

## A warm welcome from the CEO

As we celebrate the Trust's 10th anniversary this year, we welcome you to the first of our newsletters which aims to keep all of our stakeholders up to date on the Propeller Academy Trust's latest news, progress and plans across all of our member schools. We have so many exciting plans in the pipeline and so hope you enjoy reading about them.

Our most recent big news is that Bishopswood School joined Propeller Academy Trust from January 1st 2023. We have worked very closely with the school and Local Authority for a number of months to support Bishopswood and are already seeing the benefits of Bishopswood being part of our Trust (*see below*) and, alongside the hard work of the committed and talented staff team and the new local governing body, the future is very exciting, and we are absolutely thrilled to welcome them to the Trust.



**Tom Pegler**

CEO - Propeller Academy Trust

## Bishopswood Investment



Since we officially welcomed our colleagues at Bishopswood School, many new developments are well underway. The school's new logo has a wonderfully fresh look, and is starting to adorn the signage across the site.

Work has also started inside the school.

As well as a fresh new look to the main entrance area, there are a number of refurbished classrooms, including furniture, carpets and blinds, along with

an upgrade to safeguarding and two amazing new uniforms for all of the students—one for primary children and one for secondary.

We look forward to sharing ongoing works with you in the next newsletter.



## Web directory



Here are the links to all our sites for your convenience

[Propeller Academy Trust](#)

[Bishopswood School](#)

[Fitzwaryn School](#)

[Kingfisher School](#)

## Like & Follow



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## Registered Address

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*Coming Soon!*

Our next issue will be published later this year, and will feature...

- Growing our own expertise with our new in-house apprenticeship programme
- Focus on charity and fundraising
- A new alumni to keep in contact with our student leavers
- Work shadowing for our students to support their careers education programme

# Improving Educational Standards in Schools

## Investment at Kingfisher

Our new £1million extension at Kingfisher School in Abingdon, in conjunction with Oxfordshire County Council, was completed in March. Kingfisher has risen from 78 to 110 students in recent years, meeting the needs across the local community. The new facilities include a new central office, meeting room and classroom/lifeskills centre. We are looking forward to students (old and new) enjoying the facilities for many years to come.



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## TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!

This is the first issue of our newsletter, so we are keen to get your feedback.

Please consider completing this short feedback form, and include your contact details if you'd like to be entered into the prize draw.

[CLICK HERE TO COMPLETE FEEDBACK FORM](#)



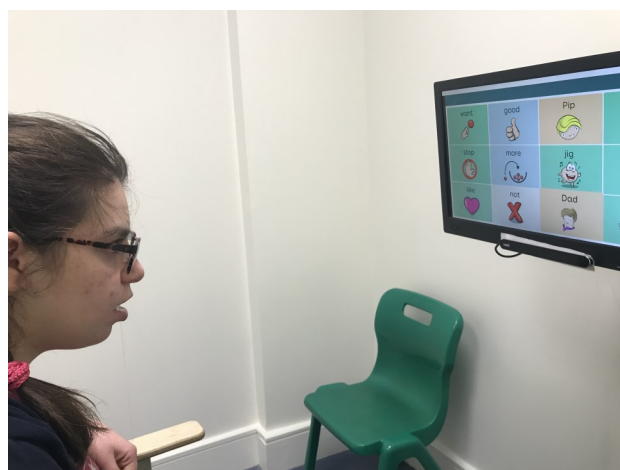
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## Engaging Expertise

As part of our ongoing improvement work, all of our schools work alongside external expertise across all areas of education. Recently, the Trust engaged an autism specialist to develop staff across all schools to enhance the support offered to students and have been working with therapeutic specialists to develop the quality of our provision further.

## New Eye Gaze at Kingfisher

Kingfisher School have been using eye gaze technology for a number of years to support a number of our pupils in developing their understanding of cause and effect and choice making. As pupils have developed in their use of the technology, some have progressed to use the device in a functional way to communicate their needs and opinions.



Eye gaze technology is important to some of our pupils because it gives them a method of communication and increases their independence and autonomy as it can ultimately be used to control their environment.

Kingfisher, understanding the huge potential this technology has, has invested in an additional up to date device. It comes with multiple cameras so that assessment staff can work with pupils in a more bespoke way.

