



ALTERNATIVE LEARNING TRUST



NEWSLETTER
DECEMBER 2024



What an amazing term we have had. We have grown and are continuing to grow, both in schools, numbers and commissioning. We are more, not less, through this process: a sum, as a trust, of our amazing parts – all of you and the children, families, staff and communities.

Our Trust's logo has changed - we have become more solid and are developing to be a strong foundation for all our schools and the children, families and staff they serve.

As we grow, we must gain more solid foundations rooted in our values – a favourite saying of mine is “we need to have both strong roots in our Central Trust Team to then enable us to fly.” Both roots and wings are needed and as a result our systems and support will grow stronger as the larger we become the more firm our foundations and systems need to be.



Education is the foundation upon which we build our future.

- Christine Gregoire



It is so good to stop and reflect: new provision, new birth. Growth is a theme at this time of year and is very relevant for us as a trust.



We are very pleased to announce that Estuary Academy Island is open and, after many challenges, they are 'in the building' and doing an amazing job: welcome Danielle and the team.

Nore Academy Special School is about to be born – its due date is 1 January 2025 – and we are looking forward to welcoming them to the family and already have key staff in place: welcome Dan and some of the team.

Estuary Academy North (previously NWKAPS) has changed its name and logo – a journey they started many years ago and they are growing and developing as one of the first provisions in the Trust. Thank you Estuary Academy North for all your love and support of your fellow provisions in our new Kent and Medway Hub. The Hub's structure is progressing to support each provision to grow and develop.

Will Adams Academy is growing and developing, too, and we welcome Emma – and what an amazing start you have had, knocking Ofsted out of the park with your fantastic team.

The Limes College is growing and developing, with a new vocational/Forest Schools' provision hopefully coming into the world soon and an amazing Task Force up and running, making a huge difference.

Saffron Valley Collegiate is taking its place in our family and is so very welcome after a long conversion ... supporting others through Task Force development.

Task Force – a key area of the Trust’s development, with the aim of having these in all of our provisions. We are making bids to try and develop this.

What is Task Force?

The Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforce Model – Improving Outcomes for Children in AP

APST is a workforce model the DfE has been testing since 2021, which draws on the evidence of how to deliver impactful and timely support to improve outcomes for children in AP.

Local areas may be particularly interested in adopting the model or elements of it as part of their strategic plans for SEND and AP.



Recommended specialists: The APST pilot has recommended having at least 4 of the following specialists within a taskforce, who collectively have the skills to respond to the range of needs of pupils in AP, led by a skilled Taskforce Manager.

Educational Psychologist

82% of pupils in state-funded AP had been identified with SEND.

Educational psychologists assess and support children with special educational needs, and advise those who work with them.



Mental health therapist or counsellor

Of those pupils with SEN in state-funded AP, 77% had Social, Emotional and Mental Health recorded as their primary type of need.

Interventions such as Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) and group therapy sessions that support the onset of poor mental health build resilience and reduce the risk of longer-term dependency on statutory services



Speech and language therapist

Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) was the third most common primary type of SEN need for state-funded AP school pupils. A meta-analysis of 22 studies has also found that 81% of children with emotional and behavioural disorders had significantly below average language abilities..

Post-16 transition coach

Only 59% of pupils in state place-funded alternative provision had a successful post-16 transition in 2020/21, compared to 94% of pupils from mainstream and special schools.

A trusted and consistent advisor sustains the engagement of disadvantaged young people, staying in contact as the pupil moves to support sustainable post-16 destinations



Youth Justice worker

Working to prevent children and young people under 18 from offending and reoffending. 29% of children who were cautioned or sentenced for an offence had ever attended AP, and 14% of children who were cautioned or sentenced for a serious violence offence had ever attended AP.



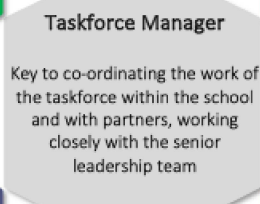
Social worker or Family support worker
69% of pupils in AP had been classified as a Child in Need at some point in the past 6 years, compared to 11% of pupils in state-funded secondary schools (data from 2018/19).

There is evidence that interventions such as family therapy can reduce youth crime and child behavioural problems



Youth worker

1-2-1 consistent relationships with a trusted mentor have a good evidence base for re-engaging young people in education and preventing involvement in serious violence



Alongside the Trust's review of its own logo, and how that represents who we are, each of our schools have also been going through the same process. Watch this space, as in some cases new logos emerge and in others their logos have been refined and developed. All are still individual and all are part of our family; each unique and different yet focussed on the same purpose of changing lives.

