

The logo for SOKE Education Trust, featuring the text 'SOKE EDUCATION TRUST' in white, uppercase letters on a red, brush-stroke style background. The background of the entire page is white with colorful, hand-drawn scribbles in blue, purple, orange, and green, including swirls and arrows.

Newsletter

CEO MESSAGE

Since I joined Soke Education Trust, I have been reviewing and refining our purpose and have been building on the values that were established when the Trust first developed. Bringing together people from across different locations and schools and ensuring that everyone feels like they are part of one family has its challenges but it is something I feel passionate about achieving.

Working together should be of benefit to everyone and across our Trust we are really starting to see positive changes and an impact of this happening. No one individual or group are 'the Trust' we are all parts of the same community.

In this issue of our newsletter, we have contributors from different areas of the organisation, who are working together to reduce workload, increase the efficient use of our resources and above all, and most importantly, make bigger differences to our children.

The work that we have been doing within the central team and our Headteacher Network has resulted in our refined purpose, vision and core values which are influencing all the work that we now do across the Trust. I am keen to see that our values are not words on a piece of paper but lived throughout everything we do.

Over the next few months, we will be putting in place resources that show that we are one organisation, whilst still reflecting each schools individual identity, such as new signs and badges.

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As you go about your role please consider how you embody our vision and values.

This is a busy term with our sports days, our Soke Maths Challenge, SATs and end of year assessments, budget setting and preparing for new admissions.

Thank you for your continued hard work and I hope to be able to visit schools and see things in action.

Kind Regards

Cathy

SOKE EDUCATION TRUST				
Purpose Statement				
To inspire the leaders of tomorrow				
Mission Statement				
To make a difference together, everyday				
Vision Statement				
To create an environment for our people to be excellent				
Core Values				
Collaborative	Nurturing	Inspiring	Honest	Professional



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





Governance Team Update

At the start of the academic year, the Soke Education Trust implemented a Governance Team led by George Hayes. Within the team, there are three Clerks who successfully support the schools within the Trust. Each member has varying experience and expertise which complements the structure.

To ensure consistency across all schools, the team of four - Amy Ure, Gillian Coupland, Zoe Spencer & George Hayes meet frequently to maintain clear direction when working with all schools. George works closely with the Central Team and clear information is disseminated to assist the termly LGB agendas.

As part of the role of Clerk to Governors, we advise schools on the governance legislation, before during and after the meeting. In addition to detailed note taking, we work closely with the Headteachers and Chairs to maintain positive outcomes for the schools and liaise on a frequent basis. Furthermore, it is the Clerk's responsibility to record all decisions accurately and objectively with timescales for actions.

In order to develop a deeper understanding of Governance, two Clerks are completing their Level 3 NGA's Leading Governance programme during the next 9 months.


The Programme is designed for new and experienced clerks who wish to develop their professional knowledge, understanding, skills and competence so they are better able to contribute effectively to the governance of any trusts and schools to which they clerk the governing board.

We look forward to meeting some of you at the LGB Training over the next few months.

The Governance Team.

Wellbeing Survey

Thank you to everyone who took part in our recent wellbeing survey. It's important to us that this information is used to continue to shape and improve our work. We will receive a report back from Welbee with access for everyone to their portal of resources am.



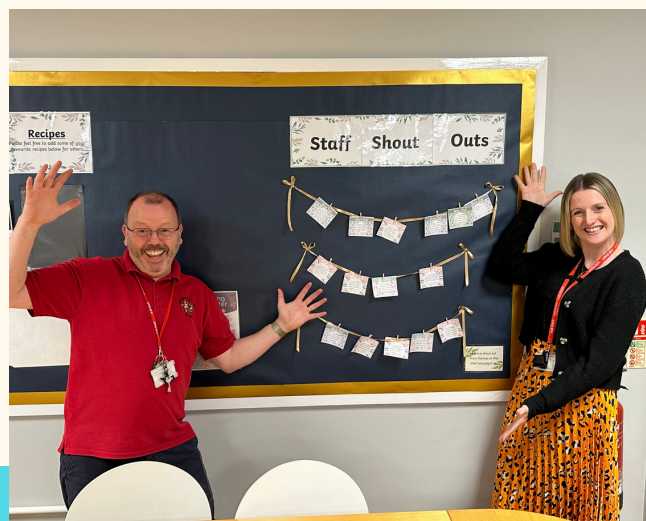
News from our schools

At Wittering Primary School, Year 3 blasted off with their pneumatic DT topic! The RAF STEM team came to work with the children and they were able to design and build a rocket before launching it using the pneumatic kit! They were soaring high and lots of fun was had!



