



BIRMINGHAM SPECIAL SCHOOLS CO-OPERATIVE TRUST NEWSLETTER : SPRING TERM 2023

Welcome

Following feedback from you about our first newsletter, it has been agreed that we will produce one of these each term to help ensure that you know what has been happening across the Trust and our work together. Collectively we agreed a Trust wide peer review process and we carried out our first one at Dame Ellen Pinsent in October. Another was planned for Longwill in November, but Ofsted beat us to it by arriving there on the 8th and 9th November! However we are all delighted at the final outcome for Longwill. [Ofsted | Longwill A Primary School for Deaf Children](#). It is a true testament to the brilliant work of staff and leaders there and the value of Trust was also recognised. The next Peer Review is planned for The Pines on 7th February.

BSSCT "Improving Trust internal partnership working and communication so that more individual staff know and value the work of the trust"

SHARED LEARNER ACTIVITIES

'Common Ground' (previously 'Proud to be Me') **A shared creative Arts project.**

All 7 schools have identified a project lead for this Arts project to give our schools a platform to showcase OUR children's art work, dance and drama and all things creative. All seven project leads met at MAC at the end of September, where Grace Mahar, project co-ordinator, presented an introduction and overview to the project. The seven project leaders were given a questionnaire designed to prompt reflection on the existing arts curriculum in their schools, with a view to enhancing their school's arts curriculum via this project. Using the questionnaire feedback, the project co-ordinator allocated suitable professional artists, one per school, to work directly with individual schools.

So far pairing of artists with schools are as follows: at Wilson Stuart the project lead will be developing accessible textiles, working with a professional batik artist; At Dame Ellen the project lead will be developing sensory sounds by working with a contemporary music practitioner; at Baskerville the project lead will be working with a professional mosaic artist to enhance their BTEC arts curriculum; at Fox Hollies the project will be focused on ceramics and nature, working with Sundragon Pottery. Longwill are completing 4 projects one of which includes working with a deaf artist. Pairings still to be confirmed are The Pines and Hamilton. The overall aim of the project is to enhance each school's arts curriculum in a bespoke and meaningful way and to share this experience within the co-operative schools and with the wider community.

The collaborative project work in all seven schools will take place across spring and summer terms. Grace Mahar will co-ordinate and communicate with all participating schools and artists in order to curate the exhibition drawn from the resulting art work from the seven schools. **The Final exhibition will be held at the Midlands Arts Centre on June 26th -30th.**

A little more information on our JOINT Arts Project

An Arts Council application for £29, 800 has been submitted, passed eligibility check and awaiting outcome early Feb. We are hopeful for a positive outcome, but we have pledged as a Trust a £20k back up so the full project plans can still go ahead even if we don't get Arts council funding as we have also successfully secured £9, 995 from Commonwealth Games Legacy and £2k from Arts Connect.

Each artist will do 8 sessions in their school which will look different dependant on each school's needs (either weekly, or more intense collapsed weeks or a combination) along with a planning day and workshop day as part of the exhibition week.

We will send a videographer out for a ½ day (possibly more if budgets and capacity allow) to each school to capture the progress and put together a film that will also feature as part of the exhibition. At the moment it appears that the exhibition will be a mix of soundscapes, interactive music, textiles, mosaic, photography, sculpture and art installations.

We have earmarked Friday 3rd February for another afternoon meeting at MAC for project leads: 12.30pm - 3.30pm. On that same day we are also in the process of arranging for Helen Frost (Arts Connect) to lead a morning session with the artists to give them Arts partner training and for Grace to give it the SEN focus.

The success of the arts council application (and the wider impact of the project) really hinges on taking innovative approaches to collaboration between creative practitioners, arts organisations and SEND education to develop new creative pedagogy and improve accessibility to high quality arts and arts venues and so, while it is a Trust-led project this year, it could have longevity moving forward to involve more of our special schools and arts partners. For this reason, we think the project should have a more generic name that can be used in future years (if we want it to) and, looking at the work that is likely to end up being exhibited we feel that 'Proud to Be Me' no longer works as the overall project title (it may well work for individual schools' work within the exhibition though). We are suggesting 'Common Ground' is a better name as it gives us greater scope for future years.