We have welcomed new colleagues to the Central Team this term:

- ❖ Astrid Searle, Chief Operating Officer
- ❖ Bethany Lawrence, HR Assistant
- ❖ Khaled Fahad, ICT Manager
- ❖ Blair Fountain, Finance Officer

All of whom will support you alongside the rest of the Central Team.

We would also like to welcome new governance volunteers who have joined this term and thank them and their colleagues for all their hard work and support which is very much appreciated:

Trustee - Marion O'Hara

Governors at Estuary Academy Island – Liz Scarboro and Tracey Davis

Governors at Will Adams Academy – Claudia Estephane, Nathan Walcott and Gemma Clarke

Governor at Saffron Valley Collegiate – Diandra Davidson



CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

A message for the festive season: This term is so long – it has been a bit bumpy at times, a long and winding road and some of it has had a good, smooth tarmac surface and at other times we have had to get off the road!



At this time of year we celebrate a Christian holiday; we have just come from Mexican Day of the Dead, Diwali, Bonfire Night, Halloween, Thanksgiving, and now ...



... we are also recognising ancient traditions with Christmas trees, Father Christmas, Christmas presents and, of course, Elf.



This is a time of re-birth, the birth of Jesus at Christmas. It echoes as a time of year for us as a Trust – new beginnings and fresh starts are what this season brings.

Looking ahead to a new year:



Yes, a fresh start is a chance to begin something again or to start over without prejudice. The term ‘tabula rasa’ is a synonym for ‘fresh start’ and also means an opportunity to start over – no strings attached, past events let go.

As in all good new years, we take a moment to look back and gather some of last term’s experiences to focus on the New Year.

This last term has been a time when we have all really focussed on the needs in our communities and those communities are becoming more complex and have increasing need.

We have taken on multiple challenges, Ofsted, finance, commissioning, SEND needs, sickness, significant injury, operations, conflict, hurt – and we have, and will, overcome, and are overcoming.

When we look back at last term, there is so much good work we can take into the New Year 2025, where there has been hurt and we know we will face those challenges again – there is such power in a ‘sorry’ and in ‘forgiveness’; sometimes we need time to heal before we can forgive and it is in that process that so many of us and the children and families we work with, are allowed to grow and move on. To restore – to grow strong roots and wings to fly.



*Psychology Today:
Power of Apology*

Apology has *the power* to repair harm, mend relationships, soothe wounds and heal broken hearts. **Apology** is not just a social nicety. It is an important ritual.

The Power of Apologies | Ombudsman and Mediation

<https://www.un.org/ombudsman/resources/tips/power-of-apologies>

An honest and sincere **apology** has the potential to restore dignity and diminish fear of retaliation or even desire for vengeance on the receiving end.

Tracy Chapman – Sorry



Sorry

*Is all that you can't say
Years gone by and still
Words don't come easily
Like sorry, like sorry*

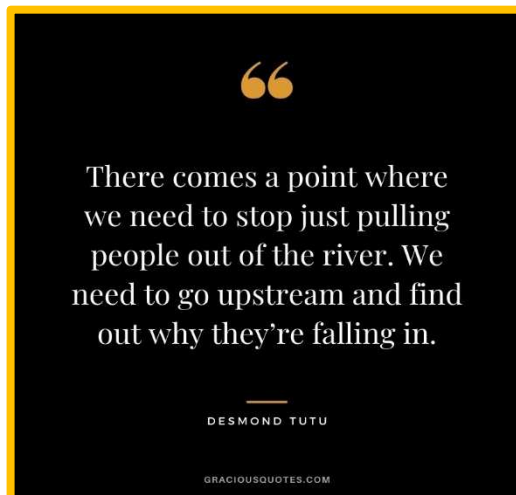
Forgive me

*Is all that you can't say
Years gone by and still
Words don't come easily
Like forgive me, forgive me*



Let's make the new term a term for 'Sorry', 'Forgiveness', 'Restoration', for growth and healing. New year – new term – after a good break we will be ready again to take the complex needs and hurt and turn it into restoration, growth, healing and learning. It is our purpose rooted in our values.

We will do this in our communities, too, as we work in our mainstream schools and local areas.



