

Message from the **Chief Executive**

Another year of success



I am delighted that all four of our secondary academies significantly improved their results in both 2019 and again in 2020. It is a just reward for the efforts of our learners and our staff. The summer results were not only a massive

improvement on last year, but a clear indication that standards of Teaching and Learning in our academies have significantly improved. Once again, our outstanding Primary, Blowers Green sustained excellent examination outcomes and we are delighted that we now have the opportunity to develop a strong cross phase Trust.

In the secondary sector, the issue of grade inflation was featured in the media with regard to outcomes in 2020. The Trust has a proven model for predicting GCSE grades which enables us to be certain about the overall accuracy of our results. It was pleasing to see that our teacher-assessed grades were significantly raised by the examination boards. This is proof of the robust and realistic approach that we took in assessing our learners. All of the grades our learners achieved were the grades they deserved. The improvements shown by our academies are all genuine improvements.

It is clear to me that Beacon Hill Academy is on an upward trajectory. The evidence for this is a second year of greatly improved GCSE results. The number of learners achieving Grade 5 or above in English and Mathematics was more than 5% higher than last year.

GCSE results at Pegasus Academy significantly improved both this year and the year before, with big advances in the core subjects of English, Mathematics and Science. This is the result of hard work by our staff and a new attitude among our learners. These results indicate that Pegasus Academy is one of the fastest improving schools in Dudley.

At St James Academy GCSE results greatly improved for the second year running and the number of learners achieving Grade 5 or above in English and Mathematics was 6.4 % higher than last year. St James has truly been transformed since it became a founder member of the Trust three years ago.

A second strong set of GCSE results is unquestionable evidence that The Link Academy has taken another big step forward. In Mathematics, for example, there was an increase of 9% in the number of learners achieving Grade 5 or above.

If school league tables were being published for 2020, I am sure that our academies would have moved up many places and would be represented in the top half of the table.

Furthermore, may I say how impressed I have been to see the quality of work produced by pupils at Blowers Green Primary. Since the school joined the Trust at the start of the year, I have been constantly amazed by the standards that the pupils set and the exemplary behaviour that they show. It is no accident that this 'Outstanding' academy already has more parents interested in applying for next year than it has places. It is easy to see why examination results are so strong at this amazing school.

To say that this term has not been easy is an understatement. Nevertheless, our learners have been resilient and definitely demonstrated our value of 'Respecting each other and our world'. All staff have stepped up to support each other and to provide the best education possible for our learners in these challenging circumstances.

Thank you for your ongoing support, and I would like to wish you and your families a very happy, restful and safe break.

Jo Higgins, Chief Executive

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Dreaming big



All you need to succeed

Aspire Centre to open at St James Academy

We are pleased to announce that in January 2021, we will be opening our brand new Aspire Centre at St James Academy. The Aspire Centre will work with a number of young people who have struggled with their learning or have not settled into the educational environment in their academy. During their time in the Aspire Centre, these learners will focus on the reasons why their education pathway is not developing as well as we would expect. We will work with a wide range of outside agencies to ensure that these young people receive a tailored support programme including a major focus on careers advice and guidance. This will enable our learners to succeed and to ensure that they go on to flourish in their education. We are planning to open additional Aspire Centres across the Trust in due course.

The Link Academy to be on Channel 4

Exciting news! Channel 4 has commissioned a new documentary series that will chart the lives of a group of young people from our very own The Link Academy. To be broadcast in the first half of next year, six episodes of 60 minutes will follow some of our learners as they are growing up in the communities around Netherton. The series is being made by the award-winning production company Label 1, which has had two small teams filming in the academy throughout this term. Label 1 has a history of producing serious reality television that gets to the truth of ordinary people's experiences. This series aims to reflect the challenges of growing up in modern Britain; it is a long-term study and will follow the lives

of our learners over several years, both inside and outside of the academy. These programmes will give our learners a platform to have their voices heard and express themselves in these uniquely challenging times. We know that the series will gain respect for our young people and the communities they come from, and we are all looking forward to seeing the first episode in April next year.

Careers

We are delighted to report that every Year 11 learner across the Trust has received a one to one careers meeting this term. It is important for our Year 11 learners to 'Dream big' and place focus on their positive destinations when they leave the academy. The next phase will be for the Trust careers team to provide one to one meetings with each and every Year 10 learner. Careers is embedded into everyday school life and we are in the process of updating our websites to reflect this very important aspect of education.