Alderman Jacobs School recently underwent a transformation over the Easter holidays as the staffroom received a refurbishment. Following a staff survey conducted by the AJS Staff Wellbeing And Teamwork (SWAT) group, the decision was made to create a space that felt calm and inviting for staff to relax, chat, eat, and enjoy each other's company amidst the hustle and bustle of the school day.

Assistant Head (and chief interior designer!), Sarah Miles and Emily Clarke, Mental Health Lead, said the "The SWAT group want the staffroom to promote staff wellbeing where all staff can recharge and connect with their colleagues, and also provide plenty of treats when energy levels are flagging! Displays signpost support, like the Trust Employee Assistance Programme, and also give an opportunity for staff to say thank you on the 'shout out' board. We are looking forward to soon installing some word art which reflects how staff feel about the school."





On Friday 22nd March children from John Clare took part in the Oundle Music Festival.

This was a completely new and different experience for our school! Every KS2 child sings in our choir and they make such a lovely sound when all singing together.

It was a nervous day for all of us! We had the opportunity to listen to many other musicians and groups, from hand bells, to brass, to singing. When it was our turn to sing, many of the children were surprised by the size of the audience and the grandeur of the room.

We sang two songs - 'Holy Night' with our wonderful soloist, Hugo, and 'My Own Superhero', which is an empowering song for children.

The adjudicators were very impressed with our performance. They noted that the children sang 'with passion,' that their tone was 'clear and smooth,' and that we communicated our words well. We were absolutely delighted to be awarded a grade of Distinction.





Northborough Primary School are pleased to see the return of the NPS Music Night. Musicians, singers and choir members performed for family and friends in a fantastic evening performance which was enjoyed by all!

At Werrington Primary School, Year 3 have had a brilliant Roman day today. We learnt all about Roman life and how they invaded Britain. We watched how a fire was made and how they cooked vegetable stew, then we got to taste this along with some Roman bread. We also got to explore and handle some real Roman artefacts where we worked out what they were and how they were used. We also got to try on the armour, learnt how the armour was cleaned and played some games that Roman children liked to play. We finished off by learning how the Roman's battled in formation following commands in Latin.

In other news George Colley has had a baby boy, Arthur - congratulations to the whole family.



At Gunthorpe, we are hugely proud of our Eco Warriors group who have recently gained their Eco Schools Green Flag. The Eco Warriors are looking at the topic of litter this year, and have completed litter picking, made a promotional video and led an assembly to the children around littering. The whole school were really engaged in the assemblies and some children have since asked to litter pick in their break times! Thank you to Natalie Smith for her time in leading this group.



A shout out for great work

Following some significant changes in our accounting system this academic year and a new chart of accounts, I would like to say a huge thank you to all those users of the finance software in our schools.

As a central team, we have found it incredibly challenging and we know that it has been equally difficult for the school office teams using the software but we are incredibly pleased and grateful for the hard work and perseverance demonstrated by the following people:

