aged 4.

**As colleagues in AP settings will know, there are increasing numbers of children who are in school years 2-4, but are working significantly below this, sometimes working towards EYFS level objectives.**

Primary AP settings tend to be small, so generally have to place children in a mixed age primary class. While a child in year 2 needs to have at least some time sitting at a desk, completing written mathematics work, a child at 22 months needs to be exploring capacity in the water tray, or developing a sense of shape through playing with blocks. No matter how wonderful our primary AP teachers are, it is incredibly difficult to create a classroom that caters for both these children.

We have therefore developed a special EYFS room in Springwell Spalding, which is set up like a nursery, and which caters for children who are still working in the EYFS, no matter how old they are. Our approach in this provision is based in the work of Montessori, Froebel, and Regio Emilia – a child centred, play based curriculum, with a particular focus on communication, early literacy, and supporting students’ SEMH needs.

## The FEA Award

The Intrapreneurship Award is a collective approach of internal innovation, leveraging the expertise and connections of the Fair Education Alliance membership to offer up to 5 Winners a year-long programme of support and £15k to develop, test and embed a new programme, partnership, product or service to make education fair. Award Winners also receive a place on the Intrapreneurship Incubator, an intensive programme of technical and leadership training, supportive mentoring and expert advice to help them develop, pilot and embed the idea within the organisation.

Louise Bostock is our Lead EYFS practitioner, and she has been working with the FEA on developing the plan for our EYFS room, as well as considering how we will measure the impact, and (if it proves successful) how we can grow the provision beyond Springwell



Spalding, as well as influence practice nationally. Louise spoke recently at the FEA summit – a national virtual conference for FEA members and interested organisations – raising the profile of Springwell Spalding, Wellspring as a trust, and our fantastic Early Years project.

## The impact so far

We are in the early days of our project, but the initial signs are amazing. We have four students in our EYFS provision now. One of those was with us before the EYFS room opened, so we can directly compare his behaviour and progress in a mixed age primary AP class, to the EYFS provision. The impact on him has been nothing short of phenomenal. This child made very little progress in his speech, phonics, or letter and number recognition while in the primary class. Since moving into the EYFS room, he has started making progress in all three. He used to go into crisis mode regularly, often biting staff and requiring restrictive physical interventions on average once a week in order to keep him and other students safe. Since he moved into the specialist provision, he has not bitten once, has displayed very little crisis behaviour, and has only required physical support twice since September. We are incredibly proud of him, and the staff in the Springwell Spalding EYFS room that have made it all possible.



The award includes £15,000 towards the project, as well as extensive leadership support and development for the lead intrapreneurs on the project.

# Mark's Interview with Schools Week

Featured in Schools Week 19/01/2021

Meet the philosopher CEO determined to prove that academy trusts can – and should – come up with 100-year visionary plans for their schools.

"I was driving to work with the radio on and they were talking about Disney's acquisition of the Star Wars franchise, for billions of pounds. And that just inspired me," says a beaming Mark Wilson, chief executive of Wellspring Academy Trust and local Leeds lad.

Since taking the helm at the trust just six years ago, he has expanded the trust from one school to an astonishing 25 primaries, secondaries, special educational needs and alternative provision schools. In that time, the trust has famously achieved a no-exclusions record.

In a sense, Wellspring has become the national go-to example for a trust that can deliver good Ofsted outcomes with a super inclusive approach – challenging the "tough discipline" approach favoured by ministers.

A giant media monolith is not quite what I imagined to be its inspiration for the future.

"Disney had paid this extraordinary amount of money and they'd set this acquisition within the notion of a 100-year plan," continues Wilson. "Disney was thinking in the long, long term, which means those billions were just a drop in the ocean to them."

Inspired, Wilson and his principals are now coming up with not just a "vision 2025" but also, quite extraordinarily, a 100-year plan. A 100-year plan?, I hear myself say. Is such a thing possible? As with many questions directed at Wilson, he answers by the long road, weaving a narrative of principles and visions.

**"I'm calling it 'cathedral thinking'. That's my attempt at a pithy slogan," he smiles. "I want it to reference the fact that great cathedrals take many generations to build, and were built to last."**

He has climbed Cologne cathedral in Germany, which, in the 13th century, was the tallest building in the world and stands to this day. "The issue at the moment is that in Covid times, school leadership has become about managing moment by moment. Much of it is just responsive. My experience in school leadership is that schools get into trouble, in the main, when there's that absence of longer-term thinking."