As we look forward into our coming new year, we need to stop and 'BE'. Reflect and spend time with friends and families. We need to decompress and have a whole lot of fun. Please take your well-earned breaks and rest because the New Year holds much adventure and many lives to transform.

Happy Christmas and a very joyful New Year 2025.

Emma



Below is a selection of this term's highlights from our schools.

SAFFRON VALLEY COLLEGIATE UPDATE

Andrey Year 11
From SVC to Kitchen Assistant Apprentice!
By Stephanie Walters, PA to SLT & Exams Officer at Saffron Valley Collegiate

Andrey arrived at SVC late in the school year as a PRU2PRU transfer. He has a complicated background and we were advised that the word 'Education' was a trigger. He avoided school, had low self-esteem and was lacking confidence which he expressed by wearing a mask, hood up, with his hair covering his face and would hardly speak.

At the start of his GCSE exams Andrey was moved to Ilford and was transported to school for exams. Day by day he would say a few words, complete his exam then left. Once his final exam was over, one kind gesture (bag of sweets and a Year 11 good luck card) sparked a conversation.

During this conversation Andrey frequently used the word 'Education/ I need an education, I think I have failed'. Knowing this was a trigger word, out of curiosity I asked 'why?' Andrey explained that the word "education" was not a trigger itself, but that adults had used the word as a weapon and to punish him so he associated it with a bad thing and didn't want to hear it. When asked what he wanted out of life Andrey said he liked cooking and fitness, so we discussed what that could look like in the real world.

By chance I saw an advert for a kitchen apprenticeship on Instagram and shared it with Andrey. However, he needed Level 1 Maths and English to apply with only a one month deadline. Andrey immediately said 'Miss I'm going to do it, I can do it!' He revised at home with past papers given to him by KS4S teachers and with the help of SVC East admin invigilating his online exams at the last minute, he passed first time!

Andrey travelled from Ilford to KS4S by himself several times for support in completing his application and interview prep. He was under the YJS and worried that he would not be accepted with a criminal past. I advised him to be open and honest to show the employer during interview that he has learnt from his mistakes, it was all behind him and that he has the skills and determination to do well - he just needed a chance.

Andrey got the job! He is now working as a Kitchen Apprentice in a school in Tooting. I visited him October and he was so happy to see me he hugged me. I was shocked. The nervous, covered up young person I had met before has cut his hair and can now be seen. He is doing incredibly well and is a confident employee. It was encouraging to see him learning from his colleagues. The head chef said he attends regularly on time but wants to 'run before he can walk' (because he is passionate) and that his confidence is growing every day.

When I used to communicate with Andrey via email, he would send one worded answers or a very short sentence. After my visit I emailed him to ask if I could share his photos below with SVC colleagues. He emailed back:-

Greetings Stephanie,
Hope you are having a nice day,
It was nice seeing you on Monday, thank you for coming.
Yes I can confirm that it is completely okay for you to use the photos.
Hope you have a nice evening.
From Andrey

*During summer 2025 Andrey achieved a Grade 2 in Maths and English. He would not have had this opportunity if it was not for functional skills exams.
Anyone can be a child's champion, if you take the time to 'see them for who they are!'*



At Saffron Valley Collegiate, we were extremely proud of our student Grace (year 9) who won this year's Christmas Card Competition set by the Civic Mayor of Croydon, Cllr Kola Agboola. Gracie was invited to the 'Switching on of the Town Hall Christmas tree lights' an informal event to raise the spirits for the festive season and as a thank you for her fabulous artistic efforts.





We are delighted to be in our new building and have been enjoying the beautiful space that we have, set in the landscape of the Isle of Sheppey. We have had a very busy first term with a slight delay, due to building commissioning, resulting in the team being very creative across the Island utilising different venues and provisions to ensure our children had access to virtual and physical provision and that we had ample chance to connect and build with relationships with our families.



Students have had a positive start to our new school and have shared ideas to help inform a curriculum that has been designed carefully with them at the very heart. Inspire, Aspire and Empower forms the foundation of our curriculum and aims to ensure our students have the best chance of success in their future whether that be reintegration into mainstream school or transition to specialist provision or post-16.



