



Vanguard Learning Trust Newsletter

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Expansion at Ruislip High and Vyners



Ruislip High School



Vyners School

Ruislip High and Vyners have both completed their school expansion projects. Construction at Vyners began in February 2018 and the new block opened to students in October 2019. The expansion has created capacity for a total of 300 students, two additional forms of entry in Years 7 to 11. A number of new facilities have been created across the school site including a second canteen, a learning resource centre, an expanded sixth form study room, expanded music, DT and performing arts spaces and a new all weather pitch and associated changing rooms. The new block has completed the quadrangle which means the main recreational space for students is now fully enclosed. The expansion of the building has also meant that the thirty-year old, temporary classrooms have finally been removed from site.

Ruislip High's construction began in April 2019 and the new wing opened to students in March 2021. The expansion has allowed for an additional one form entry in Years 7 to 11 and an expanded sixth form with capacity for up to 250 students. As well as the new sixth form centre, which has a split-level study space, dedicated social space and classrooms, there is also a performance hall for drama and music events as well as presentations, daily assemblies and drama lessons. A new astroturf has been laid and there is more undercover outdoor space, which is beneficial during break and lunchtime periods. There are six additional classrooms; one of them

can be used as a seminar room for presentations and training events. The existing building has got an additional science laboratory, a new media suite and the PE changing rooms have been refurbished. The commemorative circle, including the time capsule that was buried when the school opened in 2006, has been moved and now takes pride of place outside the new sixth form entrance. Although the existing building is only fifteen years old, it is fitting to have a memento of the school's genesis, with the names of the founding staff as well as the first cohort of Year 7 students, at the entrance of the new wing.

'We are delighted with our brand new state-of-the-art sixth form centre and the additional facilities the expansion brings to Ruislip High School's community. There is no doubt the new provision will benefit our school community for many years to come.'

Gareth Davies, Headteacher, Ruislip High School

'Taking ownership of the newly built section of the school in October 2019 has supported our expansion to become an eight form entry school. This has allowed us to better serve the needs of families within the local community. We would like to express our thanks to Hillingdon Borough Council for its support and funding for this excellent resource.'

Gary Mullings, Headteacher, Vyners School

Student activities

Student awards

Each school in the Trust selected students, one from each key stage, except for Field End's who are all in KS2, to be recipients based on their support for one of the Trust's values:

1. Life-long learning
2. Pride
3. Belonging
4. Respect, responsibility and relationships
5. Tolerance and humility

The recipients received a certificate and a Trust pin badge, and a postcard was sent home to their parents. Each school's recipients for the spring term are as follows:

Field End: Jacob, Veena and Hafsa, KS2

Hermitage: Alby, EYFS, Sohan, KS1, Avhi, KS2

Ruislip High: Giselle, KS3, Hannah, KS4, Elliot, KS5

Ryefield: Hamza, EYFS, Lily, KS1, Ollie, KS2

Vyners: Mollie, KS3, Ewan, KS4, Alex, KS5



School collaboration

Over the past year, there has been significant collaboration between Ruislip High and Vyners in helping to prepare sixth form students for applications to university. Part of this has taken place through joint Google classrooms for different subject areas, where useful links and resources can be posted to support students with their applications; these have led to students having access to a wider range of super-curricular reading, such as up-to-date academic journals about the COVID-19 pandemic for prospective medical students.

The Trust has also hosted a number of talks on Zoom for sixth form students; these were delivered by experts in their field and included a television and film industry expert for media applicants, a clinical professor in emergency medicine for medical applicants and a Q&A session with a Professor of biology and biochemistry from the University of Bath.

Year 13 students at both schools have been receiving offers this term, including ones for medical and veterinary science courses as well as ones for the University of Cambridge and the University of Oxford. The students have found this additional support extremely valuable.

'Throughout my Cambridge application, all of the staff were extremely helpful in ensuring that I was prepared for each step of the process! From checking my personal statement to preparing me for mock interviews, the staff made sure that I felt much more confident and comfortable at every stage.'

