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CONNECT



July 2025

SANDSTONE TRUST

Experiencing excellence through dynamic partnership

Hello from our CEO



Dear colleagues

As we approach the end of the academic year, I hope that you enjoy reading the updates on some of the work of staff and students in Sandstone Trust this year. Our conference on the theme of belonging seems not long ago; based on your feedback, it was clearly a theme that resonated with many people. We all remember how powerful it was to hear from some of our former students, reminding us of the impact that we have on their lives during and after school.

We decided that we should also have a student conference this year; this recently took place at Kelsall Equestrian Centre. The conference was organised and delivered by a team of eight students – two from each of the schools in the Trust and attended by approximately eighty of our students. They worked on activities which explored what makes a great leader which then led into work on preparing for the Eco Schools Award. The students have been supported by Clare Morgan, Lorraine Skellon, Ruth Cadwallader, Becky Wainright and Dan Nieroda but it is to the students' credit that the planning team took the lead on the planning and delivery of the day. You will hear more about their ongoing work on the Eco Schools Award next year.

We also recently reviewed the catering contract for the schools; students representing their school attended the day and enjoyed a full day of eating some delicious food and providing their feedback which helped in making the decision that Midshires Catering will provide the catering for all schools in the Trust from September.

We have also shared the exciting news that our Trust was chosen to open the Free School in Chester which will be called Kings Moat Community Primary School. Ruth Cadwallader will be the Headteacher at the school and you can hear more from her and our plans for the school in this newsletter.

It was a privilege to hear from colleagues on our aspiring to middle and senior leaders programmes; sharing not only the projects they have been working on, their leadership journey and their plans for the future was very inspiring. Emma Gildea and Andy Davies are looking forward to developing these programmes further next year and we are also welcoming colleagues from The Learning Trust and other schools who wish to participate in them.

It is also good to hear from some of our Teaching Assistant Colleagues who have started on a Level 3 Teaching Assistant Apprenticeship course; the course lasts approximately 15 months and has been designed to further develop the skills of Teaching Assistants with the additional possibility of providing a route into teaching for those who may be interested.


We have a number of colleagues moving on to pastures new.
Best of luck to them all and thank you for your work and dedication to your school.
I hope everyone has a fantastic summer holiday and a well deserved break

Jason Lowe, CEO



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Our Vision

Experiencing excellence through dynamic partnership

Our Values



Respect is a fundamental value that underpins everything we do across our Trust. We believe that fostering a culture of respect—among students, staff, and the wider community—creates the foundation for positive relationships, personal growth, and effective learning.

Our staff demonstrate respect in many ways, from valuing each other's professional perspectives to actively listening and supporting one another across schools. This is reflected in how we work together, whether through joint planning, peer reviews, or professional development opportunities that acknowledge and build on individual strengths.

Equally, we are committed to nurturing respect among our students. This means encouraging empathy, celebrating diversity, and creating environments where every student feels heard and valued.

Celebrating Service and Success: Staff Moving On and Moving Up

At the heart of our Trust is the value of Respect—recognising the contributions of every individual and honouring the impact they make within our community. As we bid farewell to our teaching and support staff who are retiring or stepping into exciting new roles, we do so with deep appreciation and admiration. Their dedication, professionalism, and care have left a lasting impression on colleagues, students, and families alike. This moment is both a celebration of all they have achieved and a heartfelt thank you for the respect, integrity, and commitment they have shown throughout their time with us.



Spotlight on Service: An interview with Steve



Blueprints and Beyond: Honouring a Career in Technology Education

What inspired you to become a technology teacher, and how has that passion evolved over the years?

I first thought about becoming a teacher when I was 17 years old. I took maths, physics and design at A level and in those days for the A level design you exhibited your work to the moderator and were interviewed by them about the work. It was during this interview that the moderator suggested I should consider becoming a Technology teacher. A few years later, after graduating I was working for a product design company and had to visit schools. It was here that I remembered my moderator and started to consider teaching as a career.

What I love about the job is being in the workshop with children making things. Teaching them the correct way to use tools and processes and seeing the pride they have in their work when they produce something worthwhile.



How has the world of technology education changed since you first started teaching?

There has been massive change in teaching technology over the years. When I first started, I was a woodwork teacher, developing predominantly hand skills and teaching technical drawing. Then computers arrived and with them Computer Aided Design and CNC programming. I had to learn all about electronics and systems in order to teach the new GCSE courses and later still a whole new set of skills with the introduction in schools of laser cutting and 3D printing.

What have been some of the most rewarding parts of working with students in the tech classroom?

I have equally enjoyed introducing year 7 pupils to using hand tools safely in the workshop to working together with A Level students developing concepts into working prototypes.

Have there been any student projects or innovations that really impressed you or stuck with you?

