

# WINTER 2024



SUCCESS FOR EVERYONE

TRUST NEWSLETTER ISSUE 2





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**Growing Together, Learning for Life**



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# OUR SHARED VISION



Our vision is “Success for Everyone”. We aspire for every member of our community, regardless of circumstances or background, to be the best version of themselves - confident, successful students, committed, successful staff, who are committed to growing and developing as practitioners, and engaged stakeholders who unite in celebration. We achieve our Vision through our two core values of CARE and UNITY.

## 01 CARE

The overriding feel within our Trust is that we care more than anyone else could expect. We care for all aspects of our practice and, in particular, we care for:

- Everyone’s safety and happiness
- Everyone’s personal development and growth
- Everyone’s outcomes
- Everyone’s standards
- Everyone’s learning
- Everyone’s well-being
- Everyone’s relationships

This is reflected by the fact that we call ourselves the Poly Family and we are an organisation based on relationships above all else – we are individual people first and students, staff and parents second.

## 02 UNITY

The value that ensures that our impact is greater than it ever could be if we worked alone. This means that our schools, teams and individuals are always pulled together in ways which share the workload and create solutions from which everyone benefits. We are determined that nothing can divide us when we put the needs of our community before everything else.

# MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

**Mr T Plumb**



## **Welcome to the Winter 2024 edition of the PolyMAT Newsletter**

It is a pleasure to introduce our Winter Newsletter, the theme of which is oracy and language. There is nothing more important to the enjoyment and success of our lives than the ability to communicate our needs and feelings. Oracy and language skills are vital to this and are something that all our schools prioritise.

As our trust has grown, we have been able to work with a wider group of young people and adults, something which helps grow our communication skills and learn from each other. Alongside our abilities to speak and write go our abilities to listen and learn. The two go hand-in-hand and it is a privilege to see our schools working together, listening to and learning from each other, something that brings benefits to our young people as we join up the educational journey.

As you'll read in this newsletter, there are many examples of fantastic oracy and language development within all our schools. The greatest gift we can give our young people is the confidence to be their true selves and this requires the ability to communicate in a variety of contexts and mediums. We are very proud to watch our young people develop and grow into the young adults that will go forward into the world to be happy, successful people.

We are also celebrating International Volunteers' Day in this edition. Our work is greatly supported and guided by the wise and selfless input from those in our governance structure, all of whom volunteer their time for free. We are extremely grateful for all that they do and they are all driven by the selfless desire to give back to the community. Volunteering is something that can bring great joy and satisfaction. It can feel special to do something for which you are under no obligation other than your own personal desire. Volunteering can show the best of ourselves as human beings and is something that we support wholeheartedly.

We hope that you enjoy this newsletter and another chance to see the work that we do and the achievements that result. We thank everyone involved in our daily work for the support and collaboration which makes our successes possible.

# CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERS' DAY

## **Celebrating international volunteers' day: honouring governance roles in our trust**

On December 5th, we joined the global community in celebrating International Volunteers' Day, a day dedicated to recognising the invaluable contributions of volunteers worldwide. Within our Trust, it is an opportune moment to shine a spotlight on those who serve in governance roles - Members, Trustees, and Academy Committee Members - whose dedication and commitment play a pivotal role in the success of our academies.

### **The heart of governance**

Volunteers in governance positions are the backbone of our educational framework. They bring a wealth of expertise, diverse perspectives, and a shared passion for improving the educational experiences of our students. By serving in these roles, they not only contribute to the strategic direction of the Trust but also foster an environment where our academies can thrive.

### **Strategic leadership and oversight**

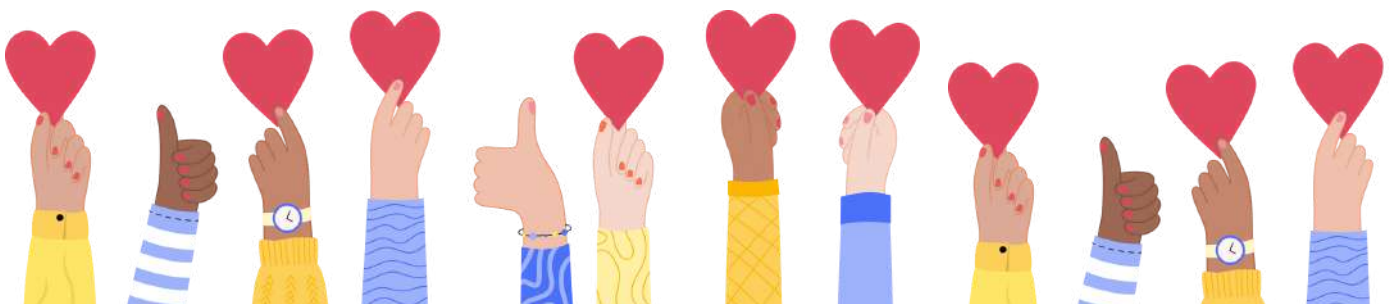
Trustees and Members are entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing the operation and performance of our academies. They engage in strategic planning, ensuring that our mission and vision align with the educational needs of our communities. Their governance provides essential oversight, allowing for transparent decision-making and accountability. This careful stewardship is crucial in navigating challenges and seizing opportunities for growth.

