

Issue 7  
Spring 2024



## Learning Partners Parent/Carer Newsletter



As the spring term comes to an end, it is surprising to note how quickly the chill of winter has passed to the warmth of spring... the only challenge has been the never ending rain in between! The Easter holidays await, and these are always a personal favourite of mine. The spring term passes so quickly, and it reminds me that time ticks on so regularly in the school year and this caused me to reflect upon what it is we do in schools. Sometimes we blink and another term passes, years tick by and it can feel like a conveyor belt of education. At Learning Partners, we strive to ensure this isn't the experience of our children. What phrase best encapsulates this? 'Making memories'.

As adults, and those as long in the tooth as I, think back to our school days - it is the memories and friendships that we remember most thoroughly. Of course the lessons are vital, the exams important as the keys to our next steps, however we know that school is so much more than this.

It is the friendships we form, the school trips we participate in, the sports fixtures, school plays and foreign exchange trips. It is these examples of school experiences that form long in the memory. It is our staff that give up the hours, form the relationships and believe in the wider purpose of education that makes our schools special. Throughout the term, I have found my heart gladdened by catching up with the award winners, the artists, the musicians, the athletes. However, it is those who have formed their own groups, their own communities and sense of belonging that encourages me most. It is these groups within our schools that indicates children who are thriving. We are empowering our young people to set up gardening clubs, chess groups, Uno societies and the like. If education teaches us anything, it is the skills and drive to become the change we wish to see in the world. Our children achieving this for themselves is a sign of us delivering on our vision: 'leading schools where children thrive'.

I could provide a never-ending list of opportunities that our children have engaged in this term. The grand, the prestigious and the all-encompassing to the small scale, the virtuoso and bespoke. All of this matters. It is these 'making of memories' that mark us apart. That is our calling and make us think of spring.

Jack Mayhew, CEO, Learning Partners

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## Meet the Central Team

When we decide on the content for our Parent / Carer newsletters, the focus, quite rightly, is usually on our schools - showcasing all of their wonderful work and the children's fantastic achievements over the previous term. Celebrating their wins and sharing their endeavours is a joyous thing to be able to do, however this time, we thought we would deviate from that approach to give you some insight into the 'other side' of our trust, which is the Central team and what they do.

The Central team is a small group that encompass the following areas: an Executive Team for providing leadership and direction, School Improvement, Estates, Governance, Compliance, Marketing, Finance, Human Resources & IT / Networking. These individuals bring a plethora of experience from a range of backgrounds, and most importantly all share the core values that make up the Trust's approach to leading schools where children thrive.

The primary objectives across the Central team are:

- Facilitate cross-trust working.
- Create structures for schools to work within, so that we all work consistently.
- Provide specialist advice that is difficult to access at school level.
- Perform tasks that are cheaper and more efficient if done centrally.
- Allow schools to focus more of their time and effort on meeting the needs of our children.



In the following pages, the teams have put together a brief update to give you an insight into what they have working on over this last term.

## Spring Term with the Central Team

### School Improvement Team

We've had another busy term in the school improvement team. A real highlight for us here at Learning Partners was the Trust-wide Inset day that we held. Our secondary colleagues spent that day at George Abbot school, our primary staff worked together at Kings College and our support staff across all schools were hosted at Guildford County school. We were treated to inspiring keynote speeches from speakers such as The Art of Brilliance, focussing on resilience among ourselves in order to deliver the very best educational opportunities and learning for the learners we serve. This was coupled by many expert professionals who delivered specific training on topics such as the use of AI in the classroom, all areas of SEND, effective Early Years education and supporting mental health in young people among many other topics. We were joined by 1200 members of the Learning Partners staff for this event.

Behind the scenes we have continued to build our curriculum networks, sharing expertise and challenging each other across our schools. 480 members of our primary teaching teams have been involved in cross school writing moderation from basic mark making undertaken in our Nursery classes through to greater depth writing at the end of KS2. In line with our drive to improve English outcomes even further, so that they are above and beyond national expectations, our secondary English colleagues have worked to align exam boards providing an enriched English curriculum for our KS3 and 4 learners.

