

# The GALLERY TRUST

A community of special schools

# Newsletter

Autumn 2021



Billy enjoying sports day at Mabel Prichard School

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





# Welcome

In our first newsletter of the academic year, I am once again writing to you against the backdrop of the continuing pandemic. The last 18 months have been extraordinarily difficult for everyone. My priority in this article is to thank all members of our community – parents, carers, staff, pupils, trustees, local board members, and our partners – who have continued to support our work to provide education and pastoral care to our students.

The disruption caused by the pandemic to students' education and their wellbeing has been profound, and we cannot pretend that recovery will be straightforward. Students have not experienced a "normal" school year for two years and indeed, some students have never enjoyed an academic year without it being overshadowed by Covid-19.

The sacrifices that children have made in terms of the impact on their families, loss of education, contact with friends, and the opportunity to play has affected their achievement and mental health. Our pastoral teams are working hard to support our young people by working in partnership with parents and carers, and with professionals in other sectors. Staff are focusing on actions which keep students and staff safe, to provide the support that every pupil needs to enable them to thrive emotionally, academically and physically, and to achieve their potential.

Despite the pandemic, school improvement is always at the forefront of our minds, and we are setting ambitious targets to promote our aim to deliver excellent education across the Trust and to embed a culture of continuous improvement. We are constantly working across our schools to identify outstanding practice to roll out across schools and to ensure that our skilled and experienced staff can share their expertise.

I am very proud that despite the challenges, there is, as always, so much to celebrate in our schools. I am particularly pleased that Orion Academy moved into its fabulous new building in September 2021. Our sincere thanks go to Oxfordshire County Council, Morgan Sindall Construction, Head Teacher Lynne Smith, the Orion staff team, and Operations and Estates Manager Mr Woodward, for all their hard work and dedication in ensuring that students were able to move into their new school in September. Well done to everyone!



Thank you for your support. We look forward to hearing from you and wish you all a very happy, and restful Christmas and new year.

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

# Academy updates

## Iffley Academy

### Welcome to Gerald!

At Iffley Academy we welcomed 31 new students in September 2021 - plus a new school dog! Gerald is a 5-year-old Cocker Spaniel. Dogs are a long-standing feature of Iffley Academy and have been proven to have a positive impact on our students. Gerald has been visiting as part of our therapeutic curriculum, mainly working on Fridays, helping with Star Time and working 1:1 with students. Gerald is already well loved by students and staff, and whilst he belongs to Mr Chinery, you will often find him being spoiled in Mrs Danby's office!



### Gaining work experience in the Cafe

Work experience is an essential part of preparation for adulthood and students have been working at Oxfam and Oxford Whole Foods. In addition to these external opportunities in the community, we have recently opened our own work experience cafe. With strong links to expressive and receptive language, this provision helps to build students' self-esteem, confidence and their ability to interact with others. The cafe is open to visitors and small groups of students, who are managed by sixth form students and our therapeutic staff team.



### Vikings at Ufton Court

In connection with the Tate Gallery Vikings topics, students attended a Vikings workshop offered by Ufton Court in Reading. Students spent the day exploring the Viking way of life; early survival skills using flint to start fires, creating fencing to secure livestock and raiding nearby countries to steal riches to honour their Viking king. It was a wonderful experience for the students who all had a great time and who demonstrated impressive knowledge of Vikings which they had developed in the classroom.



## Orion Academy

At the beginning of the school year, we were delighted to move into our brand-new building. We have worked in conjunction with partners Oxfordshire County Council and Morgan Sindall Construction to create this new building which offers a range of fantastic learning spaces for students.

Bigger than the previous building, spaces are bright, spacious and welcoming and students are already benefitting from specialist facilities to support learning in art, food technology, music (including a recording studio), construction and gardening.

The school has improved outside spaces, with a hard games court to the west of the school, and a 3G sports pitch to the east. Each classroom has its own outdoor space with garden planting and just beyond these spaces are groups of benches which are covered by canopies to provide shade.

Now that the demolition of the old school has been completed, the building contractors are now working steadily to complete groundworks which will provide a new Sport England-grade football pitch.

The project is anticipated to be fully completed by March 2022.

We are proud of our new building and look forward to showing visitors around as the year progresses.



Orion Academy



# Northern House Academy

## Balancing Skills and Climbing the Wall

We have had an excellent start to our year at Northern House Academy. All of the students have settled well in their new classes and are enjoying being at school. This term we have seen Mr Hanley take the lead in PE sessions across the school. These sessions have quickly become a firm favourite with students, especially the finale of each lesson which involves students using all their newly acquired skills to play against each other in a full game! Sports covered so far

include football, basketball, netball, handball and benchball. Students have also been enjoying the Star Time sports option on a Friday afternoon.