British Art Show

Pegasus Academy has been selected as one of five partner schools to work with British Art Show 9, which will start in March 2021. British Art Show is the largest touring exhibition of contemporary art in the UK, giving people in cities across the country the opportunity to engage with work by the most exciting artists in Britain. Wolverhampton has been chosen as the first city to host this year's British Art Show, which only takes place every five years. Learners from Pegasus Academy will work with the artists from all around the world.

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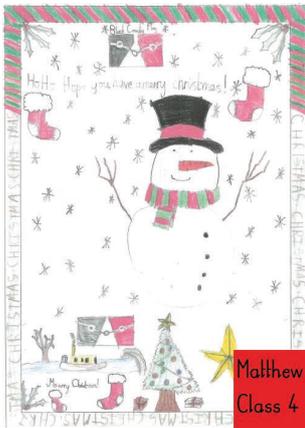
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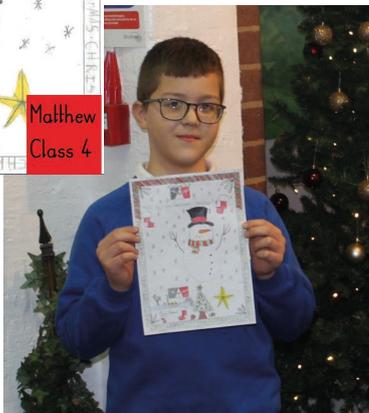
Rewarding effort

Christmas card competition

On Friday 4th December, Blowers Green Primary was delighted to receive a visit from local Conservative MP Marco Longhi. He came to meet Matthew, one of our very talented pupils in Class 4, who came second in this year's 'Design a Christmas Card Competition'. Mr Longhi gifted Matthew with a special parcel which "You can only get from the houses of parliament!" We are very much looking forward to hearing about the gift when Matthew



Matthew
Class 4



opens it on Christmas Day! Well done Matthew; we are very proud of you!

Trust rewards

Once again we are delighted to reward those learners who have demonstrated an exemplary attitude by following our values. The Trust has gifted £1,800 in vouchers to learners of all ages across the Trust. In particular, we would like to highlight those learners who have demonstrated high levels of effort. In this challenging term we believe that effort and the resilience to continue when things get difficult should be celebrated. The learners with this high accolade are:

Blowers Green Primary:
Congratulations to Maryam, who completed 17 out of 18 of the challenges set this term. She has also earned 22 Challenge Badges during her time at school for reading and comprehension, learning and reciting poetry, spelling, art and geography



Beacon Hill Academy: Alexandra (Year 7) Alexandra was chosen for this award for outstanding effort in everything she does. Alexandra was the first learner to receive over 200 merits and was awarded the very first bronze merit badge. Alexandra now has over 350 merits, the highest in the school. Alexandra was also nominated for numerous subject awards and also received the Form tutor award for this term.



Pegasus Academy: Katie (Year 11) Katie has consistently shown the highest efforts in Year 11 so far. She was also the highest in terms of work completed during self-isolation when Year 11 were off school for 2.5 weeks, as well as during lockdown earlier in the year.



St James Academy: Sydney (Year 11) Sydney has a determination to excel and achieve in her subjects. As a result of this determination she is making outstanding progress. Sydney has made the Academy exceptionally proud with her attitude to learning and is a prime example of the Academy's ethos and culture of Raising Achievement.

The Link Academy: Liam (Year 11) Liam has been nominated by his teachers every week since September for The Link Academy 'Learner of the Week' award. He is a hardworking, conscientious and proactive learner who will always go above and beyond in his studies. Outside of school he has committed his time to learn a whole new language as well as revising for his GCSE exams! He is an asset to The Link Academy and always demonstrates outstanding effort – Well done Liam!



Rewarding effort continued...



Logo competition

We are pleased to be able to announce the winner of our Mind to be Kind and Commitments logo competition. We referred this difficult decision to Rob Langston, Art Director with Mauve Design Company and Stephen Clarke, Dudley Academies Trust's Marketing Manager. Our winning design came from Amelia from Pegasus Academy who combined inspiration and practical design. Amelia won a £20 voucher and her design has been adapted by the Mauve Design Company to create the formal logo to be used across the Trust. The following learners were also recognised for their entries:



Amy from Beacon Hill Academy, Jaishmeet and Mia both from St James Academy all received a certificate for Best Concept. Taylor from Pegasus academy, Gemma and Marnie-Rae both from The Link Academy all received a certificate for Best Artwork.

