

# CONNECT NEWSLETTER

## IN THIS ISSUE

---

Fantastic Fundraiser

---

CEO Update

---

Trustee Talk with  
Rebecca Rodger

---

Lest We Forget -  
Picture Special

---

10 Minutes With  
Natalie Bannard

---

Meet The New CFO

---



# In the pink

**Children at schools across our Trust took part in our recent Mufti Day which has helped raise thousands of pounds for charity.**

The fundraiser was held after the Trust were pioneers in the region having recently provided specialist suicide awareness training, in collaboration with the team from Northamptonshire suicide prevention charity Kelly's Heroes.

The ground-breaking approach adopted by NET, which has seen more than 400 Trust teachers and staff undergo specialist suicide awareness training, was implemented following the death by suicide of Manor School student Callum Woodcroft in 2022.

The Mufti Day was held on World Mental Health Awareness Day and in Callum's memory, which helped to raise a grand total of £2120.27 for Kelly's Heroes. Children wore plenty of pink in a nod to the colour used in the charity's branding and logo. An official presentation will be made to the charity which will feature in an upcoming issue of the Connect newsletter.

**Well done to everyone who has helped support this special charity which is close to all our hearts.**

Here are some snapshots from the charity fundraiser.



*£2120.27 raised for Kelly's Heroes*





## CEO Update

**This month, I spent some time roving around our schools, learning about some of the amazing people behind the scenes, who are doing the important work that allow our schools to function on a day-to-day basis.**

I spoke with Alan Sewell, the Trust's Catering Manager. Alan and his 15-person team are primarily based at Manor School, preparing and cooking over 1000 meals a day for schools across seven of the schools in the Trust.

On the day we speak, 662 meals will be staying at Manor, while a further 700 will be headed out for delivery over the two break periods. Starting at 7am, Alan and his team oversee the cooking, delivery and service of all the meals in the Trust, as well as planning the menus and ordering stock.

We spoke about some of the more popular meals his team cook for students and staff, including meat feast pizzas, veggie burgers, Wednesday roast dinners and paninis. They had recently worked out that they make and sell over 47,000 paninis a year! With the holidays coming up, they're also planning out their Christmas dinner menus.

Alan's been with the Trust for six years and has seen a lot change and develop over his time here. He described the pandemic as a particularly difficult period, which was of course, very quiet. However, there was still work to be done delivering lunch bags around the villages to children learning from home.

Now, Alan says the team is flourishing. New investments have included a delivery van and two new ovens, each worth upwards of £13,000. Other kit includes some 'irreplaceable' steamers and a deep fat fryer. The fryer doesn't see much use throughout the week but is worked very hard on Fridays for some pre-weekend treats.

After speaking with Alan, I joined the caterers for the day and spent some time working on all aspects of the catering process. I began in the kitchen making some pizzas, before meeting Claire who taught me about the important process of separating out food for those with allergens to ensure all of our young people stay safe and well. Next, I headed out in the van and assisted with delivery, before heading back to Manor to do some service to sixth form and Year 11s.

Having experienced the important work they do, I would describe Alan and his team's work as the 'engine room' of the Trust's schools. Feeding the children in our schools allows them to be in a place where they're capable of learning, giving them the energy to make the most of their education experience. I hope this article helps with spotlighting the important work that Alan and his team do to ensure that the Trust's young people are fed and able to learn.

**You can hear my full interview with Alan on the most recent episode of the NETCast.**



*Alan Sewell*

**Does your school have some incredible news? Staff successes? School events?**  
Contact [vbrennan@neneducationtrust.org.uk](mailto:vbrennan@neneducationtrust.org.uk) to be featured in the next NET Connect Newsletter



5 Wells Development Centre



Manor Sports & Leisure Ltd

# Trustee talk with Rebecca Rodger

**Rebecca Rodger joined the Board of Trustees at the beginning of this academic year.**

Her career has spanned across systems, project management and human resources. Gaining a BA in English Literature and an MA in Victorian Literature from the University of Liverpool, Rebecca has also worked at the Northern Schools Trust in a variety of roles. Now, she works as an HR professional for printing and digital services company, Ricoh UK.

In her new role on the Board, Rebecca has already taken on some important responsibilities, including safeguarding and becoming a link trustee for Stanwick Primary. We spoke to her about her role, her career and her goals for her term as a trustee.

