



SUMMER 2023 NEWSLETTER



Issue #06

Welcome!

Chaplaincy and Christian schools work in UK schools presents a unique set of challenges and rewards for those involved in this important role. As a chaplain or schools worker, one must navigate a diverse educational landscape that encompasses students of various faiths, beliefs, and backgrounds. One of the significant challenges is establishing meaningful connections with students from different religious and cultural traditions, ensuring that their spiritual needs are considered, and fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for all.

Another challenge lies in addressing the complexities of secularism and religious pluralism. The role of a chaplain requires sensitivity and respect for diverse perspectives while balancing the need to maintain a neutral yet faithful stance in a public institution, in which we operate as welcomed guests, rather than staff or policy makers. Striking this balance between providing spiritual guidance and upholding the principles of a secular education system can be demanding.

However, the rewards of chaplaincy in our schools are numerous. SVST chaplains/schools workers have the opportunity to positively impact the

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CHAPLAINCY OPPORTUNITIES



(continued from page 1) of young people by offering mental health and wellbeing support, guidance, and a safe space for reflection and exploration of faith. We contribute to the overall well-being of students, helping to foster a sense of community, empathy, and understanding. As chaplains and schools workers we also have opportunities to play a role in promoting interfaith dialogue, fostering mutual respect, and nurturing a culture of inclusivity and tolerance. Furthermore, chaplaincy provides an avenue for personal and spiritual growth for both students and chaplains themselves. Building relationships with students, witnessing their personal development, and being a source of comfort during challenging times can be deeply fulfilling.

At SVST we continue to support our schools by offering a range of services which include one to one mentoring, small group work, collective worships, lunchtime groups, staff support and Soul Spaces. We know that we are valued and welcomed by the fantastic school communities in which we currently work and that our work is impactful and meaningful. We are digging deep wells and being salt and light where God has placed us.

However, our deepest desire is to further replicate this across many more schools in the area, working with schools in a way that blesses them as a community and partnering wherever possible with those like-minded folk who wish to demonstrate God's love to children and young people.

Kt Haynes – kt.stortvalley@gmail.com

FEEDBACK FROM SCHOOLS – ST THOMAS MORE

I would like to thank you for the support SVST has given St Thomas More Primary School over the past few years. We are a faith school and have really appreciated spiritual support from Katie Haynes. She has delivered assemblies, taken small groups of children and worked with whole classes to explain and reinforce our love of God and the support having faith gives to us.

During the very important church seasons of Advent and Lent, Katie, helped our Chaplaincy Team in Year 6 to set up prayer stations which were visited by every child in the school. Some of our Governors visited too and were so taken with the reflective, prayerful content of the day.

On a weekly basis Katie offers mental health and wellbeing support to both children and staff. She has worked with some of our most anxious children with great understanding. She has assisted us with preparing the children for the transition to secondary school. Parents have commented on how their child has responded with positivity to Katie.

SVST is considered to be a vital part of our school community and I can't thank you enough for providing such an effective service free of charge. I hope we can continue to welcome your staff into this school next year.

M J Hall, Headteacher, St Thomas More Primary School



BIRCHWOOD HIGH SCHOOL



We have found Stort Valley Schools Trust mentoring invaluable in delivering positive outcomes for young people in school. Having kind, experienced and capable adults prepared to provide a consistent and trustworthy ear to listen to problems, difficulties and build positive relationships is a boon. Both Kt and Nicola work alongside us in providing this support that benefits students and staff alike. It adds to our sense of a school community where we care for and are interested in each other. We cannot thank you enough for your time, commitment and experience.

Clare Mackinlay
Student Welfare and Mental Health Lead, Birchwood High School

I can honestly say that Stort Valley Schools Trust has become not just an important part but an absolutely integral part of Birchwood High School. The staff provide a warm, utterly reliable and all-round excellent service to the young people at our school through one-to-one mentoring, making a significant and real difference to those struggling with allsorts of challenging feelings and life circumstances. With mental health waiting lists being what they are, it would make our job as a student welfare team so much harder if we could not work with the Stort Valley Schools Trust staff. So often mental health is medicalized and this, whilst sometimes necessary, can mean the human who is experiencing difficulty can feel even more lost and disconnected. Stort Valley Schools Trust provide a truly human service, building support on developing trust and ensuring a young people feels heard, connected and valued, empowering them to make positive changes within their life. Everyone needs a space to voice their thoughts and work through things that are troubling them and Stort Valley Schools Trust has enabled that to happen for even more young people in our school community. This can only be an enormous positive for the future as these young people head out into the world. I for one am very excited by the weekly Soul Space project starting up and seeing how the service Stort Valley Schools Trust provides can be extended and reach even more of our students, helping them develop skills that can be applied throughout their life.