Poetry by Heart

We were delighted when learners from across the Trust were recognised for their participation in Poetry By Heart.

Poetry By Heart is a competition for schools across the country in which learners recite poems by heart. Our Director of English, Miss Markham, organised a Poetry By Heart evening for learners who had been shortlisted. Dilshaan, who recited Spellbound by Emily Brontë and My Boy Jack by Rudyard Kipling, went forward to the national competition.

On Friday 4th September our local MP, Marco Longhi, visited St James Academy. During the visit Marco presented the Poetry By Heart commendation award to Dilshaan (pictured), now a Year 11 learner. Later on, Poetry By Heart published videos of recitations by Grace from Beacon Hill Academy and Charmaine from Pegasus on their website as examples of 'most inspiring performances'. Congratulations to all our learners who took part in the competition.

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Leading together

Trust Student Leaders

Excellent collaborative leadership is at the heart of successful academies; that is why 'Leading together' is one of our five core values. Our learners are our most important people and investing in them is our number one priority. We are proud of our student leaders who act as role models for all year groups. Their blue ties enable them to stand out and to be highly visible in our academies. They lead a wide range of initiatives and everything they do relates to one of our five core values. A leadership experience develops so many important skills and attributes as well as giving our learners a strong voice to express their vision for their academy and for the development of Dudley Academies Trust. Indeed, we are in the process of appointing Trust wide leaders who will have the opportunity to attend Trust Board meetings giving them a wide sphere of influence. Student leaders will be appointed from both our primary and secondary academies.

Investment in leadership

We are delighted to have appointed a number of staff into some significant leadership roles.

Sukhjot Dhami took up the post of Principal at Beacon Hill Academy in May 2020. In addition, the following appointments were also made to Mr Dhami's senior team: Adam Walker was appointed as Vice Principal and Andi Lynch and Tom Clarkson took up the posts of Assistant Principal. At St James Academy, Ese Adeoye took up the post of Associate Vice Principal and Guy Carpenter was appointed to the post of Lead Director of Mathematics within the Trust's central team.

Developing highly effective leaders is central to our mission and an important

dimension of our Trust is that leaders collaborate and work together across all of our academies; this is also happening cross phase since Blowers Green Primary joined our family.



Not only do we have subject Directors and coaches for English, Mathematics and Science, but we now also have Associate Senior Leaders for History, Geography, Modern Foreign Languages, Business, Performing Arts, Music, PE, Art and Technology. This means that we have a dynamic culture to support the sharing of best practice and we are all committed to providing the very best learning experience for our young people.

Challenging times

In response to the ongoing COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic, The Trust and the academies have worked tirelessly to ensure that risk is minimised and that there are high levels of communication with all parents and carers.

Right at the beginning of the outbreak, we produced risk assessments and a plan for the safe operating of each academy, together with guidance for dealing with learners or staff who showed symptoms. The Trust and academy websites published COVID-19 areas that included all communications, signed risk assessments, government updates and all of the Chief Executive's letters to parents and carers. Academy principals have been producing podcasts

and regularly reminding learners of their responsibilities.

Inevitably, we have had a number of cases of COVID-19 among learners and staff. In each case, our own track and trace system successfully identified anyone else at risk and these people were asked to self-isolate. We also updated parents and carers about each occurrence as soon as the facts were known.

Despite all of these measures, cases in our academies rose sharply during the period when Dudley had the highest rate of infection in the whole of the Midlands. Several year groups had to be sent home in compliance with Public Health England guidance and St James Academy was particularly badly hit. We have always tried to ensure that year groups return to school as quickly as is allowed, but this has not always been easy.

We wish to thank our staff for the tremendous work that they have done in very difficult and worrying circumstances, our learners for sticking to the rules and getting on with their studies and our parents for supporting us through the many times when learners have had to return home unexpectedly. Please continue to check with your children that they are wearing masks and social-distancing outside of the academies as well as when they are in our care. Stay safe, everyone!

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Respecting each other and our world

Investing in our Estates

It has been a busy time for refurbishments across our estates. Firstly, we would like to thank our support staff and site teams across the Trust for their hard work and commitment in ensuring all COVID safety measures were in place for the start of term. Our estates teams continue to ensure our estates are at a high standard and are COVID compliant. Over the summer, the Trust invested approximately £150k improving fire safety and security across our sites with improved access controlled systems within schools, door replacements and the Trust's first Lockdown alarm system. Summer also saw the installation of new access controlled gates at St James Academy and floodlight replacements at The Link Academy. In addition, the Mathematics block at Pegasus Academy and corridors at St James Academy have been renovated and refurbished.