I have been constantly impressed with student projects over the years, some notable projects have been folding boats, roof rack storage contraptions, recumbent cycles, furniture and architectural concept models the list goes on...

Is there a particular lesson or topic you loved teaching most—and why?

I have particularly enjoyed teaching students computer aided design, especially in 3 dimensions. Some students just “get it” and literally fly with the software. Students who are not particularly strong at art or drawing with a pencil can produce incredibly accurate and lifelike CAD drawings and models.

What will you miss most about being part of the school and the classroom environment?

Obviously my colleagues and the wider school community, but on a much more practical level I'll miss having access to the workshops and the space to spread out when working on my own projects.

In what ways do you hope your work has made a lasting impact on your students and colleagues?

I know of many ex students who are now working in the creative and design engineering industries. I hope that in a some way I have contributed to their choice of career. One particular student comes to mind when I travel through airports and I see young children riding Trunki suitcases. Their inventor Rob Law was one of my A level students many years ago, who went on to build a very successful British manufacturing company.



What was it about Taporley High School that made you devote 33 years of your career to the school?

I think Tarporeley High School is a very lovely school. I lived in the village for 15 years and my two of my sons both attended the school. It was great teaching them both and seeing them during the day. The school ethos has always been so positive, students have generally been lovely and I've thoroughly enjoyed all my years teaching at the school. I really don't know where the last 33 years has gone!!

Now that you're retiring, what are your plans or dreams for the next chapter of your life?

Although I won't be teaching anymore, I certainly don't feel old enough to retire. I have my own workshop at home with several ideas from developing new products to sell online and in store to restoring furniture and undertaking commission work. I also have a very long list of jobs to complete from Mrs Davies which are obviously my priority!!

A few words of thanks

Bill Voyce (Subject Lead for Design Technology)

I have worked with Steve Davies for over 17 years. I was relieved to find out when I arrived that we were both strict observers of fundamental modernism in design and acolytes of Le Corbusier and his kin. I knew from then on that even if we disagreed on things, which we occasionally did, he was always going to be on the right track. In fact, because we shared the notion of great design, we always ended up at the same curriculum point by both luck and deliberation. Though we are essentially different characters, he was always good cop and I always took on the role of bad cop, we got things done between us. Being pragmatic is his strong point, and he is an adherent to Occam's razor. No messing about, just straight to the best point.

I will miss him terribly, and in a sense his departure heralds my own in a few years-time. What he will do without his workshop I don't know, because even if he builds his own, it won't be full of interested kids desperate to know what's next. I thank him profusely for the support and understanding he has exhibited over the years. D3 will always be Steve's room and that lesson on the computers and with soldering Iron's will still be known as Mr Davies' tech.

Jonathan Deakin (Headteacher)

I've always felt that retirements should be given a high profile amongst staff because what long-serving staff show us all is that 30-year careers in the profession can be achieved! Ahead of Steve's speech I have had a look at his contracts, his first ever job application and a few yearbooks in which he appears! In some ways, that seems faintly ridiculous to reduce someone's career to such small snapshots. But what we all know is that contracts, and job titles, and references and yearbooks are all emblematic of an almost incomprehensible body of work as a teacher. By the time retirement comes a teacher's legacy is not in the building; it's in the lives of students out there doing the things they love that (quite often) link to the subject they loved or a teacher who inspired in school.



Spotlight on Service: Thanking Karen & Sheila



The Final Paragraph: Honouring a Legacy in English Education

A few words of thanks

Sophie Davies (Head of English)

Whilst I have only known Karen for 5 years, I feel as though I have known her for longer. She has an amazing knack for making anyone, students or staff, feel like part of her family and, as a result, those around her are incredibly loyal. Whether it is through her role as a classroom teacher, second in department or as a mentor, Karen is able to make people feel encouraged, comforted, supported and loved. This could be through a quiet, kind word, an anecdote from her wealth of experience or a cheeky slice of cake - it MUST be noted that she is an amazing baker!

Her 29 years at Weaverham have been spent sharing that care and love with staff and students alike. She exudes a passion for literature, a detailed appreciation for language, and on occasion, a love for drama and the energy that it can bring to a classroom! She has inspired, enthused and entertained countless students with her knowledge, warmth and wit and to say she will be missed can never really do her impact justice.

We are immensely grateful to have Karen as part of the team and I know that she will continue to brighten the lives of her beautiful family, her wild pup Buddy and everyone who has the pleasure of knowing her. We will stay in touch with this formidably strong, resilient, patient, kind, amazing woman. You will always be part of the Weaverham English Department family.

(We will be calling should we need cover!)

Pencils Down, Sheila! A Fond Farewell to a Teaching Treasure

A few words of thanks

Andy Davies, Executive Headteacher, Tarvin Primary School.