It's a good point, and I imagine that perhaps Wilson (who once ran a primary school in Wakefield, where the use of technology was so innovative he was visited by international heads and even, astonishingly,



Top - Lunch with the school council

Middle - Springwell Learning Community in Barnsley

Bottom - The latest school, Springwell Harrogate, joining the trust

Iceland's president) is imagining what skills and attributes his communities might need in a century's time. "Future-focused" school curriculums are gaining traction. But it turns out Wilson is citing cathedrals because he really is talking about buildings.

"I'm thinking about the trust in terms of two eras," he explains. "Era One was the trust's birth, growth, and who we are. We're about humanism, and relationships, and education, the place of second chances. That's been our story 25 times over now. So the organisation is set now in terms of its personality, principles and values."

**The zero-exclusions record is an example of this: Wilson says it's not a "hard rule" but the trust's values mean it's very unlikely any head would choose to exclude.**

"Now I'm saying, we've entered Era Two. It's a distinctly new era." In this way, Wilson echoes many commentators for whom one silver lining of Covid-19 is the opportunity to set new directions. But he is not seeking to radically re-think the past six years – with the trust's 13 out of 14 Ofsted inspections returning a 'good' or better judgment (and three moving schools straight from special measures to 'good'), he is confident about the foundations. He tells me an interesting fact.

"Did you know that when we take on an academy, we sign a lease for over 100 years?" he says. "We are just leaseholders – the council is the freeholder, and at the end we theoretically hand the academy back. So my thinking is, the buck stops with us for at least that 100 years. The quality of the physical estate is us providing a stable platform for communities and their life chances."

continued...



Top - Wilson aged about three

Bottom - The £6 million new building for Elements Primary School in Middleton

It seems a simple point, but as Wilson explains his team's experiences, it makes increasing sense. He describes taking on schools with leaking roofs, awful smells from "putrefying rats", where none of the burglar or fire alarms had been tested and boilers not serviced for years. I particularly sympathise with his next statement.

"Actually, what the bogs smell like is important. It's an important measure as far as I'm concerned. And also, are school dinners decent? [He is speaking before this week's food parcels scandal, which showed the huge difference poorly prepared food makes to people's sense of dignity.] And are we investing in our buildings, and are they fit for purpose?"

**What does this look like in practice? I press. "In 100 years we want all our buildings to be energy self-sufficient. They will be carbon positive, not just neutral. We will be making a contribution to the planet through our physical estate. Unless we do it, who will?"**

The whole ambition is laid out in the trust's new Vision 2025 strategy, which includes two 'spotlight' sections: "Environments we are proud of" and "Sustainability". The development plan for the first includes "delivering aesthetically appealing environments through intuitive design and inspirational use of colour", which is an ambition perhaps now quite absent from national conversations around school improvement, compared to New Labour's "Building Schools for the Future" years.

Wilson's point is that environments have a significant effect on those who work within them. Under his watch, the trust has spent £70 million on 30 new buildings or facilities, and has taken on eight new free schools. By 2025, the goal is for £100 million to have been spent on the environment and 12 new schools built.

**When I ask him what he's proud of, he responds: "We've attracted millions of pounds worth of public funds to new schools in the north of England. I can say that is a source of great pride for us."**

The regional press coverage reflects this: "Louth primary schools 'transformed' following academy sponsorship"; "Amazing feeling as new alternative school is ready"; "Sevenhills Academy 'unrecognisable' after £500,000 refurbishment".

Just this September, one of its primary schools opened in a new £6 million building. But Wilson dreams even bigger. A 100-year plan is so exciting because "it allows you to be agnostic of cash".

In a way, Wilson is a philosopher chief executive. He speaks in terms of great strategies, visions, principles and values, answering questions in a rather lovely, slow, measured way with plenty of context and drawing on multiple ideas before giving the final answer. Nowadays, some academy trusts' CEOs seem to be more focused on the finances and operations, as the sector lurches closer to the corporate world.

"What I've done is build a team of people cleverer than me. The COO is a genius. The finance director is a genius," says Wilson. Perhaps he demonstrates that for a whole academy trust to be truly values-driven – not just having the values painted on walls – the person at the top should be, above all else, a philosophical person.

But Wilson's philosophy has perhaps made an impact because it is grounded in experience, not lofty imaginings. His parents left school at 14. At his failing inner-city secondary school, with vast year groups of

330, he was one of only three students across three years to get into university.

**As a headteacher many years later, he met one of his former teachers, now a school improvement officer. He asked him why so few children had got to university from that institution.**

**"He said, 'We did the best we could with the kids we had'." Wilson shakes his head. "That guy had taken that philosophy throughout his education career."**

The trust's exact strategies for its 100-year plan are yet to become clear, but the ambitiousness of Wilson's approach is worth noting. After all, no one has ever tried to celebrate the glory of God in a block of offices – cathedrals were built for a reason.

