

Issue

02



20

24

CONNECT



November 2024

SANDSTONE TRUST

Experiencing excellence through dynamic partnership

Hello from our CEO



Dear Colleagues

Welcome to the second edition of Connect, our Trust newsletter where we share some of the work of Sandstone Trust. In the last newsletter, the four people who had been appointed in Trust roles introduced themselves and explained some of the work they had started on and were planning to do. Since then, Ellen Green, in her role as School Improvement Lead, has begun working with secondary headteachers who have identified areas where she can provide additional capacity and support including working with subjects and with quality assurance processes such as subject reviews.

Professional Development Lead Emma Gildea and Andy Davies have written and started to deliver the two leadership programmes – Aspiring to Middle Leadership and Aspiring to Senior Leadership; as well as developing their knowledge and skills in leadership, an additional benefit for participants has been in sharing experiences across schools and phases.

Marketing Lead James Bowland continues to produce our newsletters and will identify the areas of priority from our communications strategy suggested by Athene Communications.

Trust SEND lead Vicky Marland has been working closely with our SENCOs as well as delivering staff training on supporting students with dyslexia to primary colleagues, delivered effective deployment of TAs in the classroom at Tarporley and will deliver training at Weaverham later this term. The wider pressure in the Local Authority includes the fact that there are more applications to special schools than there are places. The Local Authority is exploring different ways to achieve this and recently asked secondary schools for expressions of interest to provide satellite provision for SEND students. This would mean a small number of students being taught in a dedicated space on site at one of our schools by colleagues from a special school and, where appropriate, accessing mainstream lessons. We have submitted an expression of interest; at this stage, we are exploring the possibilities and opportunities which this would bring. If we do go ahead with it, an expected start would be September 2026.


You can read more about Vicky's thoughts on her role as Trust SEND Lead as well as some other things which are happening in our Trust in this newsletter.

Jason Lowe, CEO



Connect with us to find out more about our mission.

Visit:

 sandstonetrust.co.uk

 [@sandstonetrust](https://www.facebook.com/sandstonetrust)

Our Vision

Experiencing excellence through dynamic partnership

Our Values



Collaboration is one of the Trust values. We know that staff and student working together within and across schools brings great benefits by sharing ideas and practice. Staff have worked together on a number of things such as moderation, contributing to reviews, resource sharing and working together on our Trust Leadership programmes. We also want to build opportunities for our students to work together. Last year we ran a Forest Schools project to support some Year 6 students with their transition to Year 7; students from all four schools were involved with this. This year, we are bringing students together to plan and run their own conference, detailed below.

Initial Conference Planning Committee Highlights – Building a Stronger Pupil Leadership Network

With a commitment to strengthening collaboration between our four schools, this term saw our first Trust School Council meeting take place at Weaverham High School.

Supported by Clare Morgan, Ruth Cadwallader and Becki Wainwright, our first School Council meeting was an inspiring display of collaboration, creativity, and leadership. It was fantastic to see our young people from across the Sandstone Trust work together with enthusiasm, exchanging ideas and making meaningful progress toward their goals.

A key focus of the meeting was preparing for the Trust's first Student Conference, which is scheduled to take place in the summer term. The key objective for the conference is to bring pupil leadership groups from all four schools together to share ideas and create actionable plans to take back to their schools. Pupils reviewed the agenda and the initial planning document, with the aim to collaboratively shape the day's structure and delegate tasks for the Committee to complete before their next session.

We're excited to see how plans unfold and the incredible outcomes this collaboration will bring!



Spotlight on SEND:

An interview with Vicky

Breaking Barriers: A Personal Journey into Transforming SEND Support

With an ever increasing focus on SEND provision and schools' ability to support diverse needs; we caught up with Vicky Marsland our Trust SEND lead to find out more about her role and the future of SEND.

What made you decide to become a SENCO?

I have 3 amazing daughters, two of them have a diagnosis of autism (the third is on the pathway, two have dyslexia and one has ADHD). All 3 are thriving and excelling in grades and attitude. I saw the difference good SEN support had had on their school life and I wanted to make that difference to others. I truly believe that a SEN need can be a student's super power if the right support is put in early.

Why is SEND such a hot topic nationally?

The increase in SEN figures and EHCP requests is putting the system under incredible strain. Local authorities are on the brink of bankruptcy, there are no specialist places and those working in the system and those relying on the system both agree it is broken. I believe changes in government policies to raise standards have inadvertently caused a perfect storm. The current education system feels like a one size fits all, which creates a system where so many students feel like they're failing. Schools no longer have the autonomy to make decisions they feel are in a student's best interests due to the scrutiny on data.

What difference would you like to make to the schools in the Sandstone Trust?