Staff have been working closely with the company 'Smartbox' who are experts in assistive technology. One of our pupils has just finished a two week trial, through the company. The evidence gained will form part of the process in getting a personal device. In June, Smartbox will be coming to Kingfisher for an assessment day to support the planning of targeted provision that meets needs of pupils using the device.

We are very excited to be building on this provision and hope to share our successes with you in future newsletters.

**Tor Bradley**

Sensory Pathway Lead, Kingfisher School

## Café Enterprise at Fitzwaryn

On the last Friday of every month, the Student Centre at Fitzwaryn School host a coffee morning. Parents, governors, directors and staff all attend. We have even had the Mayor on two occasions!



The students are keen bakers and *all* the cakes are home made. The money we raise will be split between all of the classes to provide better resources. The students are in charge of all details of the coffee morning. They sell the cakes, make the drinks, host the guests and do the

cleaning up! They are very proud of their enterprise business and everyone is always welcome.

School newsletters contain up coming café dates – we would love to see you there!



**Naomi Rudman**

Work Experience & Accreditation HLTA, Fitzwaryn School

## Fitzwaryn Focus on Careers

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> May, Fitzwaryn School held a Careers Fair. We invited representatives from various establishments including Abingdon and Witney College, SENDIASS, Yellow Submarine, Oxfordshire Employment Services, Adviza, Style Acre and our very own Student Centre. Parents were invited to come along to see what options are available to their children Post-16 and Post-19. Parents that attended gave the following feedback:

*"It was great to see that there are so many options. I didn't know that support with travel was available, so I am pleased about that!"*

*"It has given me an insight into what is available for my daughter, and I enjoyed having the time to discuss this with different people."*

We look forward to hosting it again next year and hope that even more parents will be able to support it so they can gain a deeper understanding of what is available for their children in the next stage of their lives.

**Hannah Gordon**

Maths and Careers Lead

## Kingfisher PFSA makes a Splash!

A recent project, financed by the Parent, Friends and Staff Association (PFSA) at Kingfisher, has seen the successful installation of a new system of lights and music on poolside. The relaxing spa music creates a calm atmosphere which helps settle the pupils quickly and enables them to focus for longer.

The lights have also been hugely helpful. Pupils from the sensory pathway enjoy tracking the lights on the pool ceiling, and other pupils enjoy exploring the lights on the pool bottom.

These new features are used in all swimming lessons, and are hugely beneficial to the students.



### Many thanks to the PFSA

If you are a parent or friend of Kingfisher School, and would like to contribute to the work of the group, please contact the school direct.

## School Improvement Partner

All of our schools have recently had visits from our School Improvement Partner (SIP). The visits have focused on the quality of education and provide an external snapshot of schools' positions. The findings were extremely positive and we will continue to strive to provide the best possible education for all our young people and their families.

## Phonics at Fitzwaryn

We have invested in a new phonics teaching system called *Read Write Inc.* at Fitzwaryn. This is a popular phonics scheme, and like all phonics schemes, it teaches children the sounds in English, the letters that represent them, and how to form the letters when writing. It includes reading books written using only the letters they have learnt at each level (and a small number of separately taught 'tricky words'. The children will quickly feel confident and successful.

Read, Write, Inc has been adopted across all our schools.

**Read Write Inc.**

# Fitzwaryn Parkrun Takeover!

**Fitzwaryn School took over the parkrun on 20th May, and students have created the following write up to share with you...**

On Saturday morning we went to parkrun. It was our first parkrun and we did lots of preparation for it.



*"I had healthy meals in the week leading up to it, so I had more energy. I had lots of meat which is a protein which helps my muscles".*

*"I called my friend and they gave me some top tips for the event and how to keep running."*

We did some training with Mike. We did an exercise called the caterpillar. This is where we stuck together in a line and jogged around the track. We did some sprint races.

He also said not to use too much energy at the start but to pace yourself. You need energy for the finish line.

We did some cool downs and some warmups to prepare our bodies.

*"After the run I felt really energetic and proud - all the training had paid off".*

*"I felt happy as I did it under 26 minutes. I am going to go to parkrun again and I hope to beat my PB".*



It was a fantastic experience. The marshals were great on the course. I slowed down near the rugby pitch, but they cheered me on, so we kept going. There was a great atmosphere. I heard lots of clapping for me at the end.

The cakes at the end were amazing. I had the chocolate cake, and it was delicious. Thank you the Student Centre for providing such delicious cakes.



