

# Newsletter

## CEO MESSAGE

Welcome back to our first newsletter of the year!

Following our staff survey last school year I wanted to give you an update on some of the things we have put in place following your feedback. We now have a central drive in place with folders that allow schools to share curriculum and planning documents, a folder for central policies & operational documents and a leadership drive. This is helping us to be more effective in our communication and reduce the number of different ways that we work.

You also asked to know more about the Trust & School vision and these have been shared on our professional day, in schools, through our noticeboards and this newsletter. You asked for opportunities to network and meet up informally and our first opportunity will be at John Clare. We also have the same lanyards and new school signs to promote our family of schools brand. Every school has set up a social media page to share what they've been up to and we would love it if you could like and follow each school and keep up to date with what is happening. This is a good way for us to promote our schools and increase our pupil numbers. More pupils = more money = more resources and support!

Your headteacher has provided a link to a form to complete your Pecuniary Interest. I have now received 161 replies however this is still short of the 299 people who work at Soke Education Trust. If you have not yet completed it, this must be done by half term please.

Thank you for all your work this half term - enjoy the holiday!

*Cathy Carlisle*

## In this issue:

CEO message


The Dull But Very Important Bits!

Welcome to...

Health & Safety

News from our Schools

Wellbeing/Mental Health



## The Dull But Very Important Bits... Statutory Responsibilities

There are a number of processes and actions that we have to take because we are a publicly funded body. The way that we must operate may be different to how private companies work. When we don't follow these requirements, they are picked up by the auditors and reported back. Some areas that have been highlighted this year are:

### Expenses

If you need resources these need to be ordered through your school operations team so that we meet the requirements of our Financial Regulations and the Academy Financial Handbook. This ensures that we raise Purchase Orders, achieve Best Value and stay within school budgets.

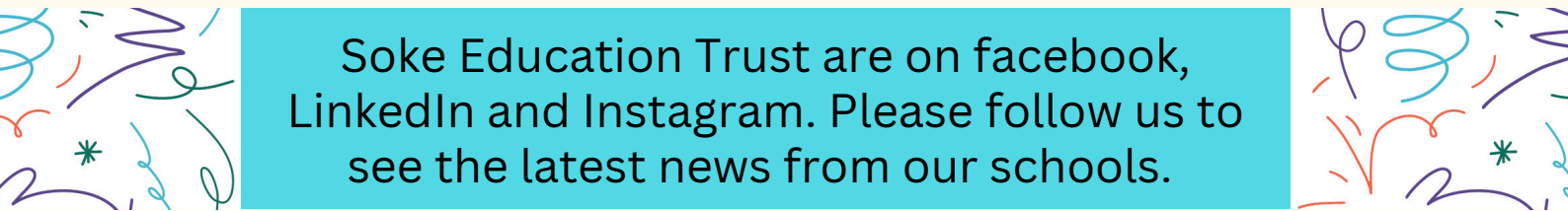
Any expenses purchased outside of the usual systems should be very rare and only in exceptional circumstances. They need to be pre-approved by the headteacher and not exceed £25.

### Pecuniary Interests

Please remember to complete the Pecuniary Interests form and update us if there are any changes during the year. Any work completed by someone linked to you must be reported to the ESFA, our funding body, before it occurs. This doesn't prevent the work from happening but must be declared so that our finances are transparent

### Purchase Orders

All orders must have a purchase order and be approved by the budget holder before any resources can be ordered. This ensures that we don't overspend the budget and that we complete transactions in line with the purchasing requirements set out in Financial Regulations. Please make sure you think about resources that need ordering in plenty of time so that the processes can be correctly completed and we are compliant with the expectations



Soke Education Trust are on facebook,  
LinkedIn and Instagram. Please follow us to  
see the latest news from our schools.

## World Mental Health Day

Thursday 10th October was World Mental Health day and some of our schools dressed in yellow to support this. In addition to our Wellbeing platform Welbee ([welbee.com](https://welbee.com)). A number of quick and useful videos can be found on [youtube.com](https://youtube.com) and the Anna Freud site



## Welcome to the new members of the Operations family

Our Operations teams carry out a huge amount of unseen work that keep our schools running.

