



BENEFITS OF BEING IN THE LIONHEART ACADEMIES TRUST DURING A PANDEMIC...

Steering a school through the choppy waters of a pandemic is not for the faint-hearted... We have faced a barrage of challenges, a barrage of unprecedented situations and a barrage of uncertainties. At all times, being a Head can be an isolating experience but I can honestly say that I have never felt as well-supported and cared for – by the Lionheart Academies Trust – as I have over the past year.

That support has manifested itself in so many different ways: from our first emergency Heads meeting, on Teams (my first time using it), in March 2020 through to our now well-established weekly online meetings. We are there for one another, we are there to listen to advice and we are there to take collective decisions for the benefit of our students.

A plethora of groups has sprung up and new professional partnerships have been forged. Amongst others, we have a cross-Trust Wellbeing Group, a Safeguarding Group and an SEN Team who share best practice via Teams. My staff have been given a wealth of opportunities and appreciate that they are in a unique position. What I really like about the pandemic is that it has forced us to unleash our creativity especially in terms of developing staff. The Trust offered us CPD opportunities to listen to a variety of experts – from David Didau through to Tom Bennett (the latter becoming my all-time favourite!) Unprecedented: from the comfort of our own homes/schools, we were united in being exposed to cutting edge research and expertise. Our Trust Diversity Group has flourished during Lockdown and I thoroughly enjoyed listening to Jeffrey Boakye and Shaun Dellenty.

Across the Trust, I truly believe that resources and expertise have been shared on an unparalleled scale: staff want to support one

another and reduce workload. In addition, common assessments have been agreed and our shared curriculum has continued to evolve. I'm sure most would agree that one of the main challenges of the pandemic has been the fact that we have been inundated with uncertainty, rapidly changing situations and unprecedented demands. The support from the LAT in terms of meeting those challenges has been phenomenal to us, particularly as a small secondary school. For example, Risk Assessments have been shared, we have been supported in setting up a testing station (that was never addressed on NPQH!) and even Social Distancing signage appeared miraculously! Online learning was a challenge for our students yet the Trust supported us in giving out over 150 Chrome Books. Collectively, we also ensured that our most vulnerable students had access to the free school meals vouchers to which they were entitled.

Finally, I write this post on the Friday before our March the 8th reopening. We can't wait and as we prepare us to open our doors once again, we know that we have the full support of the Lionheart Academies Trust behind us.

