



CEO Briefing



SCHOOL YEAR 2016/17
ISSUE 9

MONDAY 10TH JULY 2017



As I write my final briefing of 2016/17, I think it's a good time to reflect on the first full year of Nexus MAT's existence and recognise some of the huge achievements we've made by "learning together; to be the best we can be"... In fact, there's so much to say that I'm making this a whopping 3 page bonanza!

The Trust has worked hard to ensure that we have **permanent, high quality leadership** across all of our academies heading into the next academic year, which is a huge change from 12 months ago where we had interim arrangements in place for 3 of our 4 schools. Wider leadership teams have also all been strengthened in 2016/17 (or will be in the autumn) which reflects the value the Trust places on strong school leadership.

Despite the widely reported funding crisis in education and the reality that many schools are setting deficit budgets due to reduced funding and increased costs, we've secured **more funding for our special schools**—building on the excellent work started in 2015 as part of the academy conversion process and our pursuit of fairer funding.

I'm incredibly proud of the fact that we have 4 academies ending the year in good financial health and the Trust continues to fight hard for **fair funding** for all our children. We still have to take difficult decisions and like every other public service we have to meet increasing costs **without** an inflation-linked rise in our funding. However, I know that we are doing everything we can to seek the best funding settlement possible from our local authority commissioners and that will continue throughout the coming weeks, months and years.

The unprecedented **£869,651.00** of grant funding we've secured to improve our most in-need buildings has been a **phenomenal step forward**, and we're already hard at work to try and secure more funding for more investment next year. This is a huge amount of money that has been secured on a needs-led basis, though it's not enough and I won't be satisfied until we've modernised the entire Nexus estate!

Our Trust has grown in the past 12 months whilst at the same time we've worked together as a family of academies to **continually drive forward school improvement**. In her capacity of Head of School Improvement, Jacky Tattershall has worked hard with our academies' senior leadership teams to pull together our MAT Schools Improvement Strategy and work programme. This year has deliberately focused on drawing out what we do well as schools and connecting that together. Looking forward to the next academic year, our new MAT Schools Improvement Lead Jill Walker will take this good work to the next stage and position the MAT as the driving force of ever improving quality.

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Directors and Governors have continued to play a huge role in holding the Trust and School leaders to account, as they are required to do by law. Working in public service is a privilege and one which should come with the highest of standards: Directors and Governors hold responsibility on behalf of the public to ensure that we are always meeting these standards. The fact that Nexus is a finalist in the **NGA**

Outstanding Governance Awards 2017 is testament to the huge work that our volunteers put in over countless hours. It is such a positive reflection on the leadership & governance of the Trust that we have reached the NGA finals (D-Day is 5th Sept!) and this gives the Government and our families an added layer of assurance that we are a well managed Trust.

We have also secured an exciting **new contract** from RMBC to deliver **extended services** for some of our most vulnerable children and young people.

This is a significant milestone for the Trust to achieve in our first 12 months and this is exactly what our staff told us they wanted more of when I spoke with them all in September 2016. It proves the Council not only has confidence in us as a provider; it also demonstrates that they understand what we can offer now and in the future as a valued partner.

Our 5 year strategic plan outlines our lofty ambitions, and having a multi-faceted approach to meeting the needs of children and families with SEND only strengthens our position as special schools.

In fact, the **Department for Education** are so impressed with our work that they've scheduled a visit before the end of term to talk to me about what we're doing and explore what more we can do.

The **National Schools Commissioner** Sir David Carter has also specifically asked for information about Nexus so that he can talk about our progress at an upcoming national conference.

I am continuing to work closely with RMBC to further our ambitions for post 19 provision and things have moved forward in a really positive way this year. Like any new structure, it can be a painstaking task to lay strong and secure foundations but that's rightly been the focus of our work in 2016/17.

I'm really optimistic that we can continue to work with our sister special schools across Rotherham and Doncaster in open and honest partnership to ensure we have an approach which makes a difference **for all local children**—not just those we have the privilege of working with every day in our academies. A big shout out to **Lisa Suter**, Headteacher at Heatherwood School in Doncaster for her support at Pennine View and her willingness to work so enthusiastically with our MAT for the betterment of children.

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In May I hosted a meeting with the SEND Commissioners from all 4 South Yorkshire local authorities—the first time all four individuals had been in the same room (!). This has already led to further discussions about how we can offer better provision across the region, which in turn will bring **more investment** into Nexus.

There are lots and lots more achievements to share, but I'm running out of page space and I want to mention some of the amazing experiences I've had since my last briefing...

I had the honour of being a judge at both of the **S-Factor Semi Finals** for Hilltop and Kelford Schools, and I think this year's final on July 13th at Magna we will achieve the impossible and better previous years with the quality of our performances. **Wow!**



I've been out and about to visit some **astonishing children** from Kelford and witnessed their completion of the Duke of Edinburgh award in Derbyshire, whilst also getting the chance to present our **brilliant young people** at Pennine View with their bronze award certificates.



I saw an **inspiring rendition of Macbeth** by Abbey children recently as part of our involvement with the Shakespeare Festival—it was a cold and damp evening in Clifton Park that was brought to life by their confident and entertaining rendition of act 3! I felt so proud!

Finally, on a flying visit to Pennine View last week, I had an impromptu invite to class 5 so they could tell me all about their enterprising work to raise money for their trip to Thrybergh Country Park on 11th July. I came away with a book mark, a beautiful paper flower and 3 gift tags. Though my favourite part was when a young man asked me: "If you're not the new Headteacher, what do you do?". My answer of "wear a suit and walk around pretending to be busy?" didn't impress...



Before I finish, I'd just like to say a **great big thank you to Audrey Ap Dafydd**, who retires in the summer from her role as Assistant Head of Pennine View. Audrey is one of the warmest and most compassionate individuals I've ever come across, and she'll be sorely missed. Rest assured, I have already asked her to be a governor with the promise of a 100% pay rise after the first year. Alas, she knows all too well that 100% of nothing is still nothing. I've not given up hope yet, though...

Have a **great summer**, one and all. It's been an **absolute pleasure to work with you all**.

Look what we've done in a year! Imagine where we'll be in 12 months time!



Warren Carratt



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