### **Supporting educational excellence**

Academy Committee Members play a vital role in supporting the day-to-day operations of our schools. They serve as a bridge between the Trust and the individual academies, providing insights and feedback that help shape local policies and practices. By actively participating in meetings, committees, and school events, these volunteers foster a sense of community and collaboration, ensuring that the unique needs of each academy are met.

### **Championing community engagement**

The impact of our governance volunteers extends beyond the boardroom. They are advocates for community engagement, building strong relationships with parents, local organisations, and stakeholders. This outreach not only enhances the visibility of our academies but also cultivates a supportive network that enriches the educational experience for our students.



# CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERS' DAY

## **Celebrating their contributions**

As we celebrate International Volunteers' Day, it is essential to acknowledge the significant time and effort that our governance volunteers dedicate to their roles. Their commitment often goes above and beyond, driven by a genuine desire to make a difference in the lives of students and the wider community. We encourage everyone within our Trust to take a moment to express gratitude to these individuals for their selfless service.

## **Looking ahead**

The contributions of our governance volunteers are integral to the ongoing success of our Trust and its academies. As we move forward, we invite more individuals to consider taking on governance roles, whether as Members, Trustees, or Academy Committee Members. Your involvement can help shape the future of education in our communities.

This International Volunteers' Day, we celebrated and honoured the dedicated volunteers in governance roles within our Trust. Their passion, leadership, and commitment to our academies inspire us all and lay the foundation for a brighter future for our students. We thank them for their unwavering support and service!



# POLYMAT FEATURES IN THE TOP 100 MOST INCLUSIVE UK EMPLOYERS INDEX 2024

## Top 100 Inclusive UK Employers 2024

Celebrating the champions of inclusive cultures and best practice in Fairness, Respect, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Engagement!

The 2024 Top 100 Most Inclusive UK Workplaces is a platform to highlight and celebrate the remarkable achievements of everyone who has committed themselves to building inclusive cultures.

PolyMAT's dedication to diversity and inclusion has been publicly acknowledged as we rank among the Top 100 Inclusive UK Employers in 2024, something of which we are incredibly proud.

With a strong emphasis on innovation and empowerment, PolyMAT is cultivating a workplace where every individual feels appreciated, supported, and motivated to thrive.

Solat Chaudhry, Chief Executive at the National Centre for Diversity said:

*"I send my warmest congratulations to PolyMAT on successfully reaching number 83 in the Top 100 Most Inclusive UK Employers Index 2024.*

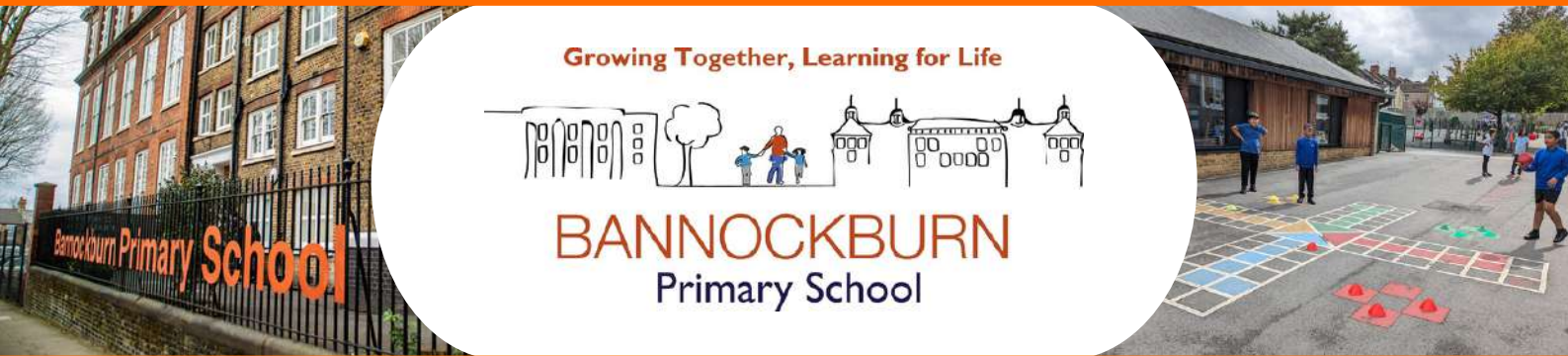
*The inspiring organisations that make the Top 100, demonstrate excellent levels of employee retention and recruitment and clearly demonstrate how they value and respect the people that work for them.*