A small group of students were chosen to take part in a weekly climbing session in Oxford. The function that the sessions serve is slightly different depending on the needs of the students and is linked to their EHCP outcomes and targets. For some students, the sessions enable them to develop their gross motor skills, for others it is an opportunity for them to develop self-confidence and build their self-esteem.

Some students have been working towards overcoming anxiety related to new activities whilst developing their resilience and perseverance, whereas others have focused on developing their communication skills with peers and having the opportunity to do this in a novel setting. The unique nature of the sessions has enabled these students to make excellent progress towards a wide and varied selection of EHCP Outcomes this term. The pupils have thoroughly enjoyed their climbing lessons and look forward to them each week. We have really seen the benefit of incorporating targeted enrichment activities into our curriculum this term and we hope to expand on this in the future.



Northern House Academy

O'Keeffe class love to dress up! On Fridays students and staff spend the day in a variety of fancy dress outfits to celebrate the end of the week. You will often see a turtle or Iron Man or The Incredible Hulk doing a maths activity, and a police officer or soldier teaching a phonics session - or even a Greek god eating lunch! But be prepared: if you visit on a Friday, you MUST wear a hat!



## Bardwell School

It has been wonderful to welcome back all the students this term as we opened our new £2 million school extension. The school extension and internal remodelling has provided us with a new school hall, a library area, a new hygiene room, teaching kitchen and drama/music room.

The students have been really enjoying the new spaces where we have seen some great learning and exciting experiences take place.

In Science, Class 1 have been using our investigation skills to observe changes - exploring the properties of cornflour has been a particular favourite!

In Class 6, we have been learning how to play cricket in our P.E. lessons this term. We have been practising our throwing and catching skills, practising turn taking, and following instructions.





## Springfield School

Our KS3 class has been looking at fireworks as part of their theme work in the Autumn Term. The class had a discussion about festivals and explored Diwali and Bonfire Night.

The pupils had opportunities to create fireworks pictures and rockets using paint and collage. In Literacy they made Fireworks poems and experienced story massage and various sensory resources linked to the theme.

Each week the pupils create their lunch and the pupils wanted it to link to the theme. Some of them researched different foods eaten on bonfire night and then they voted as a class on what to cook. They voted for jacket potatoes topped with chilli and cheese and gingerbread biscuits for pudding.

Each group within the class had a different aspect of lunch to make. Two pupils had the role of cooking the potatoes - stabbing them first, then cooking them in the microwave, brushing them with oil and then putting them in the oven. They worked hard and were very pleased with the jackets they served to their peers. Another group followed a symbol recipe to make gingerbread men and enjoyed the sensory process throughout. The final group worked independently to follow a recipe to make the chilli to top the jackets. They really enjoyed making it and there wasn't a mouthful left, delicious!



Springfield  
School



## Mabel Prichard School

This term's topic is 'The Wider World'. Our students who joined both schools in September, have been exploring their new environment, learning what is available to them, such as the jacuzzi, soft play, the sensory room and the design and technology rooms where they can cook.

Students have been learning about the local community to discover what is on offer. A small group of students have been visiting Thomley Hall to explore the learning opportunities they have. They have used the cafe, gym and music rooms to get creative, fit and learn about how to use community facilities.

Students have also continued to develop their independence skills in school. We are part of the 'National Breakfast Programme' which provides breakfast to all our students. We use this as a learning opportunity to start the day. All students taking part, choose their breakfast from different cereals, toast, bagels and various toppings. Some are learning to weigh out their cereal. They all learn to lay the table, choosing which cutlery they need, before making and sharing their breakfast with each other. They also clear up, which is not always their favourite part! All students in the school start their day like this, so as they move through the school the routine is familiar and their skills develop.

Our school dogs have worked hard since the start of term, giving our students lots of support, so Patty made sure Becksy had a little walk and a treat to say thank you.



## Spotlight on the Board of Trustees

The impact of the pandemic continues to restrict the opportunity for Trustees to visit schools to meet staff and learners and observe practice. We know that the pandemic has taken a toll on our communities, and we recognise the commitment of senior leaders and all staff to try to minimise the impact on our learners, who have been significantly affected by changes to routines and lives since 2020.

We welcome – but sadly as yet only virtually – Bob Frost as a new Trustee. Bob has an impressive CV as an independent Director working with company management teams to improve the performance of their businesses. He is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants and will bring valuable skills and scrutiny to the financial security of the Trust. Bob is keen to get to know the Trust and the schools, and like other Trustees, is looking forward to the time when we can safely resume school visits.

Stephen King, Vice-Chair, and I have discussed strategic priorities with the Trust Executive Team

linked to resource needs that will inform the Trust Development Plan. This Plan is now being drafted by the Executive Team and will be presented for discussion and adoption at the Trustees meeting in December, after which it will be for school leaders and local academy boards to identify their own actions in support of the overarching goal of improving outcomes for learners. Wishing you all a merry Christmas.



**Chris Scrivener,**  
Chair of Board of Trustees