We are also delighted to announce that the Trust has been awarded Condition Improvement Funds (CIF) for 2020/21,

totalling just over £5 million. This money is already being used to continue our refurbishment work across the academy estates. An overview of the funds awarded can be seen below:

- Blowers Green Primary will benefit from heating and domestic water distribution systems replacement in the region of £0.5 million.
- Beacon Hill Academy will benefit from heating and flat roofing replacements in the region of £2.3 million.
- The Link Academy will receive updated electrical safety and compliance and flat roofing replacement in the region of £1.2 million. This will also include car park lighting replacement.
- Pegasus Academy and St James Academy will also receive flat roofing replacement in the region of £0.5 million.

All of the above improvements will provide us the opportunity to decorate, improve acoustics, and install new ceilings and lighting. This will result in modern and brighter learning environments across our Trust.

Food deliveries

St James Academy has been delivering food parcels to learners who are isolating due to COVID. Mr Townsend, Senior Inclusion Officer, delivered parcels which included breakfasts provided by Magic Breakfast and lunches provided by Free School Meals. St James Academy is partnered with Magic Breakfast who ensure that no child is too hungry to learn by providing healthy breakfast food and expert support to help identify and reach those learners at risk of hunger.

Secondary academies across the Trust have donated food and important household items to Black Country Food Bank. Donations to the Food Bank provide help to vulnerable individuals and families for up to 3 days at times of crisis. In addition, hampers have been delivered locally to Netherton Green Nursing Home. Thank you to all our staff and learners for their valued contribution to helping others at such an unpredictable time.



Respecting each other and our world continued...



Christmas cheer

Key Stage 3 learners at Pegasus Academy have created Christmas cards for inpatients who attend The Dudley Group of Hospitals over the festive period. We are extremely proud of all our learners across the Trust who have taken time this term to 'Respect each other and our world' and taken the time

to support one another. Now more than ever, it is important to demonstrate our sense of community in such challenging times.

Beacon Hill Academy on BBC 2's Newsnight

On 03/12/20, Beacon Hill Academy featured on BBC 2's "Newsnight". The

BBC interviewed learners to find out how they feel COVID-19 and its impact on education are being handled by the national Government, local Councils and our academy. The Trust would like to take a moment to thank all the staff and learners involved in the process. The Beacon Hill team expressed their views in a clear and professional manner.

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Learning that inspires



Changes to Secondary Curriculum

We are pleased to announce that following a comprehensive consultation programme with our principals, senior leadership team and teachers, we have changed our curriculum model.

Learners will now study GCSEs for two years rather than three. The decision has also been approved by the Trust board, who fully support the rationale behind it.

As you will appreciate, we are always keen to explore the best practice nationally. A significant number of Trusts and individual secondary schools have also moved to a two year GCSE programme. This is also the approach that Ofsted refers to favourably in its framework.

One of the many advantages of this change is that Year 9 learners will now benefit from an extra year of studying a broad curriculum. They will

have more time to make informed choices when selecting the option subjects that they will study at GCSE. During this pivotal year, the Character Education Programme will also be introduced as part of the Curriculum. The Character Education Programme has been designed to develop learners' communication skills and prepare them for studying at GCSE level and for their future careers. We will be liaising closely with Year 9 learners and their parents/carers regarding the choosing of GCSE options in the near future.

Secondary Distance Learning

We don't want any learner to be disadvantaged by the face-to-face teaching time that was lost from March to July. Our secondary academies have received £280,000 of funding to employ 13 one-to-one tutors, who have been working with our Year 11 learners in the key subjects of English and Mathematics.

In Mathematics, Year 11 learners are following a curriculum designed around their personal target grades at GCSE. Year 10 started the term with recall and retrieval content to build confidence and motivation. All year groups are using the fantastic online platform Hegarty Maths to secure and build on prior learning by revisiting previous content. All year groups are embedding a greater understanding of mathematical structures this year by developing the 5 Big Ideas of Teaching for Mastery developed by the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics.