*What better than to be recognised by peers and those travelling in the same direction towards the common goal of Fairness in the workplace. It is hugely motivational."*






# OUR FAMILY OF SCHOOLS




**Growing Together, Learning for Life**



**BANNOCKBURN**  
Primary School



  
Woolwich Polytechnic  
**School for Boys**



  
Woolwich Polytechnic  
**School for Girls**



Every child, no matter their background, deserves the opportunity to discover, nurture, and express their true voice.



## **Fostering Language Development: A Foundation for Success**

At Bannockburn, we understand that language is fundamental to learning. It enhances communication, builds confidence, and supports cognitive development. To ensure our pupils succeed, we are committed to equipping them with the language and oracy skills they need to engage in learning, communicate their ideas clearly, and become independent learners.

## **Prioritising Early Language Development**

Language development is the foundation for all other learning, which is why it is a key focus across our school. We prioritise early identification of pupils with communication and language needs as early as possible. Through Speech and Language Screeners and baseline assessments, we ensure that no child is overlooked. Tailored interventions are then implemented to support those who need extra help, with progress closely tracked by our dedicated teaching teams.

## **Creating a Vocabulary-Rich Environment**

To develop a rich vocabulary, we believe in immersing pupils in high-quality language experiences throughout the day. Our classrooms are designed to reflect the vocabulary linked to our current topics, with tiered vocabulary displays, themed areas, and working walls. We also provide pupils with opportunities to explore vocabulary through our book corners, which feature a wide range of high-quality texts.

We are intentional about teaching vocabulary directly. Our planning includes specific vocabulary for each lesson, outlined in mid-term and short-term plans. Knowledge organisers for each unit highlight key words, ensuring that pupils learn both their meanings and spellings. Additionally, we often pre-teach vocabulary to reduce cognitive load, especially for lessons involving complex or new vocabulary. This is made engaging through drama and dance activities, particularly during our half-termly topic immersion days, which prepare pupils for upcoming learning.

## **Teaching Word-Learning Strategies**

We also focus on teaching pupils strategies to independently understand and learn new words. During Guided Reading sessions, teachers model how to decode unfamiliar vocabulary, helping pupils build the skills they need to do this themselves. Across the wider curriculum, pupils are encouraged to explore and apply new vocabulary, with teaching teams carefully selecting oracy structures for each lesson to support verbal communication.

To support high-quality verbal answers, we use sentence stems, word banks, and clear expectations. Teachers model what effective communication looks like and help pupils develop their responses, fostering confidence and clarity in both speech and writing.





## Promoting Reading for Pleasure

Research shows that much of a child's language acquisition comes from reading, which is why we prioritise reading for pleasure. Our classrooms are filled with inviting book corners that offer a diverse range of texts, reflecting both pupils' own experiences and those of others. We also regularly rotate our focus author displays to introduce pupils to various authors and writing styles.

Each class has a daily read-aloud session, where teachers share texts from our carefully chosen spine books. These texts offer engaging, challenging material that pupils may not have access to independently, helping to expand their vocabulary and understanding.

## Targeted Support for Language and Oracy

In addition to universal strategies, we provide targeted support for pupils requiring additional help in language and oracy development. Our Word Aware programme, based on an evidence-based approach developed by speech and language therapists, helps pupils learn vocabulary through speech, action, and practice.

For pupils needing to develop their physical oracy skills, our LAMDA (London Academy of Music & Dramatic Art) programme offers a structured approach, using drama to build confidence in tone, gesture, expression, and eye contact.

Our Coaching through Drama programme encourages reluctant speakers, boosting their confidence and enabling them to take an active role in class discussions. We also offer Speech Bubbles interventions, using drama, play, and storytelling to build communication skills in younger pupils.