This term has seen our curriculum take a focus on WWI and Remembrance. It was an honour for one of our students to be handpicked to guard the Cenotaph in Sheerness Town Centre in the Remembrance parade. Our Year 11 students have studied and engaged with WWI focused text supporting their GCSE studies and our Year 10s engaging with Animal Farm. Our year 9s have learnt about causes and events of WWI and have learned through various historical sources, as well as created some propaganda posters of their own. We are so proud of what they have achieved so far and look forward to seeing them through the rest of their educational journey with us.

Our Vocational curriculum is a real strength and this is partly down to our excellent resources. Hair and beauty have had a positive start with an initial focus on Health and Safety while we awaited the building of our Hair and Beauty Studio. Now we have our sinks and styling stations, the students are enjoying putting their Health and Safety theory into practice with washing and styling hair!

In Sports Leaders the students are loving the use of the outside space, and we cannot wait until the warmer months when the outdoor football pitch can be used for games across the school – maybe even Staff v Students!





In Hospitality and Catering, students have had the opportunity to embrace both cooking and life skills. Students have created savoury snacks, cakes and this last week Gingerbread, giving our lower corridor the aroma of Christmas spices, creating a lovely festive feel to the school! Our staff team have also enjoyed our fabulous new school

kitchen where you can find several different staff members moonlighting serving lunch, having an opportunity to engage with all our young people at the most important time of day!



Estuary Academy Island have a large Inclusion

team who are dedicated to supporting our young people with educational needs. We have worked hard to identify students who need more specific support and match them with staff who can support them with Maths consolidation, pre-teaching vocabulary or specific social and emotional intervention. This support is closely monitored and reviewed in weekly meetings.

The Inclusion team have also been busy creating resources and strategies for staff to use within their lessons and our professional development has been focused on understanding different areas of need present in our school and how these can be overcome in the classroom. We have also recently begun to develop speech and language strategies, and some students will be invited to assessment and/or to take part in a word discovery project. We recognise the importance of supporting parents and families and are also launching a SEND Parent referral as we understand that parents often identify needs, they would like support with and would like onward referrals or further investigation in the school environment.



The community team has been working hard with our students to prepare 'Hampers of Hope' for our local Salvation Army in Sheerness for Christmas to help them see the positive impact they can have in the community. In our last few weeks, we will be enjoying Christmas Dinner together as a school and raising money for Save the Children honouring Christmas Jumper Day. We recognise Christmas can be difficult for some, so are also working with a charity called 'New Leaf Support' who will be leading workshops just before we break up to help students understand how to keep safe in the community. Our activity packs in the Summer were so well received we have decided to deliver Christmas ones with small Christmas hampers for each family, made up by donations from our generous staff team and their families, so will be making deliveries like Father Christmas on Monday 23rd December! We wish all our stakeholders a relaxing holiday and look forward to January and welcoming Nore Academy on board to continue this purposeful journey enhancing educational provision on the Island.



THE LIMES COLLEGE

BELONG, RELATIONSHIPS, MOVE ON, ACHIEVE

Careers and Destinations

Good Career Guidance

The Limes College were invited to the launch of Good Career Guidance – The Next 10 Years which brought together all who supported and contributed to the development of the updated Gatsby Benchmarks. The Limes College is mentioned in the report as an example of good practice. All secondary schools, colleges and ITPs have been sent the full report which includes the updated Benchmarks and the evidence and exemplary practice that underpin them.



Royal Courts of Justice

Students enjoyed an exclusive tour of the Royal Courts of Justice and carried out a mock trial regarding cyberbullying and harassment. The students were given full use of a working court and were introduced to a real-life past case of a defendant's trial for cyberbullying and harassment. Students were allocated roles of defense and prosecution teams while staff helped by reenacting witness evidence. The trial was concluded with students debating whether the defendant should be found guilty of the charges. This gave students a great insight into the legal sector, and they were able to explore one of the most important workplaces of the country. They asked lots of questions about pathways into law and learned more about the workings of a court case.



Visit to Local Care Home

Year 11 students visited a local care home to explore the health and social care sector as a potential career pathway. Students spoke with Antonina, the Care Home Manager, who explained what her personal career pathway entailed, and how she came to be in her current role. The students heard about what being a carer consists of, the qualities needed to work within the sector, and what a typical day looks like. Students also discussed the possible Post 16 pathways which would allow them to enter the sector.

