



Newsletter

Issue Number 386

Friday 15th March 2024

Confederation of Schools Trusts

This week, the Confederation of Schools Trusts (CST) featured a blog from Jamie Hutchinson in the communication to its many thousands of members. Jamie is the Headteacher at Foxwood Academy, one of our Trust schools. He describes the journey that led Foxwood to join the Trust - I think it is a wonderful summary of the ethos of the Trust, so wanted to share it with you:

It was September 2014 - my first SLT meeting and my first day as a newly appointed assistant vice principal; also, the day a local trust had swooped in to 'save' us. We were a single academy trust with less than favourable maths and English results and an inspection report that had pointed to a decline in standards.

I had been teaching for 15 years and had worked in a small number of different secondary schools. I had been promoted to head of faculty, then seconded to the leadership team as an assistant head and then appointed full-time. This was my first real go at school leadership.

What followed was a year that almost broke me and certainly fell short of developing me as a new leader and nurturing my trust in the MAT system. There was a survival culture, constantly looking over your shoulder, asking yourself if you were good enough, looking for quick wins to keep your job rather than investing in the school community wasn't healthy; and it wasn't healthy for me. A school I had loved and wanted to stay in became somewhere I needed to escape. At the time, I wrongly blamed the process of academisation on my rushed departure and was crestfallen.

Fast forward to 2024, and I'm sitting slightly starstruck in my office explaining to CST's Chief Executive, Leora Cruddas, why I happened to be nervous about joining a local multi-academy trust (MAT). I am a Headteacher in a special educational needs (SEN) single academy trust (SAT). We have been through a couple of Ofsted visits, are in a strong position financially, are oversubscribed and have a stable and talented staff team. I truly love my job (again) and am proud to be the headteacher. The thought of joining a MAT was simply not on the radar. Selfish or not, I had been burned and I wasn't planning on it happening again.

As many of us had done, I had spent a lot of time on Zoom at the CST briefings during the pandemic and continued attending the sessions once most of the covid pressure had eased. I had used the sessions to not only help guide the academy but to also develop professionally. I was keen to reflect on my own civic duty but couldn't really get past the day to day, hand to mouth impact that I was having. BUT, I was safe, and felt safe. Yes, I had a civic duty but it didn't really matter if I stayed doing what I was doing, I was doing a good job.

In 2021, the CEO from a very local trust came for a conversation. I'd had this conversation with trust leaders before and kept them at arm's length. Sharp suits, flash office buildings, and rarely a description of how me joining their trust would improve outcomes for the vulnerable children in our school (and some bias). This was different; he wanted, and needed to do more for the local SEND community. He was keen to invest, could see the current shortfalls of the SEND system, and genuinely wanted a partnership between my SEN academy and his mainstream schools. This partnership would help support children and the provision for SEND across the trust. An inclusive faculty; A no-brainer on paper...But the dark memories lingered. I had heard past horror stories of SEN schools becoming sinbins for MAT mainstream children and also, what would happen to me? I was quite happy, thank you. A CEO/headteacher in a SAT. Happy, relatively successful, and almost 50. Easy to say no. Then returned the phrase 'civic duty.'

I could easily sit here for the next ten years and watch children arrive at age 5 and leave at age 18 - do what we've always done. The presentation evenings; the "oh it must be rewarding working in a special school!"; the amazing children (special needs education really is the best-kept secret in education by the way) and I could retire and pat myself on the back. Or I could risk it. I could bite the bullet.

My school has joined the MAT, but saying 'merged' feels better (I bit the bullet). Now, in the process of planning a multi-million-pound specialist secondary SEN school and increasing our numbers by 70% feels right. The MAT system from 2014 has changed and has grown. The HR support, the school improvement, the CPD the health and safety - the 'protection,' it's a good thing. My team felt that even if outcomes for one child in any school improved by 0.1%, then it was worth it. A civic duty.

What I've learned is that we are stronger in groups and we should consider if our fears and misconceptions are valid. Our fundamental purpose is to improve outcomes for all of the children and young people that attend our schools; we can do this alone, but often we can do it better together.



Dr. Paul Heery
Chief Executive Officer



The White Hills Park Trust
Better Together

Careers within the White Hills Park Trust

Are you looking for a workplace that values collaboration, teamwork, and a supportive environment? Then look no further. In the White Hills Park Trust, we pride ourselves on the fact one of the best things about working here is the people. Whether it's our supportive central team, our passionate and dedicated school families, or our amazing diverse pupils, we provide a friendly workplace that promotes collaboration and teamwork, united in our mission to provide the very best for our young people.

We currently have open vacancies in various roles across our schools. Please see our online application portal at whptrust.org/vacancies for more information on the benefits of working with us, to read more about the roles below and begin an application, or to sign up for job alerts.

Caretaker

at John Clifford School, Beeston
Closing Date: Monday 18th March 2024.

Cleaner

at Bramcote College, Bramcote
Closing Date: Monday 18th March 2024.

Teacher of Maths

at Alderman White School, Bramcote
Closing Date: Thursday 21st March 2024.

Teaching Assistant

at Bramcote College, Bramcote
Closing Date: Monday 25th March 2024.

Exam Invigilator

at The White Hills Park Trust, Bramcote
Closing Date: Thursday 28th March 2024.

Teacher of Technology

at Bramcote College, Bramcote
Closing Date: Monday 15th April 2024.

World Book Day

Children and staff alike donned costumes based on their favourite books and characters. The whole school was alive with talk about books, creativity and fun celebrating world book day.



Girls Football

Our year 6 girls attended the Eastwood and District Girls Football tournament this week, held at Larkfields School. They were up against some stiff opposition from girls who regularly play and performed well to win one of their games. They showed grit and determination and super teamwork and were a credit to the school. Well done!



Y4 Science Afternoon

Year 4 were treated to an interactive Science afternoon with Mr Sainsbury from Bramcote College. The children tested out their volcanoes they have made, making them erupt. This was part of their learning for British Science Week.



Early Years Fire Engine Visit

Continuing with their topic of 'People who help us', reception and nursery classes were treated to a visit from the local fire service. The children had fun, using the fire hose, learnt about all the important things fire fighters do, the equipment they use and were able to go inside the cab of the fire engine.



Red Nose Day – Comic Relief

Children were fundraising for Comic Relief today and were all wearing red for this good cause. Children completed activities and learnt about the good causes the money goes to support children and young people from this country and across the world. At lunchtime, children gathered to 'Do something funny for money' and impressed Mrs Chauhan with their jokes. The funniest were chosen to share their jokes with the whole school in assembly!