During the summer term and beyond, we will continue our spotlight focus on improving outcomes for our disadvantaged learners, as well as supporting each and every school in our trust on their own school improvement journeys.



### Operations Team

As the trust continues to work on delivering the very best educational opportunities for our pupils, the Operations Team have been focussing on supporting the schools in their day-to-day with health and safety and the use of the EVERY system at the forefront. We have sought to increase the help we provide in all areas of compliance, including website audits, and we have also been working closely with schools to offer both support and training to improve statutory premises checks, continuing the goal to ensure that pupils', staff and visitor welfare remains a priority.

Following a successful training session in January, we have re-established regular premises meetings, which will focus on training opportunities for our much-valued site staff. Working together to drive improvements across all schools, recognising the skills and experience of each of our colleagues strengthens our organisational resilience through real collaboration.

Looking forward to the summer term, we will continue to improve our health and safety position by implementing both Trust-wide and School-wide reporting processes and working with our schools to support them in their summer-holiday premises projects. This is always an exciting time where we get to see the physical developments to our schools which will lead to improved learning environments for our pupils and staff.



### Finance Team

The central finance team work hard to ensure that there are robust financial controls in place to safeguard the assets of the Trust; we ensure our statutory financial reporting responsibilities are met and work with schools both individually & collectively to ensure financial resilience is a priority. I appreciate this all sounds a little grey.....(!), however, there is real purpose behind our work to ensure the best use of funds, which allows the achievement of the best possible outcomes for every one of our pupils. Looking after every penny ensures we have glitter and glue sticks (the proper ones that work!) when needed, as well as being able to make longer-term significant investment decisions, such as enhancing the quality of our spaces for teaching and learning.

While most of our work is behind the scenes, the spring term has seen the start of our annual budgeting cycle, where we look ahead and combine curriculum and development plans, alongside financial information to ensure robust and durable plans are made for the future. We have recently been visiting with all the schools in the trust, meeting with Headteachers, School Business Managers and representatives from school Local Governing Bodies to understand school level plans and how we can best support these. It's always such a pleasure seeing what is happening in our schools, and how something we may have been a small part in supporting is now making a real difference to pupils. We also use these visits to pass on ideas for areas such as fund raising or sources of cost savings, so collectively our schools can benefit from each other. Our budget discussions always include the great work our school PTA's carry out and the huge support they provide to every school. Your engagement with this is a vital part of this process and the financial well-being of our schools, thank you.



### HR Team

We have a small HR team in the trust and our role is to ensure the best possible working environment for all our staff in all our schools. We know that all members of staff within the trust work really hard, whether they are teaching your children, setting up science experiments, gritting the playground during icy weather or ensuring the heating bill gets paid. We know that, whatever their role, it is so important that they feel valued and appreciated. Staff wellbeing has been a focus this term.

Our staff working conditions survey is live at the moment and we are looking forward to seeing the results from that early in the summer term. At the same time we are developing a trust-wide wellbeing strategy and hope to be able to share this with staff in due course. We have introduced some new benefits this term, including a fantastic well-being app which we hope staff are utilising for everything from a desk-based yoga routine to a five-minute meditation, from a healthy recipe to a podcast on financial well-being. We have also been working on some policy updates to ensure they reflect both the latest employment legislation and best practice within the sector. Finally, we have been overseeing our payroll transition from one provider which, although a huge undertaking, has been largely successful inasmuch as everyone got paid!



### Network Team

The Learning Partners Network Team support most of our schools with a fully managed service. In our fast-paced world, the inextricable link between IT and education is now so hardwired that it is almost impossible to imagine one without the other. Every school is different from our primary schools to secondary schools no matter the size, we create a complete IT solution to help support teaching and learning within the classroom through better ICT.