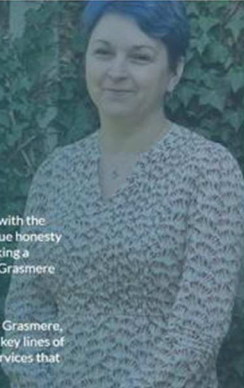
MEET THE MANAGER

Hello, I'm Antonina

Antonina Gont
Care Home Manager
Grasmere Rest Home

I started working in the care sector as a temporary care assistant in a nursing home in Ashted. I fell in love with the work and the residents and remained there for three and a half years. I am a very organised person, and value honesty and punctuality. I like to treat everyone the way I would like to be treated. I would like to think that I am making a difference in people's lives, trying my best to give them the best years of their life, while keeping them safe. Grasmere has such a warm atmosphere that really turns the building into a loving home for all of us.

Southcare Homes Group is more than a business, it is a family that continues to improve. I hope to do this at Grasmere, not just by maintaining our Outstanding CQC rating for 'Caring', but also working to improve the other four key lines of enquiry. I hope I will manage to do that as soon as possible to ensure that we have the recognition for the services that we offer.



Visit to a Local Construction Site



Willmott Dixon kindly hosted a group of Year 11 students at a local live construction site.

Students visited the High Street, where a set of existing shops and premises are being transformed for new use. This is part of the ongoing regeneration of Sutton Town Centre.

Students were accompanied around the site by the site manager and observed various trades in action during the process. The project was explained in detail, and Willmott Dixon's recruitment processes were discussed. Students got to experience how a working construction site looks and feels and were provided with information and options to consider when making further educational choices.

Farnborough International Exhibition Centre

KS4 visited Farnborough International Exhibition Centre to take part in the above event. Students were invited to explore and understand some of the career pathways and roles associated with these industries. They interacted with sector professionals in the field, hands on activities, and had interesting conversations about the possibility of 'space law' and how satellite communication is being impacted by current conflicts around the world.



Farnborough International Exhibition Centre

We took our KS4 students along to the 'JD Up' Careers Event in London which saw hundreds of young people through the doors. This event was designed to inspire and educate young people about the diverse range of roles the JD Group has to offer. There were lots of 'hands on' activities, which brought to life examples of careers at JD involving photography, design, tech, marketing, branding and plenty more! Students engaged with experts who were on hand to talk about the different opportunities and pathways available, and their own career journeys. The last activity involved all visitors gathering in the auditorium to experience a fantastic 'dance off' and an audience with Kyle Walker, Sky Sports Commentator who provided a Q&A session. The event was thoroughly enjoyed by all and the students provided very positive feedback.



Career possibilities in construction available to women

The Social Value Manager of Willmott Dixon visited The Limes College to discuss career possibilities in construction available to women. The students heard about the history of the company and gained an insight into the pathways available within the construction sector. Current study options available to school leavers were examined and the students had a Q&A session to conclude the session.



Workshops with the British Army



The Limes College welcomed the British Army in to provide KS4 students with a series of workshops relating to careers. Through the activities, students were able to identify personal skills such as communication, teamwork, resilience, leadership and critical thinking. This was also a great opportunity for our young people to learn about all of the different job roles that the Army has to offer and the pathways available. All involved enjoyed the event and we look forward to working with the British Army again in the future.

Safeguarding and Outreach Trips

Safeguarding and Outreach ran a number of trips this term, a wonderful time was had by all!

Jack Petchey Awards Trips

Boost Girls visit to Creams for reward and team building

Go-Karting to celebrate achievement and for team building



Ice Skating Rewards Trips





Welcome Casper!

This term Estuary Academy North have welcomed our new school dog, Casper. He has settled very well into life here at our school. He has worked with many of our students; learning new tricks and helping them along the way to. Even though Casper has a long way to go with his training, he has come so far already, confidently strutting around the school building.



Our new name!

In September, we launched our new school name: Estuary Academy North. We are really pleased to see students proudly wearing the new uniform!



Performing Arts Launched

We are thrilled to announce the launch of our brand-new Performing Arts Department, dedicated to nurturing creativity and expression through drama, dance, and music. To celebrate this milestone, two of our talented students, Rosie and Chloe, recently participated in an inspiring contemporary dance workshop. Guided by a professional choreographer, they explored dynamic movement techniques and developed their confidence and skills. Rosie and Chloe's passion and dedication were truly impressive, and we can't wait to see how their skills flourish as part of this exciting new chapter for our school. Keep an eye out for upcoming performances!