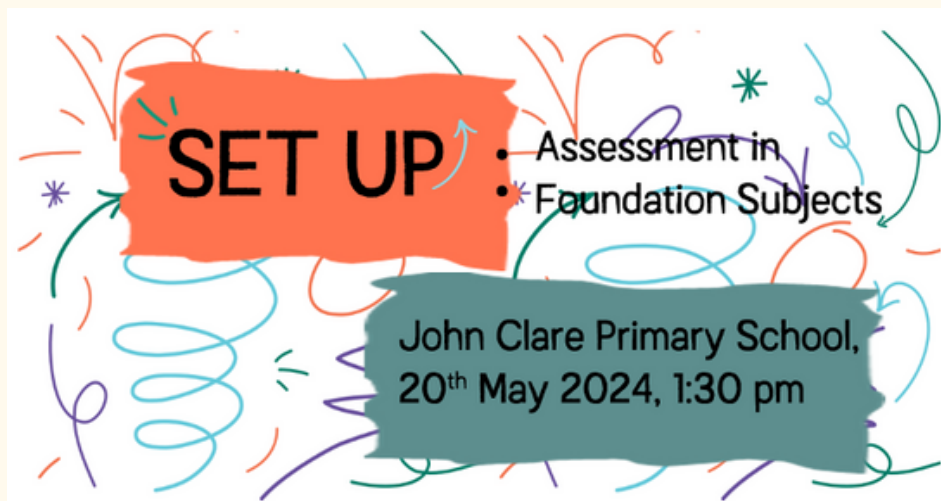
Nicola Bradshaw - Werrington
Jo Cole - John Clare
Claire Donaldson - Northborough
Emma Flavill - Wittering
Kayleigh Gibbs - Soke Central Team
Sarah Phillips - Alderman Jacobs
Donna White - Gunthorpe

You are all doing a fantastic job! Thank you for all your hard work.

Cheryl Hinton
Trust Finance Manager

Working together - An update from Elaine Crane, our Director of Education

On the 23rd April, 12 colleagues (2 from each school) gathered with me for the first SET UP session. The aim of a SET UP session is that we can meet around a specific area of our work and everyone is then 'set up' to return to schools to share and use the practice. April's SET UP session was about data - we looked at the big and small data that schools collect and how to use these most effectively to inform school improvement strategies and pupil outcomes. It was also a really nice way to get people from across the Trust together to work on a shared goal. The next session in May, is about assessment in foundation subjects when I look forward to sharing guidance and supporting development of this tricky area.



Sharing our good practice

I was privileged recently to be invited to write a blog for the Norfolk Research School, the main brief being to show how research had been used at school or trust level. My blog is titled 'From Review to Action: Using OFSTED's research review series to inform curriculum and assessment in Art and Design'. This is part of the 'SET guide to assessment in foundation subjects' and I will be able to share my work on this with colleagues as part of the next SET UP session.

This blog and others can be found by visiting the News section of the Soke Education Trust website and clicking on our blog page; The SET approach - Striving, exploring and transforming education.

Have you wondered how school funding works? Mike Lilley our CFO explains.

Funding for schools comes from the central government, which allocates money to local authorities under the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The amount of funding a school receives is influenced by the School Funding Formula, which considers factors such as the number of pupils, the age of students, and additional needs, including economic deprivation and special educational needs.

This formula ensures a baseline standard of funding per pupil, with additional resources allocated to address specific challenges. Academies and free schools, which operate outside of local authority control, receive their funding directly from the central government's Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). This direct funding approach is designed to give these schools more autonomy over their finances.

Pupil numbers are a fundamental driver of school funding in the UK. The number of pupils enrolled directly affects the financial resources a school receives through the School Funding Formula. This is because the formula allocates a specific amount of money per pupil, which forms the core income for a school. Higher student numbers, therefore, mean more funding, which can be used for hiring additional staff, enhancing facilities, or expanding learning resources, thereby directly impacting the capacity of the school.

This per-pupil funding approach incentivises schools to maintain or increase their enrolment figures as a drop in pupil numbers can lead to significant financial challenges.

Schools also receive targeted funding for specific purposes, such as the Pupil Premium, which provides extra money to schools based on the number of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, to help close the achievement gap between them and their peers.

Pupil demographics, not just numbers, play a critical role in shaping the financial and educational landscape of schools and a reason why we need to focus on increasing the numbers of pupils at each of our schools.

Schools, like all businesses, need to allocate a proportion of funding to staffing and estate management. There has to be a careful balance between how much can be allocate to people resources and the resources needed to develop the curriculum.

Mike Lilley, CFO





SET SENCO Network Update from Jenny Murray at Wittering

As part of the trust's development of SEND support the SENCO's across the schools have been working together to develop practices and ways to support each other moving forward. We have met every term to discuss aspects such as assessment of SEND pupils, EHCP applications and tracking of provision.



