

CONNECT NEWSLETTER

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Nene
Education
Trust

CEO Update - Manor Great Together aims to make improvements across the board

In recent months, Manor School has been experiencing some significant challenges. As the Trust's lone secondary school and one which many students from our primary schools will go on to attend, its success is paramount to the Trust's commitment to create lifelong learners and to raise aspirations for all of the young people under our care.

I'd like to thank the staff at Manor for their unwavering dedication and commitment to the school. I know we shape minds and futures and am determined to reunite and rekindle our team spirit. Together, we can overcome the hurdles before us.

As you are aware, all schools have undergone significant changes over the past few years, and we are now confronted with more obstacles to child success than ever before. Attendance, special educational needs, mental health, and wellbeing have become pressing issues that require our utmost attention, not just at Manor, but across the national educational landscape.

The past year has been exceptionally tough, compounded by high levels of absence. Despite our best intentions and hard work, we have found ourselves devoting excessive time managing low-level behaviours and implementing the sanctions these unfortunately require.

However, we must recognise the power of togetherness in revitalising Manor School. We must once again create an environment where we, as staff members, feel as loved and valued as our students. We need more than ever to extend our support to one another and uplift each other during these challenging times.

As I am sure you are acutely aware, we have a limited window of opportunity to make a lasting impact on areas that we do have control over. Areas like leadership, teaching, SEND, pupil attendance and pastoral support will require swift and immediate action.

We are actively re-evaluating the roles and responsibilities of those in leadership positions, while simultaneously striving to allocate more resources towards pastoral care, mental health, wellbeing and increasing attendance.

Our efforts so far, I am pleased to say, have gained the attention of the Department of Education (DfE), meaning that we now have an audience with them to advocate directly to the Minister for Children and the Secretary of State for Education.



Let us, together, rekindle the passion within ourselves to do whatever it takes for the betterment of the children of our school. By working as a team, I believe the staff at Manor School can create a nurturing and thriving environment that will benefit us all across the Trust.

I am confident that, with our collective efforts, we will overcome these challenges and emerge stronger than ever before.

Does your school have some incredible news? Staff successes? School events?
Contact vbrennan@neneeducationtrust.org.uk to be featured in the next NET Connect Newsletter

The (net)ball is in Manor's court!

In March, Manor School held their annual year 5/6 netball cluster competition where teams from the Trust's primary schools competed against each other.

The teams were ably and enthusiastically supported by 10 leaders from Manor's years 7 and 8 in a coaching and refereeing capacity.

A lovely afternoon of good sportsmanship and support was had by all and St Peter's CE Academy's blue team were 'crowned' the outright winners.

Mrs Hustwait said that she was very proud of everyone that took part, especially our Manor Representatives Olivia M, Isla R, Evie M, Poppie E, Rhimaya S, Violet P, Isla-Mae C, Charlotte F, Emily M and Mia B for their excellent leadership and role modelling skills.



Easter Across the Trust

Easter and springtime go hand in hand, bringing a sense of renewal and hope. Some of our schools celebrated this special time in their local church and others visited Chester House to see the new Spring lambs.



Storytelling Week at Redwell Primary School

As part of their Storytelling Week recently, Redwell Primary School were very excited to welcome Lowri Moore, an author from Nottingham, who lead an assembly on inclusion.

Lowri is the inspiration behind the very popular Disney film, Encanto. When she was younger, Lowri wrote to Disney as she had noticed that children that wear glasses were not represented in their films. She went on to write her own book which received a lot of publicity. However, what she didn't know was that in the background, Disney had taken her letter very seriously, and were creating a storyboard for a film which became Encanto – about a girl who wears glasses.

Once production was complete, they wrote to Lowri and invited her to the film's premier where she met the film's producer and the actress that plays Mirabel in the film. Mrs Head, Principal at Redwell said that Lowri had inspired the children so much that they are going to write stories about diversity and inclusion.

She said that she was so touched when a couple of children came up to her afterwards to say that they felt special because they too wear glasses. One child didn't like to wear their glasses as they felt self conscious but after the assembly they went straight to their drawer and put them on proudly!

What an incredible opportunity for our children!

World Poetry Day 2024

The children at Manor School embraced World Poetry Day this year by reciting three poems. Each had a different subject but all engaged the audience in its own way.

The first, The Alphabet by Spike Milligan is a humorous poem that uses the alphabet as a platform for wordplay and characterisation. Each letter takes on a unique personality and engages in witty banter, revealing their individual quirks and grievances. The poem's clever rhymes and playful language create a light-hearted tone, entertaining readers with its creative use of the alphabet.



Secondly was 'The Fox' – a traditional English folk song that was accompanied by rhythmic timing to keep the spoken song on track. The song originates from around 15th century.



Lastly, was 'Please Mrs Butler' by Allan Ahlberg is very funny and the author suggests it refers to the 'psychological state of teachers' after a constant barrage of questions from their charges over the days and years. The poem is about a boy named Derek Drew who keeps taking items belonging to the subject of the poem.

Well done to Mrs Dicker, Head of English and all of the children that took part – it looked like great fun!



An Interview with Karen Stevenson, Trust SEND Lead

Can you tell me about your career history and how you came to work in education?

