

Saffron Academy Trust, eNews, Issue 9



eNews

Issue 9, July 2023

Welcome to our Summer 2023 SAT newsletter



Dear Parents, Carers and Colleagues,

We are fast approaching the last days of term, but before we get there our SAT schools are involved in a whirlwind of activity and events: exciting trips, fetes, plays, concerts and sporting competitions to round

off the year. We hope that everyone enjoys this busy end of term and I would like to give particular thanks to the dedicated staff whose discretionary effort helps us to organise the enrichment learning and also the large number of our parents who volunteer to get involved too. We could not provide these opportunities for our pupils without those who go the extra mile for us.

Year 6 children in our primary schools will have received their SATs results before the end of term. They can add these to the very many achievements they can be proud of during the year. Our primary schools all performed very highly indeed in the 2023 SATs exceeding, by some margin, national performance levels, which is no surprise because the quality of education they all provide to children is truly excellent.

Of course, this is the first year since 2019 that our Year 11 and 13 students have sat the complete set of GCSE and A Level examination papers, so our fingers are firmly crossed for them. As year groups they approached the exam season with pleasing resolve in spite of the disruption to the patterns of learning they experienced during the pandemic. We eagerly await their results, which we will celebrate with them in August.

To end on a further celebratory note, our focus in this newsletter is on Beckers Green Primary School in Braintree. Beckers may be SAT's smallest school, but Headteacher Claire Smyth and her incredible staff team make it mighty! Beckers was inspected by Ofsted in June and although the report has not yet been published, the verbal feedback sang the praises of the excellent leadership, teaching, curriculum and pastoral care for all pupils. I was a very proud CEO to hear such a glowing account and I am sure that staff and families at the school will share my pride when the report comes out.

Have a wonderful summer!

Caroline Derbyshire

SAT CEO

Message from the Trust's Chair, David Barrs



The joys of teaching and the inestimable value of education can often be masked by the difficulties that so often receive the media headlines in what are very challenging times for the public sector, indeed for society as a whole.

A recent survey of all staff across Saffron Academy Trust suggests that they enjoy the collaborative nature of working in the Trust and still retain a passion for working with young people. There is some frustration about a lack of resources caused by inadequate funding but a recognition that we are probably in a stronger position than many other schools. This professional positivity is reflected in recent visits by Ofsted to some of our schools. Despite national concerns over the Ofsted process and the unfairness of one word final judgements, all of our schools have received very positive feedback. Our SATs results at Key Stage 2 have been excellent and, in some cases, exceptional. It is also really encouraging to note that each of our schools is showing an upward trend in attendance levels, which were badly affected in the aftermath of the COVID 19 lockdown. Another very positive development is the prospect of a brand new school in Great Dunmow.

So there is much to celebrate and be encouraged by but this is all against the backdrop of the challenges we are facing and which occupy so much time, particularly at a senior level. The term has been spent trying to recruit teachers, trying to make ends meet, negotiating with energy companies, supporting families who are suffering from the cost of living crisis and lobbying government to help them understand what is happening in education and that it needs to be properly funded. All this at a time when we should be celebrating the fantastic journey our schools are on, whether it be under new leadership or being positively endorsed by inspectors for what they have achieved.

It is our professional support staff who also need to be recognised for what they do. The staff who place advert after advert for teachers, arrange interviews, negotiate with utility companies for a better deal, manage budgets, support students and support teachers in their classrooms. The partnership that exists

between professional teachers and professional support staff in both classrooms and offices is vital if we are to achieve what we want to achieve for the children under our care.

The recent announcement that teachers will receive a pay rise which is 'properly funded' (rather than 'fully funded') has been encouraging but it has been a painful process in the build up to that, with teachers having to take strike action to make their point. Our budget continues to show a shortfall and we still await news of the pay award for our support staff.

At a Board level we have welcomed Patrick Philpott and Matt Clare as Trustees, but said good bye to James Keeler and John Kerr, James having served for 30 years both as a school governor and, latterly, a Board Trustee. We are always interested to hear from people who would like to be involved at this level and I would be happy to talk to anyone who would like to know more. Please contact us via email at enquiries@saffron.academy

I do hope our Trust community - students, staff, parents, volunteers, governors and Trustees have a warm (but not too warm) and relaxing summer.

David Barrs

Chair, SAT

Beckers Green Primary School, Braintree



1 - Claire Smyth, Headteacher



At Beckers Green Primary it is incredibly important that all stakeholders feel part of our community and that we work together to strengthen relationships and support families in our local area. This year we have been pleased to re-establish relationships with local partners, which had been limited during the pandemic, and to be able to invite families back into school. Beckers Green has always understood the importance of increasing the cultural capital of our children and has made access to sport and a range of experiences top priority. This year we have been able to once again offer a full programme of sporting events, clubs and trips for all our children and I am delighted to share some of these with you.

Trips and Visits

We are thrilled to be visiting a local care home again. Every two weeks the same group of children from Year 1 visit Great Bradfords House on our Trust minibus. We take along planned activities such as arts and craft and biscuit making – we once took along our Boccia game and everyone got involved. The children are carefully selected to meet both the needs of the residents and the children involved, for example one child had lost a grandparent and found this experience comforting. The care home residents love the visits and have formed some incredibly positive relationships.



With the cost of living crisis we carefully considered whether school trips would be viable this year. We always let parents know the cost before booking and find out if there are any who feel it is too expensive. This year, support from the PTA and a very generous donation from a parent has meant that all trips were subsidised and therefore made affordable for everyone. EYFS visited Barleylands Farm, Key Stage 1 dressed as Victorians and went to Braintree museum and have also visited the local River Blackwater, Lower Key Stage 2 went to Colchester Castle and Upper Key Stage 2 went to the Natural History museum in London.





Sports Day

Sports Day is such a highlight of our year and this year the weather was kind to us. All four sessions were well attended by families and Miss Brown – our Sports leader – arranged a fantastic series of races and events. Our children impressed with both their sporting prowess and kindness to others. As usual, our Year 6 sports leaders helped to run the events and ensured all went smoothly.



School Production

For the first time since the pandemic we felt able to plan a production in Years 3 and 4. This was based on the lower Key Stage 2 topic of climate change and was called, "The Emerald Crown." The children were fantastic and sang their hearts out.



Parental Involvement



At Beckers Green we really appreciate the occasions when parents and family members engage in school activities and we have worked hard this year to increase the opportunities for families to visit and get involved. In March, Key Stage 1 invited families to join them for a sewing morning as part of their Design Technology project, to help children make their "wild things." It was incredibly well-attended and everyone had a fabulous time.

Key Stage 1 has also had family members visit classes to share their memories of toys from their own childhoods – this focused mainly on grandparents and children really enjoyed the stories they shared. Both EYFS and Key Stage 1 have also had surprise readers this year when a parent arrives at the end of the day to read a story to the class. Although parents have been nervous, the children have absolutely relished these visits and storytime has been met with unprecedented excitement!

In Key Stage 2 and across the school parents have been invited to attend maths lessons to observe our new five-part lessons. Parents have signed up to a date of their choice (never more than 2 parents in each lesson) and get to experience the lesson alongside their child. Feedback has been very positive.



Contact Us



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