Across our schools there have been some changes and we would like to welcome and introduce, Jo West the new Operations Manager at Werrington, Jo Niblock a new administrator who has also joined the Werrington team. Tina Jones has joined the Soke central team as a Finance Administrator, Nicola Bradshaw is the new Operations Manager at Alderman Jacobs and Lucie Hackett has joined the team at John Clare.

Keep an eye on the Trust noticeboard for information, changes and quick links

## Health & Safety Update

### Common Health and Safety Myths in Schools

Health and safety regulations aim to reduce serious risks, not to ban activities unnecessarily. However, myths often lead to overly cautious decisions. Are you falling prey to these common misconceptions?

- Jewellery and wristband bans: Banning all jewellery or wristbands without assessing specific risks can be excessive.
- Hot food and drink restrictions: Strict limitations on hot food and drinks during school trips may add inconvenience without significant safety benefits.
- Overdone appliance testing: Routine testing is important, but over-testing low-risk items can waste time and resources.
- Playground equipment limits: Avoid risk -averse decisions that overly restrict playground equipment use, as it's essential for children's development. Remember, health and safety is about managing real risks—not imposing unnecessary restrictions!

"True safety is created not by avoiding risks but by preparing for them."

All schools recently had their annual Health & Safety Audit. The results are much improved on last year. As we know, Health & Safety is everyone's responsibility and it's great that everyone is taking pride in our schools, looking after each other our children and visitors. Every school will be sharing what else needs to happen next.



Our newsletter and blog are now  
available on the Soke Education  
Trust website



SET the standard...

We have received several nominations for people who deserve to be recognised for their hard work, effort, values or personal qualities. Reading these nominations is so heart-warming! You can nominate a colleague by scanning the QR code and completing the short form



Our nominees this half term are:

Mandy Hewitt-Hulin of Wittering Primary - Anonymous

Reason: Mandy goes over and above her job role every single day although would never shout about it. Things are always carried out with a great sense of humour and she is a huge asset to the Wittering team. I'm not sure what we'd do without her.

Claire Brant at Wittering - Nominated by Jessica Potter

Claire is a great support to everyone in school, she is consistently supporting the children and her colleagues with social, emotional and wellbeing support. Leading by example and showing she can adapt to any role as required to ensure the smooth running of the school.

Helen Wilson at Wittering - Nominated by Rebecca Ledbrook

She is the most brilliant HLTA/TA. She works tirelessly to ensure the children make progress. She is kind and caring and grounds me everyday to ensure the children come first. She goes above and beyond everyday to ensure I am ok and have everything I need. I am very proud to call her my colleague and my friend.

Sarah Sutherill at Wittering - Dan Aherne

Just being brilliant on a daily basis

Sarah Sutherill at Wittering - Anonymous

For their calm, professional demeanour, fabulous support for both the children in her care, and other staff and for generally being wonderful!

Mel Newberry of Gunthorpe - Anonymous

Always a smile on her face even on the hard days.

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## Avoid the Lurgy - Bug Busting Tips

A TV doctor on instagram was giving his top tips on how to avoid the dreaded cold bug and viral infections. They are things we all know but worth repeating.

- 1) Wash your hands with soap frequently - before preparing food, after using the toilet, after blowing your nose etc etc!
- 2) Avoid touching your face - any germs on your hands get easily transferred through your eyes, nose & mouth
- 3) Regularly clean/disinfect areas that people touch e.g. door knobs
- 4) Keep your immune system healthy - eat a healthy balanced diet with plenty of plants & take regular exercise
- 5) Keep rooms well ventilated
- 6) Cough and sneeze into a tissue and throw it away - don't let tissues stay on the floors around school, pick them up using a clean tissue and bin them.



## News from our Schools

John Clare



This year has started very positively! We were thrilled to receive confirmation that we have achieved the School Games Platinum Award, which places us within the top 5% of schools for PE provision in England. Our Cross Country team has been on top form, winning both the Barnack Fun Run and Soke Cross Country event, with team places throughout and personal bests achieved.

Abi Kefford also achieved a recent personal best in her 10k run at West Pinchbeck – we are super proud of you!