## Breaking news!

Following this wonderful parkrun event, Kirsty Taylor, our sports leader at Fitzwaryn School, was thrilled to share this update with us...

*I was delighted to see Lewis (a student at Fitzwaryn School) at parkrun this weekend. I was bundling my own two up ready to run, and him and his dad pulled up next to us in the car park. I was so surprised and really pleased.*

*The core team gave him a warm welcome and Mike (one of the coaches that came to school) did a warmup with him and gave him some top tips.*

*Lewis is an amazing runner and beat his PB from the takeover event. He completed in 25:29 and came in 29<sup>th</sup> position. What amazing talent at such a young age. He also inspired me to run that extra bit quicker when I saw that he nearly lapped me - I thought oh no you're not - ha ha and I sped up to make sure I was out of his way!*



*I wanted to share his success with you all!*

**Kirsty Taylor**  
Sports Leader  
Fitzwaryn School



### Partnership Working

As a Trust, we have placed emphasis on growing local partnerships to ensure we can support and influence local policy making as well as placing ourselves at the forefront of local growth and sufficiency. Tracey Stratton (our Chief Operations Officer or COO) is working with local authority (LA) leaders to find a solution to the 'funding gap' and I have been chairing the SEND Employment Forum aimed at developing high quality routes into employment for local young people with SEND. Stephanie Coneboy (Headteacher at Fitzwaryn) is an active member of the LA led SEND strategic working party and strategic school partnership board. Lorraine Wilson (Headteacher at Kingfisher) contributes to Schools Forum which is the vehicle for decision making on LA funding division and Priya Bhagrath (Headteacher at Bishopswood) is an active leader in both BAME education and BETT (British Education Training and Technology). This Trust wide network and partnership working allows us to be well placed to influence direction for SEND locally and nationally as well as accessing available funding and resourcing in such a key period.



Tom Pegler  
CEO



### Cross Trust Work

Internal partnership working has also been at the forefront of Trust wide development. Headteachers have completed their first 'peer review' session, visiting Bishopswood where Priya presented to the executive team leading to pedagogical debate and future cross trust working plans including trust wide moderation and joint training and INSET.

Our current cross trust working parties are bearing fruit with both the 'moving on' and mental health and wellbeing groups planning impactful change for our schools in the near future including the adoption of a Mental Health and Well-being Charter.

Our LGB chairs now meet regularly and have contributed to the development and refinement of our scheme of delegation, schedule of reporting and training plans.

Also, in October 2023, we are very much looking forward to bringing ALL staff together across all schools, to join the Trust for a day of planning together on an INSET day.

### 19-25 Education at PAT

A working example of partnership working has landed recently. Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) has committed to funding the development and submission of a business case to provide 19-25 education within the Trust. This was born from our 'moving on' strategy and working group and meetings with a number of the LA's senior leaders championing the lack of opportunities for our young people. The aim will be to pilot this in one area initially with the possibility of a much larger future roll-out. This work is impactful and crucial to the Trust's growth and sustainability and will provide a wonderful opportunity for our families to make the most of their local communities.

### Trust Strategy

In the Spring term, we were delighted to share the first iteration of our Trust wide [strategy document](#). The document highlighted our 5 key priorities (noted below- greater detail can be found in the full document).

- **Ensure all students fulfil their potential in and out of the classroom.**
- **Prepare and support all students to be happy, active and lifelong integral members of their community.**
- **Effectively invest in people**
- **Continually extend our reach to provide high quality support to as many students as possible.**
- **Deliver a sustainable business model to enable us to fulfil our strategic aims.**

We have already made significant progress in all these areas and have been working with school teams to deliver a number of projects to provide the support they need to thrive.

### Value for money!

We had a visit from a School Resource Management Adviser (SMRA) at the start of the year. The visit, designed to identify any savings or efficiencies to help stabilise the Trust's financial position, was extremely positive. Their findings in the report stated;

*'The Trust has already implemented cost savings and been successful at generating income. I could not find any further opportunities for the Trust to make savings.'*

This provides national assurance that we are providing value for money in all we do.

Equally, we are committed to working with other MATs. Our Chief Operations Officer is working with another local SEND MAT to add weight to our financial bargaining and we will complete a comprehensive peer review with another local MAT.