We have been liaising with Cathy to share our ideas and thoughts on SEND across the trust. As part of our work we have secured the Birmingham Toolkit which is an assessment tool which can be used to track smaller steps of progress for those children who are working at a lower developmental level than their peers. We have also set up a shared drive so that we as SENCOs regularly share resources and paperwork and support each other.

Our current priorities are developing a trust document to showcase our Ordinarily Available Provision across the trust and looking at how we can use assistive technology to support pupils and deliver interventions across our schools.

Introducing...

My name is Laura Holland and I joined Soke Education Trust as a Director in September. Since joining the Board, I have become the Trust Safeguarding Lead. working with the central team to develop an overarching safeguarding strategy which continues to ensure that our practice supports the most vulnerable children and families. Over the past 6 months I have visited some of the schools and in April I was invited to meet the Governors at Werrington Primary School. It was a pleasure to attend one of their meetings, hear all about the school, pupils and the community. I was able to share insights from the trust board and answer questions they had as well as hear about what is working well at Werrington.

As someone who started out as a governor of my local primary school it was great to see the hard work the governing bodies do as part of Soke Education. I look forward to visiting more schools and meeting others from the trust over the coming months.



**SATs season is shortly upon us.
Good luck to everyone involved**

An update from Claire Spooner, Chair of the Trust Board and a thank you in return

It is with both a sense of regret and pride that I announce my resignation from the Board of Trustees for Soke Education Trust from the end of this academic year. I have been fortunate enough to be involved with the Trust from the initial conversion and its schools for over 14 years and am immensely proud of the Trust that we have developed together.

I am hopeful that you can all appreciate that this has not been an easy decision for me however as we have a strong, committed leadership throughout, capacity within the central team to support our schools' senior leaders and experience and dedication within our governance structure to take the Trust to its next level it feels that it is time for me to seek a different challenge and create a bit of "me" time.

I have always been quite vocal in that the driving force for my volunteering commitment has been the ability to see our children grow and learn within schools as I truly believe in the value of quality primary education and being able to truly appreciate what good governance can achieve in education. The memories of school plays, music evenings, school visits and spending time with the children will remain with me always as it has been a privilege.

Within this term we are also losing other valued, dedicated members of our Board. Julia Walker-Smith who has successfully led our Audit, Finance, People and Risk committee for a number of years and David Over who has been a member of our achievement and standards committee have resigned leaving spaces for new volunteers.

As a board, we have been proactive in recruiting new trustees to the board who will fill any skills and experience gaps whilst bringing fresh ideas, enthusiasm and capacity to the team. I know that as they visit our schools and are introduced, you will continue to make them feel welcome and valued as you have done to myself, Julia and David.

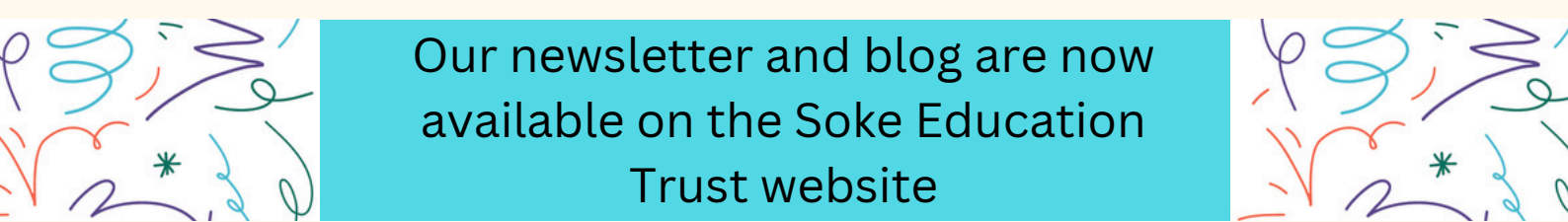
I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff and children for their continued dedication to the learning in our schools and wish you all every success in the future. It has been an absolute pleasure to work alongside you all.

Claire Spooner

Being a governor is an entirely voluntary activity and it requires a great deal of dedication and commitment, not just to attend meetings but to read the documents, make visits to school, understand the finances and support during Ofsted inspection - to name just a few aspects.

Thank you to all those who volunteer their time to support our organisation. To Claire, Julia and David, we wish you all the best in your new activities and hope that you will continue to follow our success.

Everyone at the Soke Education Trust



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