

# The GALLERY TRUST

A community of special schools

# Newsletter

October 2020



For pupils, families and staff of schools within The Gallery Trust







# Welcome

Welcome to our first newsletter, and I hope you will be interested in reading about the achievements, developments and various projects across The Gallery Trust.

The Gallery Trust has grown considerably since it became a Special Multi Academy Trust in 2013. At that time, there was only one school in the Trust, Ifley Academy. We now have 5 open academies, 2 new special schools opening in 2022 and 2023/2024, a resource base, and a satellite provision. I am thrilled that Mabel Prichard School will join the Trust on 1 November 2020. This growth puts us in a strong position to act as advocate for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, and we have an important role in developing the SEND strategy and provision in the county. This increasing influence at local and national level has direct and indirect benefits for all of our pupils, families and staff.

Staying true to our core principles and values is vital at this time of growth, and I am proud that our drive to improve outcomes for pupils with SEND is undiminished and underpins everything we do, and every action we take.

Recent months have been incredibly difficult for pupils, staff, and families because of Covid-19. Staff have worked tirelessly to keep schools as safe as possible and I know that they will continue to dedicate themselves to ensure that our pupils feel secure, and that parents and carers are assured that their children are in safe hands.

Despite the challenges we continue to face, I am incredibly proud of what our staff and pupils continue to achieve, and I hope that this newsletter provides a celebration of our community. I would like to thank all of you for your energy, commitment, dedication and enthusiasm – you are amazing, and I am inspired to work with you.



Thank you for your support. Please don't hesitate to get in touch with us at [office@thegallerytrust.co.uk](mailto:office@thegallerytrust.co.uk). We look forward to hearing from you.

**Kay Willett,**  
Chief Executive,  
The Gallery Trust



# Trust update

The Trust's activities have continued at pace before and despite the pandemic, and a number of notable milestones have been achieved.

## New academies

We are delighted that 3 new schools joined our Trust in the last year: Northern House Academy and Orion Academy joined in February 2020; Springfield School joined the Trust in July 2020, and Mabel Prichard School will join on 1 November 2020. We have also opened a satellite provision of Orion Academy in Banbury, The Grove@Longford Park, which joins our resource base, The Gallery@Longford Park.

We extend warm greetings to all staff and pupils in these fantastic schools – welcome to our community!

## Expanding the number of special school places in Oxfordshire

The Trust is responding actively to the shortage of special school places in the county by opening 2 new schools in the North and South of Oxfordshire.

Planning for the opening of Bloxham Grove Academy near Banbury continues, and we hope that this new school, with a state of the art new building co-located with The Warriner Secondary School, will open in Spring 2022.

The Trust is very pleased that it has been successful in its application to the Department for Education and Oxfordshire County Council to open a new Special School in Didcot in 2023 / 2024.

Both Bloxham Grove Academy and Didcot Free Special School will cater for pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health difficulties, Autistic Spectrum Condition and Cognition and Learning Difficulties. The schools will have 100 pupils on roll, aged 7 to 18.



## Improving environments for our pupils and staff

One of the Trust's aims is to develop the quality of environments for the academies in our community, which will enhance opportunities for pupils, and deliver the high quality teaching and learning spaces that pupils deserve.

We are delighted that despite the pandemic, the long awaited move into Iffley Academy's new build took place over the summer, with staff and pupils moving into their new building when they returned after the summer holidays in September 2020.

The main building is finished, and the next stage of the works is to complete demolition of the old buildings, build the new car park and finish the multi use play area.

Thank you to all those involved in the original bid to the Department for Education for the new build in 2014, the planning and design, the organisation of the move to the new buildings, and to the staff who volunteered to help with the move during the summer holidays.

A bird's eye view of the new Orion Academy



Further enhancing the Trust's estates, building has recently started on Orion Academy's £12 million new state of the art re-build on its site in Blackbird Leys, Oxford. The building is scheduled to be completed in late 2021, and staff and pupils are already excited by the opportunities which will be offered by the new facilities.

At Bardwell School, the Trust is working closely with Oxfordshire County Council to build a £1.7 million extension, creating a new hall, kitchen and shared space for creative and expressive learning, along with 2 new classrooms. The Trust has also been successful in its £430,000 bid to the Department for Education to refurbish Bardwell School's pool facilities.



The entrance to the new Iffley Academy building



# Academy updates

## Iffley Academy

Over the past three years, University of Oxford Gardens, Libraries and Museums have been working with staff and students from Iffley Academy to co-develop and co-deliver a programme of creative learning opportunities and project work based around the University's collections. Pupils and staff have been anxiously waiting for the results of the Museum and Heritage Awards, for which Iffley Academy and the University of Oxford's project had been nominated for the Partnership of the Year.

The awards ceremony took place online on Tuesday 23 September and staff and pupils are thrilled to have been awarded "Highly Commended Partnership".

Find out more about the collaboration here: [www.glam.ox.ac.uk/iffley-academy-partnership](http://www.glam.ox.ac.uk/iffley-academy-partnership)



Of course, the most exciting development of the year was our move to our fantastic new building, and staff and pupils are delighted to be working in a purpose built environment. Students in Dali class are thoroughly enjoying the new cooking facility.