# How can you help?

## We encourage you to get involved

We are always keen to explore any new opportunities for support of any kind available from local businesses, or individuals that can help enrich the experiences of our students at any member school. This might be financial or time and expertise. We invite you to get in touch with any ideas you have on how you'd like to be involved. Here are some examples, but we are not limited to these, so do get in touch today for an initial chat with Helen De Broize at [Helen@PropellerTrust.org](mailto:Helen@PropellerTrust.org) to see how we could work together.

### Experience of the World of Work

Partnering with us to provide work experience and employer encounters is not only beneficial for our students but also for local businesses. By offering work experience, businesses can make a positive impact in their community and help support the next generation of young people. It also provides businesses with the opportunity to tap into a diverse talent pool, and potentially identify future employees who are enthusiastic and eager to learn. We can work with you to identify suitable roles and tasks for our students, and provide support and guidance throughout the placement.



### Match Funding

If your employer has a match funding scheme, we would love to hear from you, to understand the terms and eligibility criteria. Not only does each school have a vibrant and hardworking 'Parent & Friends' charity raising money for their school, but the Trust also continually applies for all manner of funding to support our schools. If you can get in touch, we can work out the most appropriate way to benefit from such schemes.

### Corporate Sponsorship

If you part of a business who takes their Corporate Social Responsibility seriously, and is able to partner with the Trust to support one of our schools, we are keen to promote you in our social media and school communications. We have a number of opportunities, across a range of budgets. We can always match with the businesses priorities, whether they are to support education, environmental concerns, community or many other areas.

### Volunteering in Schools

If you have time to share with your school, then we urge you to get in touch. Whether or not you *think* you have skills and expertise (most people are terribly humble!) simply time and patience is a great starting point.

## Shop Online and Create Donations for school

To support the work of each school, a fundraising page has been set up for you to be able to give FREE donations every time you go shopping on line. Easy Fundraising has made it very easy for supporter to create an account, and then every time you shop, you access your retailer through the Easy Fundraising page. Once you've arrived at your shopping destination everything continues exactly as you would expect BUT when you checkout after making your purchase, a donation will be made to your cause.

All you need to do is set up an account on [Easy Fundraising](#), and select your cause. Depending on your school, you will find our member schools listed as:

**Fitzwaryn School**

**Bishopswood Special School**

**Kingfisher School—Abingdon**

Every few months, a payment will then be made to the school based on the total donations received to date.

You will see all the usual supermarkets and online retailers listed, but there are **over 7000** in total. Remember to check if you are booking holidays, taking out insurance or buying a big appliance, for example – chances are you'll be able get the school quite a sizeable donation if you go through the Easy Fundraising page. *(No data is shared—the administrator can see first names and the amount of donation per purchase—but no shop names, and no surnames are shared.)*

Remember you can share this with all your friends and family too. Essentially, this is **FREE money!** If you have any questions about Easy Fundraising contact our Commercial Manager at [Helen@PropellerTrust.org](mailto:Helen@PropellerTrust.org) for help.

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**Jane Edwards**

Chair, Board of Directors  
*Propeller Academy Trust*



Having worked in education for virtually the whole of my life, I was delighted to be asked to become a Director of the Trust, on retirement. I am passionate about doing what I can to ensure that the young people, children and families within the Trust, as well as those supported in the wider community, have the best and most enjoyable education that also equips them for a fulfilling life beyond the Trust.

**Tom Pegler**

Chief Executive Officer  
*Propeller Academy Trust*



I am very proud to be CEO of Propeller Academy Trust, a Trust that focuses on providing the best possible opportunities in and out of school for its pupils and their families.

I have worked in education since university and have a background as a senior leader in secondary mainstream education, prior to joining the special school sector where I have been a Headteacher in two schools and the Director of Education for an SEND charity prior to working at Propeller. I am very proud of our 3 schools and the unrelenting passion and ambition of our staff teams to deliver the best possible educational experiences for the young people in our care.

I have worked in Education, across all phases of primary, secondary and special schools for over 15 years. Previously my experience is from a Corporate background in Operations, HR, Procurement, Marketing, FM and Contract management.



**Tracey Stratton**

Chief Operations Officer  
*Propeller Academy Trust*

It is vital that our Students have first-class facilities and resources to aid their learning and wider school experience. The whole support team is committed to providing excellent value to ensure these aims are met and our young people have a positive experience.