**Why should places dedicated to huge personal growth, eye-opening education and deep relationships be very much different?**

# Fantastic Food Parcels

By Lynn Dove

Once again, Bramley Park Academy have risen to the challenge and we have ensured that our school community is cared for. Our staff have been out delivering food parcels to families. A total of 57 parcels to date and a further 20 by the end of the week.

We have also distributed 93 devices to our children to support their online learning.

Our staff are making twice weekly welfare calls to our families and our most vulnerable children are receiving daily calls or home visits from the pastoral team at school. I feel very humbled and proud to be part of Bramley Park Academy. Our staff are brilliant!

Bramley Park Academy are part of an outstanding community. Our school has an incredible partnership with Rethink Food, Pudsey. They are a 'not for profit, CIC (Community Interest Company) and do a remarkable job for our local community.

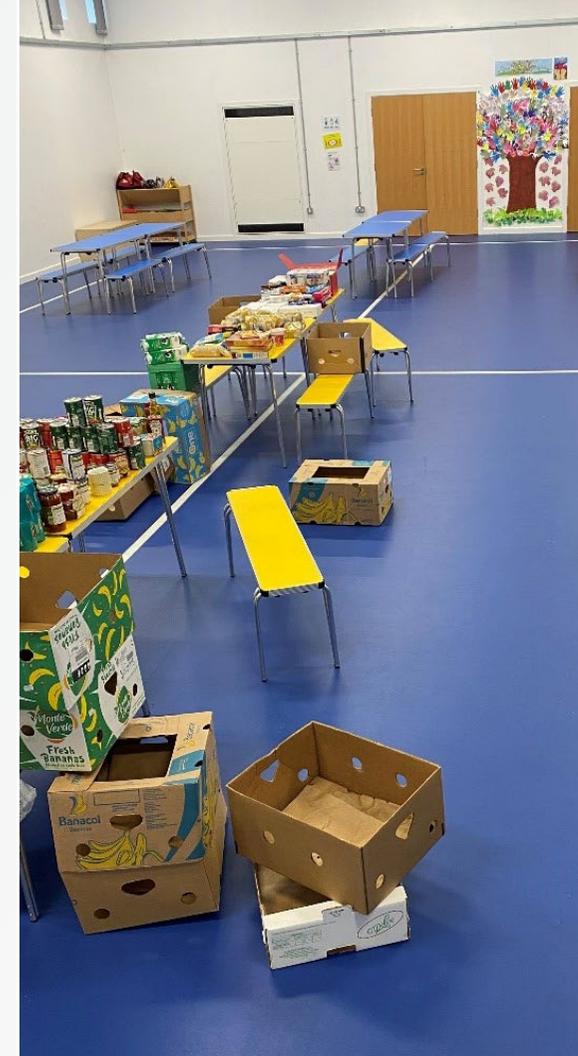
They have fed our children and young people in October half term and Christmas, and are now delivering weekly food parcels for some of our families... amazing!

## Shooting Stars at Bramley

By Cat Willetts

We have set up a holiday club called 'Shooting Stars Holiday Club'.

We were awarded some funding from The Leeds Healthy Holiday Grants Team. With this money we were able to run some sessions in October half term and Christmas holidays. Little Legs Rugby Coaching came in to run these sessions at Christmas with a small group of our young people. What a fabulous time we all had!



I feel very humbled and proud to be part of Bramley Park Academy. Our staff are brilliant!



# Letter to the Yorkshire Battalion

By Sally Taylor



**The Forest School**  
Every Child, Every Chance

**British Values are really important to us at The Forest School, we embed the teaching of this in all that we do.**

**We want our children to be proud of who they are and of what they do but we also want them to remember that not everyone can be home for Christmas and that our Armed Forces play a really important role in keeping everyone safe.**