## Orion Academy

We have had a very exciting return to school in September. Our new school building works have begun in earnest, with aspects of the school grounds changing dramatically week by week. The students are keenly looking forward to visiting the site, once all the safety regulations are in place. It is hoped that we will be moving into the school as early as September 2021 and this will enable our community to steadily increase its numbers from 60 to 108 students. We will also be welcoming a cohort of girls as well as developing a 6th form provision. The students are most excited by the prospect of a 3G sports pitch, a state of the art

gym, a full-sized football pitch, therapeutic spaces and a new music studio for drumming, keyboards and electric guitars.

In the meantime a new member of staff is causing a fair amount of excitement.

Digby, a chocolate Labrador puppy, has joined the team as a therapy dog in training. He has already become a firm favourite with the staff and students, who enjoy spending time with him down in the offices or on the school field. Digby loves coming into school and the benefits of having a therapy dog on site are significant.





**Northern House  
Academy**

## Northern House Academy

Northern House Academy Pupils are modelling their new uniforms, introduced as part of the re-branding of the school. Not to be outdone by Orion Academy, Northern House Academy pupils pose with their new therapy puppy in training. Beau, a golden labrador, is 16 weeks old and is learning how to be a therapy dog, joining resident veterans, Dexter and Teasel. Pupils are keen to spend time with the dogs, enjoying the unconditional affection that the dogs offer. The therapeutic benefits that can be gained in the social and emotional support provided by dogs is evident in every interaction.



## Bardwell School

It has been terrific to welcome all of the Bardwell students and staff back to school after what has been a very long break for some. There are lots of new faces at Bardwell too and it has been brilliant to see the new students settling into their new classes.

Classes across Bardwell School have been embarking on their learning for the term. Class 3 have been exploring a castles and dragons theme in some of their lessons. This has involved the students wearing sets of wings and travelling across the school as they imagine themselves as fire-breathing beasts! Class 8 have been learning about rainforests, while Class 4's learning has

taken them to the land of the dinosaurs. Many of the students have been enthusiastically naming the dinosaurs they have learned about. Some students have been so taken with the topic that they have been wearing dinosaur T-shirts and socks to school! Class 7 have been enjoying the outdoors, both with weekly trips to Evenley Woods for some forest school learning and for their Bikeability lessons on the playground. The students have made amazing progress in riding their bikes already!

We're very excited about the building work that is due to start at Bardwell in the coming months and we are looking forward particularly to seeing our new school hall.







## Springfield School

Staff and pupils were really pleased to join The Gallery Trust on 1st July 2020. We look forward to sharing experiences with the Trust and working as a collaborative group to improve opportunities for pupils across the Trust schools.

During lockdown and since the return in September, everyone at Springfield has been enjoying outdoor learning, including Science work on bubbles, plants and bugs; Maths number washing lines and working on capacity; painting, acting out stories; ball skills, trikes and dancing. The secondary pupils have been tidying the sensory garden. Of course, there has also been the great value of simply enjoying the outdoors and playtime with friends. As winter approaches, we will continue to take the approach that there is no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing!



Springfield  
School



## The Grove@ Longford Park

The pupils at The Grove @Longford Park have had a fantastic first term. The learning topic has been based around what makes Banbury special and pupils have explored geography and history looking at landmarks, canals and a detailed study of Banbury and Oxford castles. Pupils have been enjoying Life Skills sessions focusing on healthy lifestyles and been learning all about what it means to be healthy. English work has been linked to the idea of traditional tales and maths work has been linked to number, place value and operations. Pupils have been exploring an exciting social, emotional and well being curriculum looking at



our STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) learning in different experiments, highlights being turning milk into plastic and exploring which citric fruits makes the best volcanoes. Fridays are known as 'Fab Farm Fridays' and students have been enjoying everything from making fires to tractor tours to working with the small animals, reptiles and donkeys at Warriner School Farm.





# Spotlight on The Gallery Trust

The Trust is a charity dedicated to providing outstanding education and support for young people with special needs and disabilities. A single organisation and legal entity, the Trust has

**530 pupils 340 staff**  
**working across Oxfordshire**

The Trust is dedicated to:

- Commitment to special education – striving to provide the best specialist learning experience for all students
- Opportunities for all to learn – ensuring that students and staff have access to learning pathways which enhance their lives
- Genuine respect and value – creating relationships which promote trust, confidence and respect within environments which are safe and secure

The schools are supported by a central Trust team who provide school improvement and business services, allowing school leaders to focus on teaching and learning within their schools. The Trust teams are based at Iffley Academy and at Northern House Academy.

Schools maintain their own character and individuality, while subscribing to, and sharing, the

values of the Trust. There are considerable benefits and opportunities for pupils and staff to being part of a successful and stable community of special schools.

School leaders and staff can combine their knowledge and planning abilities to work on challenges and solutions together, and benefit from the opportunities for secondments, peer to peer support, shared training and career development. Best practice and successful initiatives can be shared across the schools in the Trust. Greater value for money can be obtained by negotiating better deals for services, allowing a greater percentage of resources to be spent on curriculum delivery.

Pupils benefit from being part of a Trust which is well resourced, secure and committed to continual school improvement in all its establishments. Because of the diverse range of SEND across the academies in the Trust, pupils can be placed in the right school in the right location within the Trust, where they will be taught by staff who have a wide range of SEN experience, allowing them to flourish.