At Bannockburn, we are dedicated to ensuring every pupil has the language and oracy skills to thrive. Through a combination of intentional teaching, engaging learning experiences, and targeted interventions, we are building a strong foundation for success.



# WOOLWICH POLYTECHNIC SCHOOL FOR GIRLS



**Headteacher  
Ms L Williams**

## **Why Language Matters**

This year at WPSfG we have a clear focus within our professional development of being research-informed and ensuring that all decisions made regarding the education of our students are taken within the context of what cognitive science and leading research tells us about the brain and learning. For those wishing to read more about why oracy and language must be at the heart of the curriculum and envisaged not as 'skills' but understood in terms of declarative knowledge – please read the following short article: [Oracy Cambridge](#)

## **WPSfG Winter Countdown!**

At the Girl's School, we are currently running a 10-day countdown to the holiday. Each day from December 5th until the 18th students may come to the library and participate in various activities such as puzzles, word searches, crosswords and book quizzes. Each successful completion rewards students with a raffle ticket for the daily prize of a book.

## **Professional Development and Skilled Readers**

As part of our whole school CPD staff were provided with opportunities to develop a greater understanding of how schemata play a pivotal role in fluency and reading comprehension.

## **Developing Oracy - Tutor Time Reading**

As part of our plan to develop proficient readers and increase oracy, we have introduced Tutor Time Reads, whereby tutor groups collectively read a book during form time, which is led by their tutor as the expert reader. Please the next page below for the books currently being read by tutor groups in KS3.

Success for Everyone



All students within the same year group read the same book twice per week. These texts have been chosen specifically as reading for pleasure, with the focus being that they are stories students will enjoy sharing together. 55% of our students said that they were not read to by parents at home when they were primary school age. Our aim with Tutor Reads is to fill in this gap, modelling fluent reading and a love for sharing stories.

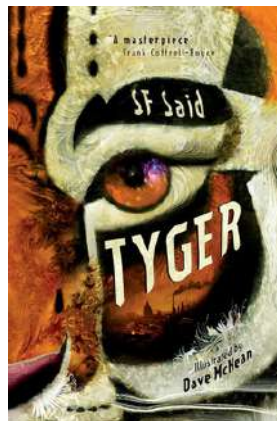
Feedback on this has been positive, with 100% of staff surveyed saying that they believed tutor reads were having a positive impact on students' ability to develop reading and oracy. Library visits and book borrowing have increased noticeably since the start of Tutor Reads. The authors of both the Y7 and Y8 Tutor Reads have been booked to visit the school and speak to students in early 2025.

## Tutor Time Reads

### YEAR 7



### YEAR 8



### YEAR 9



## Sparx Reader

Sparx Reader is our new English homework platform for KS3 students. On Sparx Reader, students:

- Take their reading age tests
- Are given a wide choice of books based on the outcome of their test, considering their reading age and reading speed
- Read texts in full on the platform, with periodic comprehension and retrieval questions to earn Sparx Reader Points
- Many of our students with lower reading ages have been highly engaged with the competitive aspect of Sparx. We send shout-outs to tutor groups each week for students with the highest SRP and are introducing various other celebrations and rewards as the term goes on.
- This platform will form the cornerstone of our developing reading intervention plans moving forward and play a vital role in supporting the achievement of our ambition for all students to be able to read at chronological age by the end of KS3 in order that they can properly access the curriculum and achieve success.

# WOOLWICH POLYTECHNIC SCHOOL FOR BOYS



**Headteacher  
Mr T Lawrence**

At Woolwich Polytechnic School for Boys, we recognise the importance of oracy. Not only is it an essential tool for developing reading and written literacy, it also provides students an opportunity to 'get it wrong' or refine ideas without the commitment in writing. In this sense, oracy is an essential part of pedagogy as part of our 'I Do, We Do, Your Do' approach to modelling skills and knowledge, the I do and We Do sections requiring whole class questions and student-led oracy respectively.

However, oracy also demonstrates a commitment to student voice. I have been delighted to see our year 8s take a lead on this in their assemblies where we have now had two individual boys and very soon a group of boys leading whole year group assemblies since the beginning of the term.

The first assembly to be led was during Anti-Bullying Week, when Year 8 student, Frederick explained the different types of bullying, from cyber to physical, to the whole year group, asking questions and fielding responses from the other boys. He delivered with such confidence and I suspect that his voice, being a student voice, had even more impact on such an important subject with his audience.