Our children in Broadwheel and Swaddywell class (Years 3-5) are studying settlements and land use as part of their geography learning this half term. In September, the children went for a learning walk around Helpston to visit the significant landmarks in the village. During the walk, the children learnt more about each of these places of interest and enjoyed engaging with many locals, who shared their knowledge of the village and its history.

Year 6 have made a great start to the year and have settled well into their learning and various roles and responsibilities throughout school. They have shown their caring and nurturing sides through their commitment in helping their reception class buddies settle; this is a John Clare tradition and we pride ourselves on the relationships and support that this offers.



On the 10th October, we all celebrated World Mental Health Awareness Day. The children came to school in yellow clothing to highlight awareness of the importance of wellbeing, looking after themselves and each other, whilst raising funds for the Young Minds Charity.

As a staff team, we enjoyed the Art of Brilliance INSET in September and are looking forward to working with our colleagues on implementing Teacher WalkThrus.



### Alderman Jacobs

On Friday 27th September, children, parents and staff made and donated cakes for our first Macmillan Bake Sale. Originally intended to be an outdoor event, the dreadful weather forced us indoors! It was great to see the school community come together for such an important cause - nearly £600 was raised on the day.



### Sponsored Walk/ Run

On Wednesday 9th October all children at AJS took part in the annual sponsored walk. The weather stayed fine and all the children pushed themselves and completed the following distances;

- Pre School - walked for 20 minutes and covered a distance of 1km
- Early Years - walked for 40 minutes and covered a distance of 2km
- Year 1 and Year 2 - walked for 50 minutes and covered a distance of 3km
- Year 3 and 4 - walked for 60 minutes and covered a distance of 4km
- Year 5 - walked for 60 minutes and covered a distance of 5km
- Year 6 - walked for 45 minutes and covered a distance of 4km

Once all the money has been collected, the School Council will think about ways in which the sponsorship money (usually in the region of £800) should be spent and on what kind of resources.

On Sunday 13th October, our AHT Emma Vickers and Kayleigh Gibbs from the Central Team, successfully completed the Great Eastern Run raising money for Andy's Man Club - the men's suicide prevention charity. An amazing personal achievement. Emma & Kayleigh would like to thank everyone in SET who sponsored them. (Emma's limbs still ache...! )

SET...Coffee & Catch-Up will be on Monday 9th December at Northborough Primary School

## Werrington



Year 5 had an amazing time in the planetarium. We learnt lots of new things. Did you know that, on Neptune, diamonds rain from the sky? We were so impressed by the questions the children asked. It was particularly exciting when the lights went off and we could see all of the stars as they would be in the sky that night. We found out Saturn is easy to see at the moment. It looks like a big star but doesn't flicker. The children made their own lunar landscape from clay.

Year 3 have had a wonderful team building day! It was so much fun. We would like to thank the PTA for funding this excellent day and to those who volunteered to come and help. In teams of ten, the children had to use their learning powers of resourcefulness, relationships and resilience to solve active problems. It was fabulous to see how well they communicated their ideas and how enthusiastic they were in their bid to solve the mystery of the perfect pie.





## Gunthorpe

### PAL Project Development at Gunthorpe

Following the September launch of our new Outdoor Play and Learning approach, we have already observed many wonderful changes at lunchtime. Children from across the school are engaging in positive play opportunities together and have enjoyed exploring each new play opportunity as they have been introduced. Some children have really enjoyed using loose parts and small-world play equipment in really creative ways. We are very grateful to our staff members and volunteers who have given their time to prepare for our OPAL launch as well as to our wider school community for their kind and generous donations of all sorts of play equipment. We look forward to seeing how OPAL continues to develop in our school and how this improves the educational and personal experiences of our children.



## Wittering

This half term at Wittering Primary School, Year 6 were visited by the RAF STEM team as a fantastic introduction to their DT topic of Bridges. After initial discussions about the different structures and purposes of bridges, the children split into small groups to design and then create their own bridges. Using just the kits they had been provided with along with their knowledge and imagination, they set about producing some very impressive designs, which featured: draw bridges, a range of decks, trusses and beams to support their structures - there were even cars and boats added to travel under and across. A fantastic couple of days were had by children and staff.



## Northborough

Northborough are pleased to share some highlights of things the children have been doing.



Happy holiday!