After an incredible 24 years at Tarvin Primary School, we extend our heartfelt thanks to Sheila Earlam for her unwavering dedication, kindness, and passion for teaching. Sheila is well respected and admired by staff, children, and their families alike. Over the years, she has been a fantastic team member, supporting and encouraging her colleagues, and sharing her wisdom with those joining the profession. The creativity she has shown through her teaching and evidenced in our annual exhibitions will be particularly missed. Thank you for everything, Sheila - you will be deeply missed by everyone at Tarvin. We all wish you a long and happy retirement.



Spotlight on Learning Transition

Bridging the Gap: Cross-Phase Transition Project - Andy Davies - Primary Lead

A new initiative is underway across our Trust to strengthen the transition from primary to secondary school. The Cross-Phase Transition Project, led by Trust leaders from both the Sandstone Trust and The Learning Trust, brings together staff from seven schools to improve continuity in curriculum, literacy expectations, and behaviour standards.

The project seeks to address three key challenges:

- Potential Gaps in non-core subject knowledge between KS2 and KS3
- Possible underestimation of literacy levels in Year 7
- Inconsistencies in behaviour language used across phases

This will involve Staff from Christleton High, Queens Park High, Tarpoley High, Weaverham High, Tarvin Primary, Eaton Primary, and Belgrave Primary are participating -around 60 teachers in total.

The three key aspects are:

- Curriculum Alignment: Subject leads are developing a shared vocabulary and knowledge guide to support KS3 readiness in Art, Music, PE, DT, MFL and Computing.
- Literacy Collaboration: Year 6 and Year 7 teachers are working together to align literacy standards and teaching practices in KS3 humanities.
- Behavioural Consistency: Senior staff are creating a shared language and framework for behaviour expectations to help pupils feel "secondary ready."

Our aim and hope will be for pupils a smoother transition, stronger academic foundations, and clearer expectations. For staff we hope aim for more focused curriculum planning, enhanced CPD, and improved cross-phase collaboration.

This project is a powerful example of how collaboration across our Trust and others can lead to meaningful change for both pupils and staff.



Spotlight on Partnership

Our Leadership Programme



"The in-person training sessions were exceptionally beneficial. We received training from external sources on topics such as communication with stakeholders, various methods for effective communication, GDPR issues, and its significance, particularly in the context of social media. Senior staff members from partner schools and the trust provided valuable guidance on handling difficult conversations, offering strategies that we could implement and practice.

As we honed our skills throughout the course and many of us were preparing to advance to the next level, we participated in an excellent session on interview techniques. This included experiencing some of the tasks we might face and understanding the necessary steps to prepare for a Senior Leadership Team (SLT) role. The most valuable aspect of this programme, in my opinion, was the open and honest discussions with both the course facilitators and fellow participants, fostering a genuine atmosphere of trust, support, and camaraderie.

I highly recommend this course to any staff member aiming to take the next step in their career."

Jen Lees, Tarporley High School

"This year has focussed on strengthening my leadership and management skills. This involved refining my abilities in task delegation, establishing effective boundaries, promoting professional growth, and fostering a positive, collaborative team environment. The course equipped me with practical techniques that I've successfully implemented, enabling me to transition from an organizational mindset to a leadership-focused one. I've particularly enjoyed the networking opportunities with colleagues from various settings, whether through meetings or facilitated course activities, finding value in learning from their perspectives."

Alicia Cogan, Tarporley High School

We are very excited for the next steps in the development of our leadership programmes as we begin work with our new cohort of aspiring leaders. 2025-26 will see us expand our offer to schools in The Learning Trust and to both The Bishop's Blue Coat and Bishop Heber High School. This wider network of leaders will enhance our ability to support our colleagues as they seek to make that next step in their careers and learn from inspirational leaders within and beyond our Trust. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work with these colleagues this year.

Thank you for your work and congratulations!

Emma and Andy



Spotlight on SEND

Our Leadership Programme

With support staff across all schools being given ever increasing SEND responsibilities, the SEND Teaching Assistant Programme was launched to address the critical gap in SEND-specific training within traditional Teaching Assistant qualifications. The course is fully online and flexible, with the aim to equip all teaching assistants with essential skills to support all children, including those with SEND. With expert-led modules, practical masterclasses, and personalised coaching, learners gain the confidence to build inclusive classroom strategies.

The course is ideal for all teaching assistants in mainstream or specialist schools seeking a recognised qualification who also wish to develop the essential skills and confidence to help all children thrive.

A huge thank you to our staff who continue to value their own personal development.

"For me, the course will help me to further develop my skills, to help myself and others both in the classroom and in the support hub."

Lisa Feeney

"The course will help me to adopt adaptive techniques and pedagogy to support the individual needs of each student."