Student's take part in SLT

This term we have also hosted our first SLT meeting that was attended by our student leadership team! The students shared their ideas of what should be done around the school to improve the experience for our young people as well as event ideas that we can host. Our student leadership team did their fellow students proud with how mature and responsible they were in the meeting; coming in prepared with notes and arguments for why we should take them seriously.

Our cooking super stars

We have seen some exceptional cooking this term with students now working to open a pop-up restaurant in the school.



Feedback and reflection on learning

The students have been incredibly engaged with their learning this term – taking work home and asking for extra revision materials. Staff have been really supporting this through embracing our new feedback policy which gives students a chance to reflect on their learning.

Black	I'm still not sure
Red	I've understood this but with help
Yellow	I've understood this in this lesson but am likely to forget it
Green	I've understood this and feel confident that I will remember it
Purple	I knew this already

Review
Reflect
Refocus

Hosting aspiring heads

We are always looking at ways to help the wider community understand the importance of alternative provision and as part of this, we hosted 25 aspiring headteachers for a day of training on site. They were really impressed by the confidence of the students giving tours.

Work experience for KS4 students

We are really proud that 28 students were able to experience the world of work this year through our work experience week. This meant that students have felt more confident to make college and post 16 applications, with a number of students already having secure next steps. We are also really proud of Dolly, who secured a Saturday job after impressing her work experience hosts so much!

Well done Franky!

We would like to congratulate one of our KS3 pupils, Franky, for not only undertaking his level 1 and 2 in food hygiene but successfully completing the courses. This led to him being able to assist in the making of school lunches for other pupils. Franky has come such a long way and continues to grow as person and realise his passions for food and cooking!

We are now preparing for a visitor from Starbucks to test some of our barista skills in the coffee shop!



Upcoming events

As usual at Estuary Academy North, there is lots to look forward to...
- We are holding our first family film night and Christmas fair to spread the seasonal cheer
- KS3 residential in January is in the final stages of preparation
- Mocks are being revised for ready for January sessions

Coming soon –
our new Library
/ Life Skills
double decker
bus!





Careers week

We had a really successful careers week in October. This included lessons on interview techniques and CV as well as a visit to Hadlow college and our own careers fair. All students took part and engaged really well.



Antibullying week & Remembrance Day



For Remembrance Day we took part in a 2 minute silence school playground where we could hear the guns from the local barracks.

We also took part in lessons for anti-bullying week about respect and talked about looking after our mental health. Students talked about why respect is important to them. We have displays up for both.



Student Engagement

We have recently appointed two members of staff as our Student Engagement Leads and they have really hit the ground running!



Firstly, they organised an election for school council. The students wrote manifestos and campaigned for votes. The whole school community voted and 4 students were elected to the new school council who have already started working hard to get student voice heard and shared appropriately.



Next on the agenda was Christmas! We have had a daily elf on the shelf challenge and had arrangements made for lots of end of term fun including a carol concert and memorial for parents, karaoke, bingo, Christmas dinner, and a whole school trip to go ice skating. We can't wait!



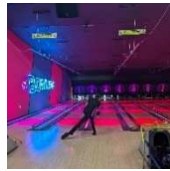
Intervention Trips

Our respite students have taken part in a number of intervention trips this term including archery, cycling and clip & climb. They have done a great job getting out of their comfort zone and challenging themselves.



Dojo points and end of term trips

This year we have begun to use Class Dojo, whereby students have to work together in their forms to collect Dojo points. The points indicate whether they go on the



'Gold, Silver or Bronze' end of term trip. Last term, the Gold trip was laser tag, the Silver was bowling and the Bronze was to a local park. Students really embraced the competition!

Staff training

This term we have implemented mini CPD sessions after school known as Upskill sessions. These have included sessions on various aspects of behaviour, SEND and Safeguarding and have been really successful. We have also had 2 longer sessions on Trauma Informed approaches.

Congratulations to Breggie!!

Our very own Head of Maths, Breggie, graduated from Derby University achieving a Masters Degree in Psychology! She specialised in



Educational Psychology with a focus on maths avoidance and maths anxiety in students in alternative provisions/ PRUs. Her work is soon to be published!!

Ofsted

We had our Ofsted inspection at the end of November which went extremely well! Staff and students did an excellent job in really showcasing what Will Adams is all about and the inspectors commented several times that they really enjoyed their visit. The full report will be published in the new year. Thank you to all staff from the Trust and EAN who supported us.