I want to help all of our schools to continue to build an inclusive ethos, where students are the best version of themselves, that they're happy in school and value themselves. I want to support our students to develop into inclusive adults who know their worth in society and accept and promote those around them. I have met the SENCOs from each school and together we have written an implementation plan that ensures that Sandstone Trust students will receive consistency, best practice and go on to achieve their potential.

How has the first half term in role been so far?

I have thoroughly enjoyed it, I've been to all 4 schools and they have all been so welcoming. I love the culture of Sandstone Trust and feel that it aligns with my own values of Respect, Collaboration, Honesty and Exploration. It has been a busy start to the role, reading lots of information and getting to know the individual school, but I could not have asked for a warmer welcome and support. I look forward to seeing what great things we can achieve together over the coming years.



Spotlight on Growth

Staff Development

Leading the Way: Celebrating Success in Educational NPQs

We are incredibly proud of our staff across the Trust who have recently undertaken NPQ qualifications, demonstrating their dedication to professional growth and excellence in education. Their hard work and commitment to enhancing their leadership skills have had a profound impact on our school community. These qualifications empower our staff to implement innovative strategies, drive meaningful change, and support both colleagues and students in achieving their full potential. The positive outcomes of their learning are reflected in our Trusts' continuous improvement and the enriched experiences of our students

Matt Pringle SENCO at Tarporley High School

Qualification NASENCO – Due for completion in December 2024.

"The NASENCO course has been essential for my development as a SENCO. It has given me an understanding of the complex world of SEN and allowed me to network with colleagues from other settings. I am currently writing a 6000-word essay on the challenges of diagnosing and supporting girls with autism. I will use my research from this essay writing process to improve my own practice, in addition, I hope to be able to disseminate my findings to other staff within school."

Liam Wright Assistant Headteacher at Eaton Primary School

Qualification NPQSL - Completed spring 2024.

"The NPQSL has equipped me with the skills needed to lead effectively, support colleagues and implement sustainable change to improve the outcomes for pupils."

Lauren Greatbanks Head of Year 11 at Tarporley High School

Qualification NPQMLBC – Completed spring 2023.

"Completing the National Professional Qualification for Leading Behaviour and Culture I was able to contribute to the creation of a positive year group culture that led to improved outcomes for my pupils by involving my year team in the creation of short-, medium- and long-term priorities that I identified in my learning modules. These priorities regularly developed my practice of being a Year Leader through focusing on the behaviour monitoring of my cohort and the importance of consistency when dealing with it. Reading around consistency also allowed me to work closely with Curriculum leads about implementing the behaviour policy and I was able to successfully monitor behaviour and share my ideas with other pastoral leaders, which in turn allowed me to contribute to pastoral changes across all year groups within the school."

James Bowland Subject Lead for Art & Design at Tarporley High School

Qualification NPQSL – completed summer 2024.

"Completing the National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership provided me with essential skills and knowledge for effective school leadership. The modules allowed me to experience areas of leadership I hadn't previously explored at middle leader level and developed strategic thinking, data analysis and project management skills, enabling me to drive impactful school improvements as an Associate Assistant Headteacher, ultimately empowering me to advance in my career and contribute to a thriving school environment."



Spotlight on Growth

Staff Development



Llion Williams Subject Lead for Music at Tarporley High School

Qualification NPQLT

"Completing the NPQLT has been a transformative experience in my professional journey. It's provided me with a deeper understanding of effective teaching strategies and leadership within the classroom, empowering me to support both colleagues and students more effectively. The course has equipped me with practical tools to enhance student outcomes, while also giving me the confidence to take on greater leadership responsibilities within my school. The skills and knowledge I've gained are invaluable for my ongoing career development and have truly elevated my approach to teaching and learning."

Tom Flaherty Assistant Headteacher at Tarvin Primary School

Qualification NPQSL – Completed spring 2023.

"The NPQSL course helped further develop my understanding of effective leadership in schools, as well as providing me with practical examples and strategies for building a collaborative working culture in an educational setting. The opportunity to discuss ideas with other leaders at the face-to-face sessions helped me to develop my approach to leadership and the skills needed to identify and implement change."



Jason Howdon Head of Physics at Tarporley High School

Qualification NPQLT

"I thoroughly enjoyed the NPQLT process, especially the face-to-face training days which were a great opportunity to meet teachers from all over the area and share ideas. The course was structured to give clear expectations of what is expected for middle leaders, providing a framework for leading development of a robust curriculum."

Andy Davies Executive Headteacher at Tarvin & Eaton Primary School

Qualification NPQEL – completed summer 2024.

"The National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership (NPQEL) bridged theory with day-to-day leadership challenges. The programme's focus on strategic leading across multiple schools, and evidence driven decision-making, has made a real impact on how I think about my practice. It was great to work with other executive headteachers, who were navigating similar challenges to myself. Overall, the NPQEL has further enhanced my capacity to drive meaningful change across our schools."