Fiona a part-time management accountant for the Trust and is an experienced School professional working with our finance manager to ensure compliance. Fiona has recently joined the Trust team from the Bishopswood local team and we are pleased to welcome her experience to our



**Fiona Allnut**

Management Accountant  
*Propeller Academy Trust*

**Stephanie Coneboy**

Head Teacher  
*Fitzwaryn School*



I am immensely proud to be the Headteacher at Fitzwaryn School where I lead an amazing team of professionals who have the children & young people at the heart of everything we do. My priority is to ensure that each and every child that comes through the door of Fitzwaryn gets the best possible education and experience, and when they leave us, they have the skills and knowledge to enable them to go onto the next stages of their lives, but also with some fantastic memories of their time at school!



**Lorraine Wilson**

Head Teacher  
*Kingfisher School*

My career in Education has been vast and varied which provides the knowledge and experience needed to lead our amazing school. My aim is to provide a first-class education to support pupils to reach their full potential in all aspects of their life. For me, this includes providing opportunities to build independence and enrich wellbeing as well as the more formal educational elements of learning experiences.

**Priya Bhagrath**

Head Teacher  
*Bishopswood School*



My utmost commitment is to empower our children with essential life skills, cultivate resilience, foster their curiosity about the world, and harness the potential of technology in education. Together with my team, and support of the wider Trust, we look forward to our journey of continuous improvement, guided by research-driven practices, to ensure that we provide the highest quality education and support to all our children.

**Sam Shepherd**

Chair of Governors  
Local Governing Board  
*Kingfisher School*



As a parent myself, I am passionate about ensuring young people have the best possible education. Having a career in the public sector, I seek to bring both a strategic and inclusive approach to my Governor role.



**Carole Hollister**  
Finance & HR Manager  
*Propeller Academy Trust*

I have worked at Fitzwaryn for nearly 24 years in the school office. My current role is Finance and HR Officer for the whole Trust, working alongside my colleague Dawn Broughton. I have seen the school undergo a total refurbishment over the years and it has been wonderful to witness pupils grow and thrive from when they start school as a 5 year old, to when they leave at 18.



**Michael John**  
IT and Health & Safety Manager  
*Propeller Academy Trust*

I was originally a TA at Kingfisher and then moved to Site management a year later. I was Site Manager at Kingfisher for 8 years, but since March 2023, I've moved to the Trust in my new role. Before all of this, I spent 32 years in the Fire Service, so gained a LOT of health & safety experience—hence my new role!

I love interacting with all the classes—which I'll be doing more of now, across all the schools.



**Dawn Broughton**  
Finance & HR Manager  
*Propeller Academy Trust*

Having worked at Barclays Bank since leaving school I decided after having children to change my career. I was very involved in my children's school PSFA and I knew that I would enjoy working in a school environment. I started at Kingfisher School in 2003 in the role of finance officer, moving to our Central office based at Fitzwaryn in September 2021. I love that no two days are the same!



**Clare Offill**  
Project Manager  
*Propeller Academy Trust*

As an Accountancy graduate, and after of 15 years in a corporate environment, I moved into Education purely by chance. Originally a TA at Fitzwaryn, and then an HLTA running the sensory theatre I got the opportunity to move into my current role in 2022. Supporting projects within the Trust Central Team is totally me! I thrive on a challenge and no two days are same!



**Helen De Broize**  
Commercial Manager  
*Propeller Academy Trust*

I've been working in education since 2010 and am qualified as a Careers Leader. I've also worked in corporate training and as a community artist. My aim is to be an enabler. I seek out the finances (through bid writing and sponsorship) as well as contacts, to give our schools the power and support to achieve their goals.

**Wayne Tica**  
Chair of Governors  
Fitzwaryn School



Hailing from a background in business, I'm big on support and collaboration. I love to identify and understand problems, and help to shape continual-improvement initiatives that create and promote environments conducive to high-levels of quality and satisfaction for students and staff alike.

**Mark Winch**  
Chair of Governors  
Bishopwood School



As a school governor for over 10 years I have held the Chair role in Primary, Secondary and Special schools. In those 10 years, I have been part of Boards that have moved an adequate school to outstanding and an RI school to good. My background is in the NHS where I have held a number of senior level roles with responsibility for governance, performance, organisational change and strategic implementation.