

The Mercian Voice

A NEWSLETTER FOR ALL COLLEAGUES WITHIN THE MERCIAN TRUST

Edition 3: December 2017

On the threshold

We seem to have been “on the threshold” of officially forming the Mercian Trust for a long time. A very long time. But Tuesday 12th December should prove to be a decisive day in the countdown to our being a MAT.

That evening, at the end of a bitterly cold day, the Shadow Board of Trustees met to sign all the papers that had to be submitted to the Secretary of State for one final signature.

This was no small task ...



Bundles of papers prepared ready for signing

... but the Chairs of Governors of the five Founder Academies arrived at the meeting with the backing of their respective Governing Bodies. And they signed!

The following day, we asked our lawyers – Browne Jacobson – to make a final check through all the documents and then the papers were sent to the DfE at their Coventry Office by courier. So now, we just need the Secretary of State to get out her pen before the Christmas break.

And the Mercian adventure can begin!

Message from the Mercian CEO



Thank you for everything you do to make all the Mercian Schools far more than just a place of work.

2017 has not perhaps been an easy year, but as we begin to work *together* we have already achieved some **great** things. What a privilege we have helping young people to live life to the full! *Thank you* for your part in that ...

Enjoy the holiday! I hope that it will be marked by peace and joy for you and your family.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS to you all!

Senior Leadership Course: a personal perspective

Pete Sunley is Head of Economics at QMGS and has signed up for the senior leadership course. He tells the Voice about his first homework ...



As part of my involvement in the *Mercian Trust Senior Leadership Development* programme I was tasked to visit the Mercian school that I knew the least about which in my case was *Walsall Studio School (WSS)*. I had an understanding of WSS from the existing partnership with QMGS and through colleagues who had taught there. However, I had never made a visit before myself.

Darren Perry the *Assistant Principal & Director of Key Stage 4* at the WSS kindly accommodated my visit request and gave up his time for a tour of the school followed by a discussion on the culture and philosophy of the school.

During my visit it was particularly interesting to discover the ethos of 'Perform and Applause'. This was where students are regularly provided with the opportunity to showcase their talents and skills. As part of this there would be regular peer critique and acknowledgement.



Collaboration and team-working amongst the staff was a key message from the discussions I had with Darren. Staff and departments form learning clusters to review progress and share best practice. It was also interesting to discover how personal and professional development was at the heart of the educational experience preparing students for life, further education and the world of work.

The small community nature of the school was very different to the approach at QMGS where WSS provide very much a personalised learning experience where students have access to personal coaches. Also impressive was the links to the local community through charity projects, work placements and also the many expert professionals visiting the school for tutorial/lessons in a range of disciplines.

In summary I found the visit captivating and energising, a real highlight of the week for me. Darren Perry spoke passionately about the school and its vision. Students I spoke to from the sixth form

were really enthused by the opportunities provided by the school and they felt empowered and trusted to develop professionally and personally.

TSST B-Physics Programme



OBJECTIVES:

- To share knowledge and best practice
- To support, develop and retain staff
- To broaden and deepen the links between schools and the UoB
- To enthuse and inform Physics and Engineering students about teaching as a career

In the last issue of The Voice, we flagged up a new initiative from The Mercian Trust and the University of Birmingham working in partnership.

It is a form of Teacher Subject Specialism Training (TSST) which we are calling **B Physics**.

We are now in a position to give you a few more details.

There will be **four sessions** this academic year:

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|----|------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| 1. | 23 January | QMGS | Electricity and Fields |
| 2. | 20 March | SOA | Waves |
| 3. | 22 May | Aldridge / QMHS | Mechanics and Forces |
| 4. | 10 July | UoB | Energy and Particles |

Each session will begin with a talk entitled *Why this matters* for the whole group and then there will be two different workshops: one for those who want to focus on K3/4 teaching; one for those wanting to discuss matters relating to A Level teaching. The workshops will be led by Physics teaching specialists from Mercian schools with support from PhD students and HE staff.

Each session will be at a different school venue within The Mercian. On the day, the UoB will send two PhD students in to the school from 12 noon with a brief to help with careers advice, A Level teaching or individual coaching. The *Why this matters* talks and workshops will be scheduled from 4pm to 6pm.

There will also be a B Physics Blog and participants' network so that teachers can keep in touch and support each other. Those taking part will also have access to on-line materials produced by the Institute of Physics.

All this *and* a free Hoodie for participants.

If you are interested in taking part but haven't signed up yet, it's not too late. Please get in contact with David Mountney: david.mountney@themericiantrust.org

Twilight Training on Tuesday 23rd January

Advanced notice:

The next Mercian Twilight Training session is on Tuesday 23rd January, starting at 4pm.

The programme is as follows:

Leadership Courses at QMGS

On the agenda this time: Data for Middle Leaders and Staffing issues for Senior Leaders
We'll also be looking together at more material from Andy Buck's book on *Leadership Matters*

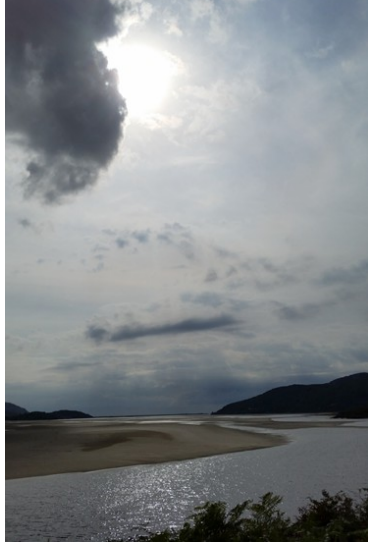
Departments to meet at the same venues as in November.

On the agenda this time: stretching the most able
Feedback from last time suggested that there was not enough time to engage in a review of books and files; more time will be given for that this time

Associate Staff

There will be no meetings on the 23rd for Associate Staff.
Feedback last time suggested that it would be more useful to meet in sub groups at a time when everyone can attend.
We have identified *nine* such groups and will be making arrangements for each group to meet with Mercian Leaders during the next six months.

Farchynys: Field Centre in Wales



Did you know that Mercian Schools have access to a Field centre on the beautiful Mawddach Estuary in Wales? It's the perfect spot for Outward Bound weekends, for Geography and Biology field courses or just as a venue to take a group of students to experience life outside the classroom If you are interested in organising a trip, please get in touch with Tim Swain tj-swain@qmgs.walsall.sch.uk for more details.