The Learning Partners Network Team support our schools in all aspects of ICT as we have tailored our support to meet most requirements our schools face. Our technical staff are skilled in their areas of expertise, with a Learning Partners IT Apprentice programme to ensure the team have continuity for the future. We cannot be experts in every aspect of IT, however with a training programme and having good communication with 3rd party vendors we cater for the majority of requests and provide the support required.

The Learning Partners Network team is purpose designed to grow as our community and school numbers grow, with a structure to meet our needs, broken into 3 categories:

- Network Service Desk
- Field Engineers / Onsite IT Technicians
- Development & Infrastructure Team

This structure combines on-site and centralised support staff to better co-ordinate helpdesk tickets and projects for our schools.

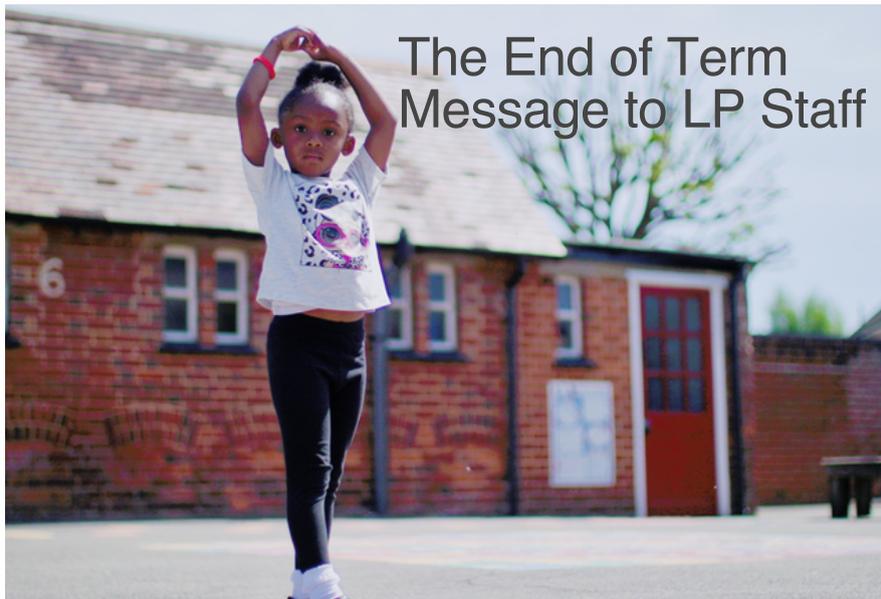
Some of our projects this term have been:

### Recently Completed - Key Projects

- Learning Partners Printing Solution. Glebelands & Fullbrook Printing. Complete overhaul of printing at both schools including new servers and "Follow Me Printing" for all staff.
- Wi-Fi at Pyford: a complete system upgrade for the Wi-Fi.
- MIS Project has begun and progressing well and we will soon be starting the full tender after soft reviews in February/March.
- The trust inset day ran smoothly with the help of the Network Team at all 3 sites supporting around 80 sessions.
- Learning Partners Backup solution is now fully implemented with a weekly meeting and report for the IT Director on all schools across the entire Trust.
- Guildford County are moving to the Learning Partners preferred supplier for broadband, web filtering and firewall, providing a large discount due to purchasing together.

We hope this has provided an interesting but brief look at some of the work we have been completing. We're looking forward to continuing with our work throughout the Summer term and beyond. Follow us on our social media channels to see more of what we and all our schools are working on!





# The End of Term Message to LP Staff



## Learning Partners

academy trust

### Our Values



Ambition for all - We will always strive for excellence - in every school, for every child



Better together - We will collaborate and work in partnership with others to improve outcomes for all



Learning that inspires - We will enable everyone to access inspirational and thoughtful learning



Brave Innovators - We will restlessly pursue creative and innovative ways of enriching the education of all children



Guided by integrity - We will be open, transparent and make decisions fairly

Leading schools where children thrive