Emma, Year 13, Ruislip High School

Poetry competition

The inaugural Trust-wide poetry competition was launched at the beginning of the spring term 2021 despite the complications of the current climate. A number of outstanding entries have already been submitted and Russell Grant, astrologer and media personality, has been confirmed as one of the judges.

The theme of the competition is 'identity' and this has never seemed more pertinent than in the past year; this is reflected in students' writing in terms of their maturity and emotional deftness.

The deadline for entries is Monday 29th March 2021. The next stage will involve the finalists from all five schools taking part in a virtual workshop - one for each key stage - with Arvon, a charitable company that supports with creative writing, both for adults and school-aged students; a professional writer will lead the workshop to support students with honing their poem as well as their craft. The intention is to have an anthology published of all the finalists' poems. Peter Randall, Ruislip High School, is leading on the organisation of the competition and stated:

'Reading all the competition entries has been a fantastic experience. There is clearly a huge well of talent in the Trust and it is encouraging to see so much effort and creativity in such a challenging time. We are sure that the competition will grow as a tradition and that students will look forward to taking part.'



Poetry competition flyer

School improvement work

NQT and NQT+1

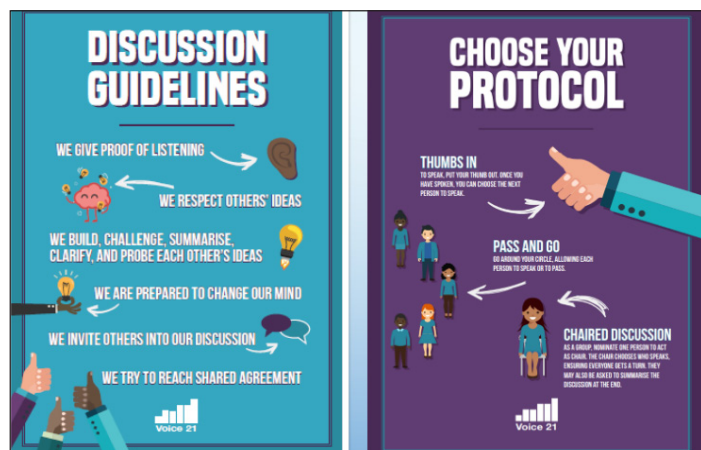
During the spring term the 26 newly qualified or recently qualified teachers (NQTs/NQT+1) across the Trust participated in two professional development sessions which expanded their knowledge on learning theories and explored practical teaching skills.

The first session was led by Martina Lecky, executive headteacher and Michael Walsh, Let's Think tutor, on the topic of theories of learning and neuroplasticity; they explored how teachers' pedagogical understanding is developed by putting theory into practice. The teachers particularly enjoyed learning about neuroplasticity, the function of the teenage brain and the recommendations for further reading on this subject.



Delegates at the NQT session

The second session was led by Liz Strong, deputy head, Ryefield Primary School, on the topic of oracy. The session focused mainly on practical tips to help teachers to embed oracy approaches into all areas of the curriculum. The two strands of oracy, learning through talk and learning to talk, were discussed, and the participants discovered how easy it is to increase engagement in learning by adopting some simple oracy strategies. In their feedback the participants commented on how they found the practical strategies presented at the session useful in increasing participation, student involvement and engagement in lessons.



Course materials from the NQT session

SSAT (schools, students and teachers network) leadership courses

The SSAT leadership courses are progressing well and, whilst the participants look forward to when future sessions can take place in person, the lead facilitators are working hard to navigate the constraints of the pandemic and ensure the materials are as accessible and engaging as possible.

The latest stepping up to senior leadership session focused on leading and managing the complexities of change; this proved to be a timely discussion as each school continues to manage the challenge of leading during a pandemic.

'I found the models and theory behind change most useful as it was like a puzzle falling into the place. I could see so many examples within my school why certain changes happened or didn't happen and what feelings were experienced not only by me but other staff members as well.'