## **What does your safeguarding role entail?**

From a safeguarding perspective, my role involves liaising with the Trust Safeguarding Lead, Sam Parish, and then to work as a link between the Board-level Education and Standards Committee and Sam.

It's important to ensure I understand how safeguarding is working in practice so I can report back to the Board and act as a specialist on that aspect of the governance structure.

## **Looking at your career history, there's been a wide variety of subjects covered across your professions, including literature, the law and events. Does this variety of interests reflect on your work as a trustee?**

I'm very individually committed to lifelong learning in terms of my values and what motivates me.

There's a family joke that I've never left university because I'm always doing a course or some other formal learning programme. I did my degree and my masters, which were more fuelled by academic curiosity than any particular career aspiration.

## **Do you think that curiosity and desire for education for yourself is what has brought you back to being involved in education?**

I think so. I'm very much committed to realising the potential in all of the young people who have attended our schools, supporting them to succeed in terms of their career, and also in the sense of ensuring that they remain curious, engaged and enthused by learning.

That's one of the things that really motivates me, and I think if you find the right outlet for a young person, they can find their individual passions.



*I want every child who attends one of the Trust schools to have had an education experience that raises their aspirations and allows them to identify and then pursue their dreams.*

*Rebecca Rodger*

## **You've worked with a Trust before in a different capacity as an employee and facilitated partnerships with different organisations in the local community. Is that something you would like to return to in your new role?**

Yes, absolutely. I'm also a director of Manor Sports and Leisure, which is currently the trading arm of the Trust. There's an awful lot of partnerships that can be leveraged through that organisation and how it's continuing to grow.

There's also the opportunity to help individual schools find the more local partnerships that will bring the best opportunities to their young people, and I have the experience to do that.



5 Wells Development Centre



Manor Sports & Leisure Ltd

# Lest We Forget

On 10th November, Manor School staged a Remembrance Service, supported by pupils who are Army, Navy and Air Force cadets. Representatives from GirlGuiding UK and the Scout Movement also proudly embodied the values that their groups stand for.

Windmill Primary School conducted a whole school assembly to discuss Remembrance and how important it is to honour those who fought.

On 11th November, children from the schools in Raunds gathered at the Town Hall to observe the annual two minutes silence and took part in the huge, community-focused Remembrance Parade the following day which concluded in the laying of wreaths.

Chris Hill, Trust CEO, said: "I was very proud to attend the Remembrance Day Parade on Sunday on behalf of the Raunds community. All of our local schools were represented at the event and conducted themselves with respect, embodying the values that we, as a Trust, hold very dear."





**Name and Title**  
Natalie Bannard,  
Executive Assistant  
at Manor School

# 10 minutes with...

## Who are you and what do you do – what are some of your day-to-day duties/ key responsibilities?

I am currently the Executive Assistant for the Senior Leadership Team at Manor School. I assist them from an admin and clerical perspective; however I also oversee the administration team for the school, so everyday can be very different. You cannot plan what you will be doing on the day until you come in and see what emails you have received on that day. A lot of my job involves assisting with trips, transport and admissions and I am also involved with a lot of Subject Access Requests – whatever the school and the senior leadership team require me to do. I do also manage both the Principal and Vice Principal's diaries as well, which in itself is a full-time job.

## How long have you worked at NET?

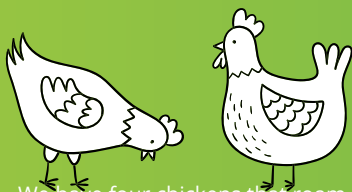
I have worked at NET for five years.

## What do you enjoy about your work?

This was so easy to answer ...the team at Manor are so great to work with and every day in the secondary school is so different but everybody always comes together to get the job done.

## What do you like to do outside of work?

We are currently renovating a 100-year-old house that we bought at the beginning of 2022 so in our spare time there is always a lot of DIY going on and all four of us are involved, my husband Matthew, who is a builder and our two girls Issabella, 13 and Alice, 9.



We have four chickens that roam our garden who are really good for our wellbeing, and we spend a lot of time out in the garden as well. Our chickens are called Robin, Daisy, Friday and Gumi.

We are renovating our rooms one by one and we're having a log burner installed, which will be amazing.

We've just had planning permission to build an extension, so we've ordered hard hats for us all. It will be something we do in our spare time.

## Do you play/follow any sports?

I am a super massive season ticket holder of Ipswich Town Football Club and I enjoy following them home and away with my dad, my brother and three nephews. We go to every home game and as many away games as possible. My office is covered in Ipswich memorabilia including calendars, photos and pens. Come on the Tractor Boys!