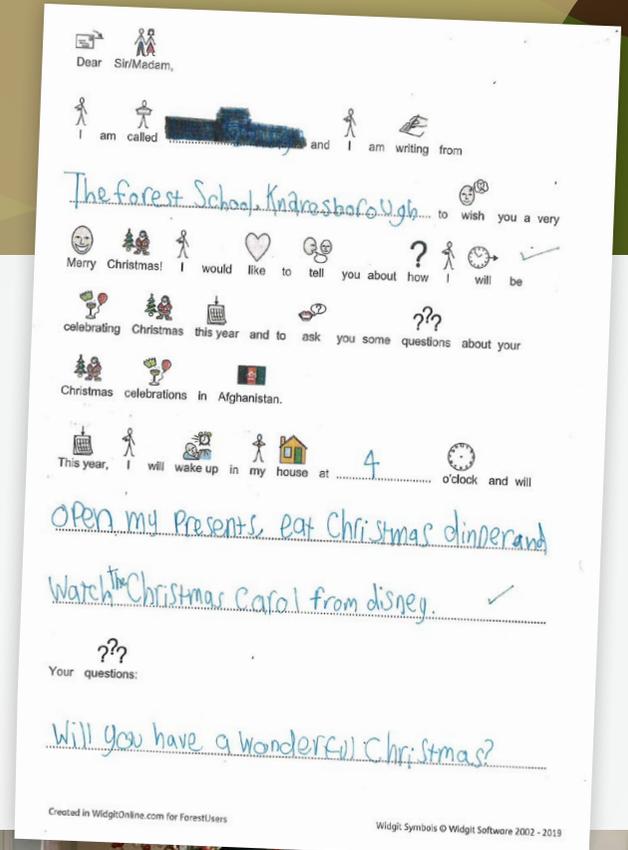
We want our children to grow into kind and thoughtful adults and we want them to know that Christmas is a time to think of others as well as of ourselves. To support this learning, during the Autumn Term The Forest School children have continued a tradition of writing Christmas letters to the Yorkshire Battalion, who are this year in Afghanistan.

This has become an important event in school that the children (and adults!) now look forward to and thoroughly enjoy writing.

The children's letters have included them introducing themselves and discussing how they celebrate Christmas, asking questions to the soldiers and sending them a Christmas wish. Alongside the letters, the children brought donations for shoe boxes or filled their own shoe box. This year we sent 27 boxes to Afghanistan which were gratefully received by all the soldiers.

In return our wonderful armed forces (The Yorkshire Battalion) have taken the time to write to the pupils which encourages our children's engagement in literacy activities. The soldiers sent lovely pictures of them opening their presents and this allowed our children to see the joy of giving and reinforces exactly what we are trying to help our amazing young people understand.

**We are proud of our Armed Forces and we are proud of our children for being such active citizens and supporting them.**



# Barnsley's new budding businesswoman



**OAKHILL**  
Primary Academy

**A ten year old girl has used the lockdown to get creative and has started a budding business selling scrunchies – and has donated more than 30 to the hospital.**

**Maddie Hall created Mooscrunch in April, during the first national lockdown.**

She began making scrunchies with bits of leftover material from dance costumes made by her mum, Katie.

What started off as a lockdown pastime soon became a budding business for Maddie and she began selling her scrunchies to people across the country.

“When she goes to school wearing one, all her friends and teachers put their orders in,”

said Katie, from Ardsley. “She also dances at Wendy Charles School of Dance, and has made scrunchies to match dance costumes – she has a good little enterprise going on.”

**Maddie has also donated more than 30 rainbow scrunchies to the staff at Barnsley Hospital to thank them for their work during the pandemic.**



“I am really proud of her,” added Katie. “She comes home from school and will sit on an evening making lots of scrunchies. I think she really enjoys it.

“We have transformed our conservatory to make her a little office where she makes the scrunchies. “She’s taken me on as her packing manager and almost every day we are sending orders out.

“I don’t know what designs she will make next but I don’t think she will give it up any time soon.”



The Barnsley Spirit Awards are run by Barnsley Council to celebrate and recognise the amazing response from people across the borough who have shown their Barnsley spirit in supporting our communities during the Coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic by providing them with a special mayor's award. The Mayor's Barnsley spirit awards are to recognise people who have shown:

- Commitment and achievement related to the response to Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Barnsley.
- Commitment and achievement which has resulted in a benefit to Barnsley.

Five members of the Oakhill staff team - Anna Owens (Picture), Paula Edwards, Kate Prince, George Stevenson and Sally Richardson were nominated for their contribution to support people who needed help the most in Barnsley and for going to extraordinary lengths in doing so. They received a medal and certificate to recognise their incredible community spirit.