I've always enjoyed working with children and, while at school, I helped with youth groups and volunteered at a primary school, which then led me to deciding to train to be a teacher.

Since then, I've taught in various primary schools, taking on my first SENDCo role in 2011. I continued to follow this route throughout my career, taking on a range of leadership roles with SEND and inclusion responsibilities.

And how did you come to specialise in SEND?

It's always been important to me that children feel included and receive the support they need and I have strived to provide that support for the children in each of my classes. When the SENDCo role became available, I jumped at the opportunity as I was keen to find out more about how we can help to remove the different barriers that children experience, as well as advocating for children who need extra support.

I believe that good teaching for children with SEND is good teaching for all, so learning more about how we support our SEND children can only have a positive impact. Before taking on my current role at NET, I worked for a short time in the Local Authority, focusing purely on SEND. Although I learned a huge amount in that role, I found it too far removed from the children themselves. When the NET role came up, it felt like an ideal opportunity to be able to work more closely with children, while still providing strategic vision.

What does your current role involve?

I am part of the School Improvement Team where our aim is to provide bespoke support for each school. My primary role is supporting SEND across the Trust's schools. SEND is very interlinked with teaching and learning, so I do get involved with lots of other areas too.

Each school has their own SENDCo who is usually my main point of contact. I try to support them however I can: offering advice, facilitating CPD and organising network meetings to share best practice and give a space where we can collaborate. I feel very lucky as they are a great team who all work tirelessly to create the best offer we can for our SEND children.

It's also important to work within the wider professional community so that we can support change and improvement in the local area and beyond. I am involved with a variety of working parties to improve SEND services and provision. We recently partnered with NN Track, EPIC psychology and wellbeing services, Creating Tomorrow Trust and Meridian Trust to secure the Autism Education Trust license for Northamptonshire, allowing us to raise awareness, upskill staff and improve education for autistic children and young people. If we work collaboratively and collectively, we're far more likely to achieve a positive, more far-reaching outcome.

Is your approach unique in any way?

When I joined the Trust, they were recruiting for two Trust Inclusion posts – SEND and Safeguarding lead. At the time, this was quite unusual as a start point to expanding the school improvement team as curriculum leads are often prioritised. The prioritisation of inclusion was one of things which attracted me to the role. As the SEND lead was a new role, it has allowed me to build what our offer looks like, making sure that I can be reactive to what we need.

I adapt my approach with each school based on what is most effective for them at that time, allowing me to be both strategic and operational – we don't adopt a one size fits all approach. The Trust's size allows me to still be involved 'on the ground' so I can meet lots of the children with SEND needs under our care. This means that I can make suggestions that aren't just based on a report but use direct knowledge of a child to inform decision making.

What are your goals for the schools within the Trust? How does this fit into the Trust's strategy?

My goal is to be part of a solution, to always be constructive both on an individual and a Trustwide scale. We are needs-led rather than diagnosis-led so it's important to strive to find the right approaches for each child and looking at creative ways to offer provisions. Children get one chance through the education system so it's imperative we do everything we can to offer the provision that ensures each child has the opportunity to succeed.



Name and Title

Rob Alexander, Primary Campus Manager for Windmill, Woodford and Stanwick

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

My team and I make sure that everything in the school is safe and running smoothly. Our main duties include all compliance checks on things like fire extinguishers, the water supply, doors and windows, everything really! We perform all the maintenance around the schools too, making sure the schools are ready to go, and often do renovation projects too.

How long have you worked at the Trust?

It will be twenty years in June. I started at Manor as a Sports Centre Manager. As the Trust came about and developed, I became more and more involved in estates management and briefly managed all the schools in the Trust, but we realised quite quickly that was too much for one person. Now, I'm one of three campus managers across the Trust.

What do you enjoy about your work?

I enjoy seeing people's faces when we complete a project, whether it's big or small. I love the element of making someone's life a bit easier. We've just put together some funding to add a brand-new early year's area at Woodford Primary School, and the project is now complete. It's had such an impact on both the children and the staff, and that's the kind of thing I love to be a part of.

What do you like to do outside of work?

A couple of years ago, I bought a school minibus off Manor, and have since converted it into a campervan. I take a lot of fishing trips in it, I love the peace and quiet.



10 minutes with...

Do you play/follow any sports?

I wanted to be a rugby player when I was younger, but I never got big enough! Nowadays I support Leicester Tigers, which is a bit controversial around here! For football, I'm an Aston Villa fan.

Favourite city/destination?

I used to live in Cornwall so that's definitely up there, but I haven't been in a few years. I'll be going to Whitby this weekend for my 50th so I'm very excited for that!

Favourite food?

There's not much I don't like! I love Italian, Indian, Thai... I take my Dad to McDonald's every Sunday for breakfast and for tea, which we love to do together. Like I said, there's not much I won't eat!



Favourite book?

It's been a while since I've read a book, but the last one I read was The Beach by Alex Garland. I couldn't put it down!



Favourite saying or quote?

"Have a good 'un!"

Fears?

Rats, snakes, and lizards! I went to Thailand a few years ago and that was my worst nightmare! Anything that moved in the grass or on the beach had me jumping in the air!

GET IN TOUCH

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Raising Aspirations - Developing Character - Positive Environment