Susie Gray Literacy Lead at Tarporley High School

Qualification NPQLL – completed January 2024.

Completing the NPQLL has been a transformative experience, both personally and professionally. The program has equipped me with the knowledge and skills to lead effective whole school literacy initiatives, empowering me to make a significant impact on student outcomes. By implementing evidence-based strategies and collaborating with colleagues, I have been able to create a supportive literacy learning environment. The NPQLL has not only enhanced my leadership abilities but has centred my own teaching and learning strategies around the importance of literacy as a tool not just for learning but for life.

Spotlight on Growth

Staff Development

Ellen Green Assistant Headteacher at Weaverham High School

Qualification NPQH

"The National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) is a leadership qualification designed to develop the skills, knowledge, and confidence needed to lead a school effectively. By focusing on strategic decision-making, instructional leadership, and building a strong school culture, the program prepares aspiring or current headteachers for the challenges of school leadership.

Studying the NPQH aligns with my commitment to driving school improvement across the trust as School Improvement Lead and achieving impactful academic outcomes for the students that we serve. It provides a framework to enhance expertise in data-driven decision-making, team leadership, and curriculum excellence, to deliver sustained improvements in student achievement and whole-school performance."



Sarah Brookes Deputy Headteacher at Weaverham High School

Qualification NPQH

"The NPQH course I am currently completing is run by Best Practice. The face to face meetings have been beneficial as it is a great opportunity to network and speak to like-minded colleagues from a range of schools in both the secondary and primary sector. The learning hasn't been new as such thus far but has provided an opportunity to view case studies of successful headteachers and executive headteachers etc. who provide a valuable insight into how they lead schools successfully. I also value the opportunity to look at research in varying areas and reflect on my own practice and how it can be developed."



Nicola Cash at Weaverham High School

Qualification NPQLL

"I participated in the first cohort of the NPQLL - a great opportunity to broaden my knowledge of effective strategies to lead literacy in the secondary school. The course involved online and face-to-face conferences and was flexible for me to complete assignments around my usual working hours. I greatly valued the networking opportunities and sharing of ideas that have fed into our current processes."

Jon Brownley Deputy Director of Sixth Form at Tarporley High School

Qualification NPQSL – ongoing until Summer 2025.

"My undertaking of the NPQSL is an opportunity to develop skills of leadership to complement my role as Deputy Director of Sixth Form at Tarporley High School and boost my application for any Head of Sixth Form jobs I may apply for. At first I felt a sense of imposter syndrome but I have quickly come to enjoy the challenge of learning the theory of school leadership and believe it will make me a better leader in practice as well as allowing me to reflect on my current role and setting in a different and holistic way.



Spotlight on Growth Leadership Programmes



At the Sandstone Trust we want our staff to 'experience excellence through dynamic partnerships'. This aspiration has certainly been at the heart of our Aspiring Leaders Programmes that were launched in the Summer Term, and which began work in September. Leaders from across our family of schools have come together to frame and develop projects that will impact positively on the outcomes of our students. These projects will also allow these colleagues to develop their leadership skills in an active and practical way.

Our first session was hosted at Dragon Hall where we began our work by exploring our guiding leadership values and those 'north stars' by which we navigate our roles in leading students and staff. In conversations underpinned by our Trust values of respect, collaboration, honesty and exploration, colleagues talked with passion about their desire to lead by example, inspire others and put the students at the heart of everything we do. Our aspiring senior leaders talked about their leadership role models who are calm and consistent, offer support and challenge in equal measure and who are grounded in humility and service.

After having completed a personal skills analysis, these colleagues have worked in liaison with leaders in their own schools to define and design projects that will have impact across our Trust. These aspiring leaders will be working on projects as diverse as strengthening phonic teaching in Key Stage 2, redesigning extra-curricular learning in key Stage 3 and 4 and exploring the power of play in developing resilient creative and resourceful self-managing primary pupils who are ready to make the transition to secondary school. We are hoping that these 'blueprint projects' will be the models of practice that we can scale and replicate within and beyond our Trust to impact positively on the outcomes of all our students and expertise of our staff. To further strengthen our dynamic partnerships, we have designed future sessions that will be delivered by experienced leaders from our schools and the wider family of schools that we work with regionally.

Our vision for Professional Development at the Sandstone Trust is to develop high quality, innovative and evidence-based pedagogy with and for our colleagues and to strengthen our practice with shared experiences and through professional learning communities and specialist network groups. These pathfinder colleagues have certainly lived up to that vision.



**GET IN
TOUCH**

Contact Us

Tel: 01829 731780
enquires@sandstonetrust.co.uk
sandstonetrust.co.uk

Trust Central Office

Dragon Hall House, Dragon Hall,
Whitchurch Road, Chowley,
Chester, CH3 9DU

Experiencing excellence through dynamic partnership