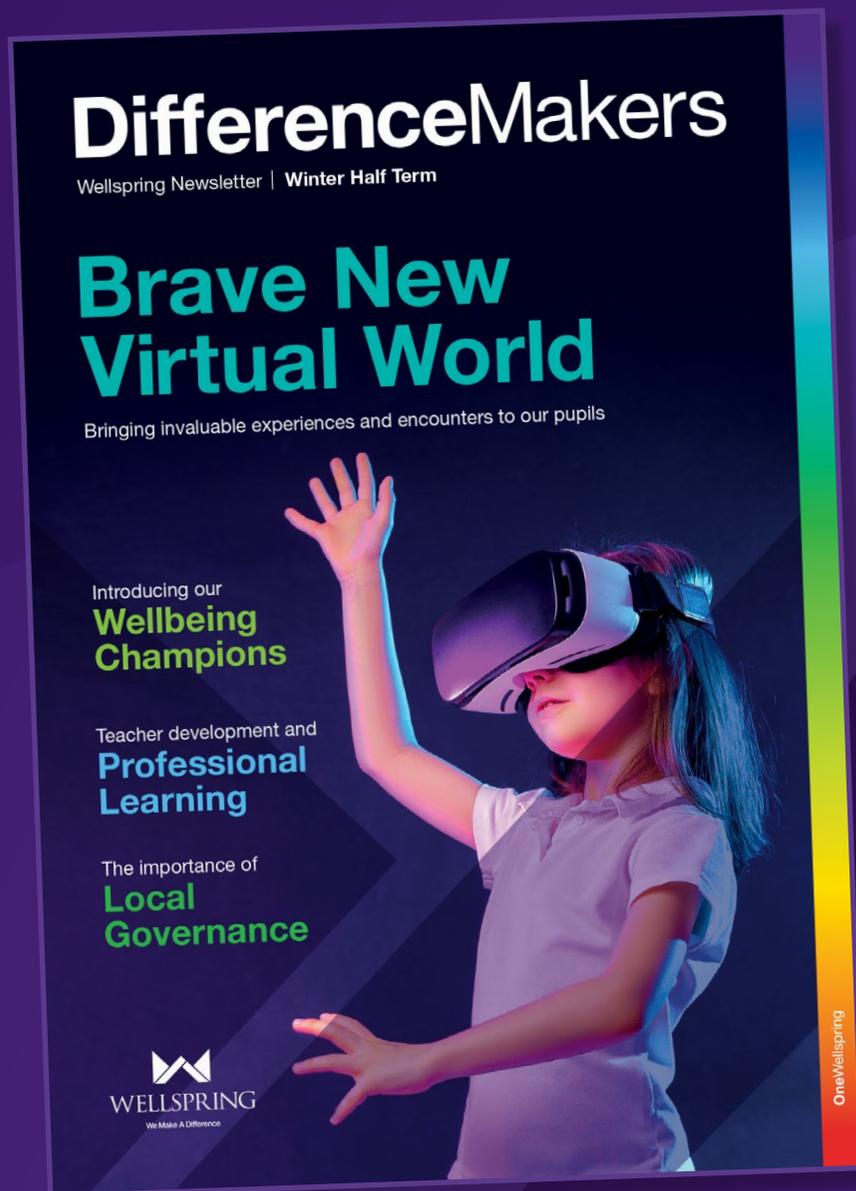


## School Games Award for Oakhill

Oakhill was awarded a School games engagement award for their involvement and engagement in virtual PE, Sport, and well-being activities.



# Our newsletter is changing!



From next month, the way we share our news will be a little different. After half term, we'll be launching **Difference Makers**, a fabulous new half-termly magazine which will replace our current newsletter.

**Difference Makers** will contain a round-up of news, as well as in depth features covering best practice, new innovations and expert knowledge from across the trust. You'll start to see regular features such as 'Inspiring Spaces,' a look at some of the excellent learning environments around Wellspring, and round table discussions, where we invite people to share their expertise and opinions on a variety of topics. With sections on training and development, wellbeing, teaching methods and more, there'll be something for everyone.

As well as **Difference Makers**, we'll also be introducing a **fortnightly e-newsletter** to update you on the most current Wellspring events and news. That way we can make sure you're always up to date on what's happening around Wellspring.

Another exciting development is the launch of the **Wellspring podcast**. With a new guest each month, the Wellspring podcast will let us dig deep into a particular subject and explore some of the challenges and opportunities facing schools with people who really know their stuff.

Finally, we have our website. With a **news page and a blog**, we have opportunities to share news as well as opinion and think pieces. Using our social media channels, we can make sure these are shared widely across the trust and beyond.

Whether you've got news to share, an opinion you think needs to be heard, or skills and knowledge that could be useful for colleagues, we've got a channel for you. Please drop us a line with any story/feature ideas in advance and we can help to identify what the best route might be and offer guidance on structure, deadlines and wordcounts etc.

**We know there's no shortage of wonderful things going on across the trust. Our new suite of communication channels will enable us to share them more effectively than ever.**

To find out more and share your stories, please email:

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