A Forest Schools shared event

On 24th March we are planning on holding a shared Forest Schools event across the Trust. This is being co-ordinated by Adrina Mountford from Dame Ellen Pinsent School. Forest School and Outdoor leaders from across our schools are meeting together to arrange a number of practical Forest School activities which children from across the trust schools can take part in during the day. Dame Ellen are currently working with Kings Heath Park to host the day and have applied to BCC for their agreement for Kings Heath Park to host this event. Each school is able to send one class for the day. The only issue could be terrible weather in which case the event would be cancelled and rescheduled for later in the school year. An interesting article on outdoor learning can be found [here](#)

<https://senmagazine.co.uk/content/activities/play/7918/making-outdoor-learning-work/>

BSSCT "Providing safe opportunities for independent interaction for learners to improve communication and confidence and enabling them to flourish outside of their own school."

Shared Staff Activities

SCHOOL BUSINESS MANAGERS

The termly meeting of SBMs took place on 14th December 2022. The SBMs now have information that may make joint procurement a feasible option - which is brilliant news! Also, they are re-looking at visiting each others' schools as part of their CPD. Flavia BSSCT project leader who convened the group has now left BSSCT however she has been replaced by Jo O'Brien ... A warm welcome to Jo who will co-ordinate this group from now on.

MATHS, ENGLISH AND PSHE LEADERSHIP NETWORKS

All three groups have met over the course of the Autumn Term and continue to do joint work together in their individual groups. They are all focussing in on ways in which the 7 schools can partner together in different ways to improve provision for children in their own schools and across the Trust as a whole. A massive thank you to the leaders of these groups.

SENIOR LEADERS

16 Senior leaders from across all 7 schools are currently undertaking the 2nd year of the BSSCT leadership programme. The evaluations are really strong and there are still 2 more sessions to go! The coaching session by Nicky Atkins a former Governor of Longwill was particularly well received, so THANKS Nicky!



LONGWILL STAFF

Used an INSET day to visit all 6 of the other schools to learn from them about how to improve their work and to share best practice. The day was a great success so thanks to all of you that visited and hosted. Evaluations indicated that 100% of staff from Longwill thought this activity is excellent CPD.

RESEARCH PROJECT

Working with Birmingham University through a Governor at Longwill Dr. Emmanouela Terlektsi PhD, FHEA. each school is being offered the chance to identify 2 members of staff to be part of an Action Research Project. The project includes a questionnaire, an interview and 3 full days of workshops at the University. Participants will work then together with academics to co- produce online resources and set the foundations for the development of a mentoring scheme. You can read some of Emmanouela's earlier research below.

BSSCT "Developing Trust, Leadership and Staff Professional Development"

FURTHER LEARNING

You may be interested in listening to <https://ofstedtalks.podbean.com/> or for Governors [Ofsted Inspection and Governance](#)

For leaders and aspiring leaders you may want to carry out a FREE self-diagnostic to benchmark yourself against 96 leadership skills <https://www.mtdtraining.com/leaderdna>

For those of you interested in how your work compares against others internationally, you may like to read "Special Education in New York City: Understanding the Landscape" published in August 2019 [Special Education in New York City final.pdf \(nyu.edu\)](#)

Rushton, R., Kosyvaki, L., & **Terlektsi, E.** (2022). Music-based interventions for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities: A systematic review of the literature, *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities*, [MUSIC-BASED INTERVENTIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH PROFOUND AND MULTIPLE LEARNING DISABILITIES](#)

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much" — Helen Keller.



Website:

[About BSSCT – Birmingham Special Schools' Co-Operative Trust \(bhamcooptrust.org.uk\)](#)



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