## Favourite city/destination?

For the last 21 years we've been going to a small village in the north of Corfu called Kassiope. My mum and dad go there as does my sister, it is like a second home, we go every year and there were 13 of us who went this year. It is a different way of life out there; it is lovely and the people are the best.



We also do a lot of camping as a family together and like the Cotswolds and Oxfordshire for camping trips.



## Favourite food?

Anybody who knows me knows that I love cake and I live for cake! I make the best risotto out there and tend to use left-over food from previous dinners. My mother-in-law is Italian, so I have had to learn to cook decent Italian food – no pressure! I like to make risotto using chicken or left over gammon/ham and throw in any type of vegetable we have left in the fridge for an end of the week dinner. My favourite cake is carrot cake; however I will eat any cake.

## Favourite book?

I love the author Cecelia Ahern and my favourite is Roar, which is about 30 women and their inspirational stories. She also wrote P.S. I Love You which is the most beautiful love story ever written.

## Favourite saying or quote?

It is simple however it says it all. "The best way to predict your future is to create it."

## Fears?

I have a fear of escalators, a fear of falling off them. It is quite horrific if you ever get me on an escalator because I have to be pinned in by someone in front of me and someone behind me just to get me on one!



5 Wells Development Centre





## Meet **Laura Kerrison**, our new Chief Finance Officer

### **Could you tell me a little bit about your career history?**

I first began working in education around 16 years ago, joining a local authority primary school as a Business Manager, seeing them through the first primary academisation in Northamptonshire. Several years later I moved on to a small multi-academy trust and have since worked in three other trusts prior to joining Nene Education Trust. I was with my most recent trust for five years, working as Finance Director, and now I'm here at NET as CFO.

### **How are you settling into your new role?**

It's only been a couple of weeks, but it's been great so far. I've found that the whole team have been really approachable and friendly. They've been very open when chatting with me and discussing what's pertinent to them, and hopefully I can help them with my skillset.

### **How have the relationships with the rest of the senior leadership team been developing?**

I've primarily been working with Chris Hill, the CEO, Director of Operations, Malcolm Johnston and Director of School Improvement, Matt Coleman. I've been working closely with them over the past couple of weeks, getting to know them and what the key objectives for the Trust are. They've been very good with helping me get under way so I can start having a positive impact on the schools and the Trust as a whole.

### **Could you take me through a day in the life for you since you've joined the Trust?**

Day-to-day, I've been having a lot of meetings and responding to ad hoc operational and financial things that come up. On a more long-term basis, there's been a lot of strategy planning, ensuring the finances align with the strategy of the Trust moving forward. I've also been visiting schools and getting to know the Principals and the wider teams, ensuring I understand everyone's roles and building up those networks so I can work with them as effectively as possible.

### **What are your overall goals as CFO?**

One thing I'd like to do is inspire the central teams so that they can develop in their roles and be the best versions of themselves. I'd also like to play a role in enabling outstanding educational outcomes. I believe very strongly in collaboration and think that working together is the best way to achieve that. Fundamentally, I'd like to be able to demonstrate, as a central service, best value to all our schools.

### **What do you enjoy most about working in education?**

I think it's ultimately making a difference to the pupils, not just to those in our care, but those in the wider community. That's why it's important for Good and Outstanding Trusts to grow, as you're able to bring expertise and opportunities to all children, and I think we all have a part to play in that.

*Knowing that what you do makes a difference, especially with Government funding being so tight these days, it's important to be able to maximise the resources available for educational purposes, the impact of which will make its way back to the children.*

*Laura Kerrison*

### **What do you like to do to outside of work?**

In my day-to-day I enjoy going to the gym and socialising. I also like to go to the theatre when I have the time, and I often go down to London to see musicals and try new restaurants. My daughter's a performer, so we often try to catch a show together.



5 Wells  
Development Centre



Manor  
Sports &  
Leisure Ltd

## **GET IN TOUCH**

### **Contact Us**

Tel: 01933 627081  
[enquiries@neneeducationtrust.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@neneeducationtrust.org.uk)  
[neneeducationtrust.org.uk](http://neneeducationtrust.org.uk)

### **Our Location**

Nene Business Centre, Waterside House,  
Station Road, Irthlingborough  
Northamptonshire NN9 5QF