Su Kankanalapalli

"The qualification will help to back up my experience and further expand my knowledge, especially around understanding our SEND students and catering to them all individually."

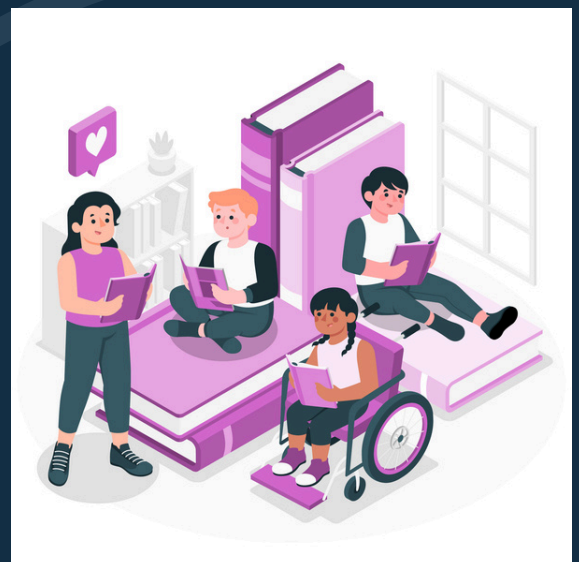
Carly Walley

"The course will help me gain a better understanding of how to support our student's effectively and help them access learning."

Jo Oldfield

"The Level 3 TA course is strengthening my understanding of how to support children more effectively in the classroom. In the EYFS, the right support can make such a big difference to a child's confidence and learning journey. This course is a great opportunity for professional growth and is proving to be a valuable step in my development, helping me to become a more confident and capable Teaching Assistant."

Kate Postlethwaite



Spotlight on SEND

An update from Vicky



In June, Weaverham High School was pleased to welcome two primary colleagues from Eaton and Tarvin for a dedicated training session on adaptive teaching. The visit was designed to support a smoother transition for incoming Year 6 pupils and ensure that staff are equipped with the most effective strategies to meet the diverse needs of the new cohort.

Adaptive teaching is a key component of inclusive education and the session aimed to foster collaboration between primary and secondary staff while exploring practical approaches that can be embedded into the classroom from Day One in September.

During the session, staff explored a range of adaptive teaching strategies, including:

- **Scaffolding tasks:** Teachers discussed how to break learning into manageable steps, such as using sentence starters or guided examples, to help pupils access challenging material without reducing expectations.
- **Flexible grouping:** The importance of using dynamic groupings based on pupils' current understanding, rather than fixed ability sets, was emphasised as a way to promote confidence and peer learning.
- **Formative assessment techniques:** Strategies like mini whiteboards, exit tickets, and think-pair-share were shared to help teachers quickly gauge understanding and adjust their teaching in real time.

The training also allowed both primary and secondary staff to discuss continuity in language and expectations — vital for ensuring Year 6 pupils feel confident and supported as they begin their journey at Weaverham High.

It was lovely to see how committed, Weaverham are to providing a welcoming, inclusive environment for every learner joining Year 7.



Foundations for Tomorrow: Our New School Takes Shape

We were delighted to have been chosen to open a new primary school in Chester which is being built to serve the families on the Kings Moat Garden Village estate. Eventually there will be approximately 1300 new houses at the site which is on Wrexham Road. The build for the new school has started and we have held two events for local residents and stakeholders where we shared the plans for the new school.



The school will open in September 2026, initially for children in the Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 and then grow each year. The school will be a one form entry – 30 students per year group. If there is need, it will expand to a one and a half form entry school – 45 students per year group.

The Headteacher will be Ruth Cadwallader who is currently Head of School at Tarvin Primary School.

Building from the Ground Up: A Bold Vision for a New Primary School

Taking on the role of headteacher at this brand new primary school was a deeply considered and exciting decision for me. I was inspired by the rare opportunity to help shape something from scratch — to build a nurturing, forward-thinking, and inclusive learning environment where children can thrive and staff feel truly valued. My aim is to foster a culture rooted in kindness, curiosity, and high expectations, where every member of the school community feels a strong sense of belonging. In the first year, my top priorities are establishing strong relationships, embedding a shared vision and values, and creating systems that support both academic excellence and emotional wellbeing. I'm committed to ensuring that both pupils and staff are supported through open communication, professional development, and a culture of listening and collaboration. The wider community will play a vital role; I see parents, local organisations, and residents as key partners in helping us grow a school that reflects and enhances our shared values. Looking ahead, my vision is for the school to become a beacon of excellence and inclusion over the next 5 to 10 years; a place where children not only achieve their potential, but also develop the confidence, compassion, and creativity to shape their world.



Pictured: Ruth Cadwallader, Andy Davies, Jonathan Hayes, Jason Lowe

**GET IN
TOUCH**

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