In English, Year 11 learners are having English Language boosters and English Literature revisits to their core texts. Year 11 learners are following a curriculum that is closely targeted towards their needs and personal target grades at GCSE. Year 10 learners started the term by recapping the skills learnt at Key Stage 3 and are developing the skills needed to analyse their key GCSE texts.

Learning that inspires continued...

Inspirational work

At St James Academy, Year 7 learners have settled in extremely well even with the difficulties faced at the moment. They have been working on the theme of 'planets', and one of the projects they had to look at was the moon landing in 1969. They were set research based homework to find out about the Apollo 11 mission and then built models to illustrate this momentous event. All of our Literacy for Life learners have been reading 'Wonder' by RJ Palacio and 'I am Malala' by Malala Yousafzai. These books tackle serious subjects, which not only encourage the love of reading but also enable our learners to be critical thinkers.

Completely on her own initiative, Mariah of Year 7 at St James Academy wrote a poem about her new school and handed it in to her teachers. We thought you'd like to read it:

**St James Academy is so GREAT,
You will definitely make a mate,
You will have the best teacher,
I bet she's excited to meet ya!
You will love art,
This is an amazing part.**

**The teachers are so kind.
This is what you will find.
We work together,
We are a team forever.
I will tell you more,
Our Principal is called Mr Moore.**

**Try your best,
Smash your test,
Have a great time,
You will be more than fine...**

Where are our learners now?

We were very pleased to hear from one of our class of 2020 learners from Beacon Hill Academy, Syrian Sagoo.

Syrian has progressed into Further Education and is studying Performing

Arts with our sponsor, Dudley College of Technology. Her tutor, Andrew Wilson stated that "Syrian is doing really well. She is a very spirited and energetic young lady and is working hard to focus this into her work."

Syrian didn't always find school life easy and we are so proud that due to the Values Driven Expectations behaviour model, she adapted her behaviour and progressed onto such positive destinations. Syrian has recently contacted the Trust to thank colleagues for their combined efforts in supporting her and she is keen to become a member of the Trust Alumni. It is wonderful to see Syrian 'Dreaming big'. Syrian has big plans for her future career: firstly, she is interested in becoming a Teacher and one day aspires to go even further and to lead her own school. Well done Syrian, keep making us proud.

We are hoping to make similar stories a regular feature of our Newsletter. Please get in touch with us if you would like us to share how a former learner of Dudley Academies Trust is 'Dreaming big'.

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Important dates

17/12/20	Term ends
18/12/20	INSET Day
04/01/21	Term starts (for all Secondary staff and learners)
04/01/21	INSET Day (for Primary staff)
05/01/21	Term starts (for Primary pupils)

Explore, dream, discover

Gaming
The UK games industry has nearly three thousand companies employing nearly fifty thousand people. People like you, perhaps?

The power of fashion
Did you know... Many companies try to be as ethical and environmentally-friendly as possible, but Stella McCartney went a step further and made her bags out of corn... Queen Victoria was the first person to wear a white wedding dress. Prior to this, white had been used as a colour of mourning... Bra manufacturer Playtex made the spacesuits for Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin when they went to the moon!

Our Values:
Dreaming big
Rewarding effort
Leading together
Respecting each other and our world
Learning that inspires

Elisabeth Varlow...
Elisabeth Varlow started to lose her hearing when she was 16 and became deaf by the time she was 18. She didn't stop her dancing and started her passion to make music her career. She is now a professional musician playing the role for the London Symphony Orchestra.

Margaret Hamilton...
Margaret Hamilton was a pioneer in the field of software development. She was the first woman to be named a NASA Distinguished Engineer. She was also the first woman to be named a NASA Distinguished Scientist.

Gold Medalist
The first woman to win a gold medal in the 100m sprint was Florence Griffith-Joyner. She won the gold medal at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics.

Bill Gates
Bill Gates is a pioneer in the field of software development. He was the first person to be named a Microsoft Distinguished Engineer. He was also the first person to be named a Microsoft Distinguished Scientist.

Discover more

Dudley Academies Trust operates a policy of openness and transparency in all of its activities.

Further information about the Trust can be found on our website at www.dudleyacademiestrust.org.uk.

Further information about the Trust's sponsor Dudley College of Technology can be found at www.dudleycol.ac.uk.

For further information on any aspect of the Trust's operations, please contact:

Jo Higgins, Chief Executive

Dudley Academies Trust offices
Priory Villa
3a Ednam Road
Dudley DY1 1HL

Tel: 01384 363247

Email: info@dudleyacademiestrust.org.uk



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