Daiva Simaite, Hermitage Primary School

Delegates on the middle leadership course recently had the opportunity to consider the difference between leadership and management, how this is reflected in their current leadership approach and how they may adjust their practice in the future.

'I valued the fact that there were a variety of different ways of looking at the characteristics of effective leadership behaviours. Consequently, I have gained a much greater sense of how to develop the behaviours that will make my leadership more effective.'

Catriona Connolly, Vyners School

The latest leaders for the future session focused on the importance of leading vision and culture; delegates had the chance to write and set their own vision and work collaboratively with each other.

'The resources we discussed at the beginning gradually introduced us to the idea and purpose of vision. It was engaging and accessible for all and linked perfectly with the body of the lesson.'

Lucy Lawrence, Ruislip High School

ssat the schools, students and teachers network

School improvement work

Let's Think Hub

The Let's Think Hub established in September 2020 continues to thrive. 16 teachers from across VLT are enjoying the training and looking forward to implementing the lessons now pupils have returned to school. Two sessions were held online during the spring term 2021. In the February session, participating teachers reviewed research on the development of cognition and how pupils can be set just the right level of challenge to ensure they are stretched and engaged. One teacher commented:

'I found it really useful. My colleague and I discussed the benefits and the necessity of developing the children's independent thinking. It has highlighted the need for pushing the children to reflect on their own past learning to approach new problems and not rely on being helped.'

Julia Dearing, Ryefield Primary School

The second session on 24th March 2021 explored metacognition which has a robust evidence base that it is a key factor in successful learning. Metacognition

is when students are supported to become more aware of their thought processes and develop greater control over them through planning, monitoring and evaluation. Participants worked with Let's Think tutors in subject groups - English, mathematics and science - focusing on how teachers can facilitate and promote metacognition in lessons. Participants were asked to write a sentence on metacognition at the end of the session which is illustrated in the Jamboard image below.



Jamboard illustrating participants' thoughts on metacognition

Jo Cotton

School improvement lead, Ruislip High School



Why did you decide to become one of the Trust's school improvement leads this academic year?

As Assistant Headteacher at Ruislip High School for many years, one of the vital roles I have enjoyed is designing professional development

opportunities for staff, ensuring a culture of improvement and learning at all levels across the school. When the position of school improvement lead arose, I saw it as the perfect opportunity to continue to develop this role at a wider level and to broaden my own professional development. I was attracted to deeper involvement with the work of the Trust and working in a team of colleagues from across the schools to develop opportunities for collaboration, professional learning and support. It has been an exciting opportunity to be part of the continued expansion of the Trust and its innovative work, and to get to know colleagues from the other schools.

You are currently leading on the arrangements for the NQT and NQT+1 course. What does this entail and what has been the impact of the sessions so far?

In the last academic year NQTs and NQT+1 teachers lost a significant period of their training or NQT

year due to the pandemic. The school improvement team felt it was important that these early career teachers were offered Trust-wide professional development and wellbeing sessions supplementary to the programmes already in place in their schools. A programme of four sessions was designed, each session led by one of the school improvement leads and one by the executive headteacher, Martina Lecky. The feedback from the teachers has been extremely positive; they have appreciated the new learning, practical teaching strategies and the opportunity to meet other teachers at the same stage in their career across the Trust.

You are leading and co-facilitating the SSAT middle leadership course. What has this involved and how will the three leadership courses benefit all schools in the Trust?

I co-facilitate the middle leadership course with Gary Mullings, Headteacher at Vyners School. SSAT provides the course materials but, as facilitators, we plan the sessions so they are personalised by adding our anecdotes, wider reading and experiences to the discussions. We ensure the sessions are as interactive as possible giving opportunities for discussion in small groups or pairs. The SSAT leadership courses are well attended with consistently excellent feedback. Through these courses, leaders across the Trust are empowered to drive changes in culture and improve standards in their teams and schools; this will ultimately lead to improving the lives of the students.