Frederick reflected upon his experience of delivering an assembly and said, "I think that boys need to deliver assemblies to get the message out there that bullying can have a major toll upon others. Its also important so that messages are out there and that creates more accountability. Boys pay more attention to other boys than their teacher – all eyes were on me! Boys need to hear different voices."

Success for Everyone



This assembly has been followed up by another. One has been led by Year 8 student, Michael on racism, a topic he has been working on over the weekend: the presentation itself was a real passion for him, as his research into the topic and clear articulation, despite the nerves, showed.

After the assembly, Michael said, "When Ms Evans raised the subject of racism for an assembly, it immediately spoke to me as a passion. I spent the weekend doing research on the meaning of racism, how it comes about and some of its recent history. Speaking as a black student, with ambition to be an actor, John Boyega's own actions really spoke to me. I think that students communicate better in assemblies than teachers – it's easier to understand each other at times than teachers."

The third assembly will also be on racism. Ms Evans, the Year 8 head of year, originally put out the topic to the year group and another group of boys have been vying to present after Michael. The topic will draw upon the first assembly on bullying. As Ms Evans said herself, the topic is more appropriate to be delivered by the boys, rather than a white woman!

On each occasion, I have phoned the boys' parents to commend them and reinforce the good practice they are sharing, both in the topics and their accomplishments in oracy.

I can see how Year 8 can lead the other year groups and tackle pressing issues of safety onsite and off, particularly on their ways to and from school.



# WINTER SUPPORT PACKAGES

Our dedicated staff across the schools have been putting together essential winter support packages for families for several years. These packages include non-perishable food, toiletries, small Christmas gifts, and vouchers. Our staff selflessly prepare and deliver these packages directly to our families. We take immense pride in our school community and the commitment of our staff to prioritise the needs of our students and their families. PolyMAT has reached out to local businesses and companies, resulting in generous donations that will greatly enhance these packages. We are only sorry that we are not able to provide packages for all families. We are incredibly grateful for every contribution, as each item will be utilised by our students and their families.



## Donated Items:

- Churchills Confectionery: 63 boxes of Christmas fudge
- Abbey Place Residents: Over 100 food items
- Keels Toys: A box of cuddly toys
- Donations provided by staff at the Travel Corporation and their digital marketing agency, BS&T Digital
- Walkers Publishing: Four beautiful Christmas-themed picture books
- Cheeky Panda: 144 toilet rolls, x3 boxes of baby wipes and x3 boxes of tissues
- Blueprint Collections: Over 40 stationery items
- Bunker 51: A £50 gift voucher
- Honest Burger: A £20 gift voucher
- Wentworth Puzzle: A £32 puzzle

## Staff Raffle

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who purchased raffle tickets! We successfully raised £110, which will be evenly distributed among our schools to buy items for the winter support packages. Your kindness is truly appreciated. On Friday, December 6th, we held the raffle, and here are the lucky winners!

- Wentworth Puzzle valued at £32 - Winner: Miss L White
- Honest Burger £20 Voucher - Winner: Mrs D Hawgood
- Bunker 51 £50 Voucher - Winner: Miss A Minnican



# WINTER SUPPORT PACKAGES



On behalf of all the students at PolyMAT Schools



Growing Together, Learning for Life

BANNOCKBURN Primary School

Woolwich Polytechnic School for Girls

PolyMAT

Woolwich Polytechnic School for Boys

Woolwich Polytechnic Sixth Form

😊 **THANK YOU!** 😊





# Are you looking



# to join

# PolyMAT?

## BECOMING A POLYMAT SCHOOL:

If our vision and values strike a chord, we would welcome the opportunity to work with you and see if you would like to become part of our trust. We are open to collaborations with schools in the South East, if your school is interested in becoming part of PolyMAT, please reach out to: [contactus@polymat.co.uk](mailto:contactus@polymat.co.uk)

## ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A NEW CHALLENGE?

At PolyMAT, we place great emphasis on creating a workplace that is happy and fulfilling and puts people on a journey of development, both professionally and personally. We feel truly blessed with the amazing staff that we work with and their never-ending drive to do special things to help our students. We are ambitious and dedicated and will always place the quality of education before any other desires. If you are interested in working with us, please contact one of our schools directly, and we will be very happy to discuss opportunities with you.

If we do not have any vacancies matching your interests, please join our Talent Pool at [MyNewTerm](#) and we will review your application.

Tim Plumb  
CEO of PolyMAT