Furthermore, the support for staff – both professional and personal – is something that we did not anticipate but have come to value enormously. From supporting us as a student welfare team, to working in collaboration with the Heads of Years and classroom teachers to ensure a student has the best experience they can (both in and out of school), we are so grateful for the kindness and tireless dedication the staff bring into our school every week (the donuts provided as one measure to boost staff wellbeing are always very welcome!) Ultimately, and I feel I can speak for all staff and the many students who have been involved with the service Stort Valley Schools Trust provide to Birchwood, we could not be more grateful or recommend the service any more highly. You make a real and positive difference to so many people's lives and there is no greater achievement or service than that.

Joe Harlow
School Counsellor, Birchwood High School



ST MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL



At St Mary's we appreciate that everyone is an individual and we work hard to create an environment where all children are nurtured, not only in their academic life, but also in their personal, social and emotional development. We encourage our children to make good choices, to communicate confidently and show consideration for others at all times.

We are extremely fortunate to have Stort Valley Schools Trust working with us, contributing to the spiritual and emotional development of the school community. The chaplain is on site every week offering pastoral support and working closely with the inclusion team and class teams, offering gentle interventions to both pupils and staff.

For some, the support is a planned weekly session and for others this may be as a drop-in. Planned sessions are offered to year groups or the whole school as assemblies or collective worship, which is part of the school curriculum. Other sessions have included "Rooted" a lunch time club, as well as class-based sessions. This term the focus has been on transitions for the year 6 pupils with each pupil having a 1:1 session as well as a whole class Soul Space session, run by the chaplain and class teacher, which focused on the children's plans for the future.

We are so fortunate to have such a great relationship with SVST and really value what they do and what they offer to us as a whole school community. This support is vital to the well-being of both pupils and staff and contributes to the school's ethos of being an inclusive, supportive and friendly school.

Chris Jarman
Headteacher, St Mary's C of E (VA) Primary School

RADWINTER PRIMARY SCHOOL

Nicola first came into school to lead Easter prayer stations for our pupils which were incredibly popular and led to thoughtful discussion and reflection. Since then, she has been visiting our school as part of our pastoral team, based predominantly in Y6 to support the children with preparing for the transition to secondary school. Nicola has led a range of transition workshops and activities, as well as one-to-one and small group discussions with the children as required. The children have valued her support and guidance and we have been delighted to welcome her into school. From September, Nicola will be working across the school in a chaplaincy role; leading collective worship, meeting with our worship council and introducing 'Forest Church' sessions. She will also be helping us to develop an outside 'sanctuary' space for reflection, calm and restorative conversations to take place. We feel incredibly fortunate to have Nicola working with us and are very grateful for her time and support.

Emily Bartram,
Headteacher, Radwinter Primary School



RADWINTER PRIMARY SCHOOL



We have been very fortunate this half-term to have Mrs Williamson from The Stort Valley Trust providing pastoral support in our year 6 class with a particular focus on secondary school transition. Mrs Williamson has led fun activities designed to get the children focused on what to expect at secondary school as well giving each child a chance to have individual talks where they can discuss their feelings towards the transition. Mrs Williamson has also led an afternoon of reflective activities where the children could explore different stations where they could reflect on their time at primary school as well as looking forward to secondary school.

Sian Grey,
Year 6 Teacher, Radwinter Primary School

MENTORING YOUNG PEOPLE

I have been volunteering for SVST, in many forms, including, lunch clubs, It's Your Move and helping with seasonal events since I was appointed Youth and Children's leader at St Mary's Church, Saffron Walden in 2013. In January 2022, Kt asked if I would be willing to help out with the mentoring scheme at County High School and Katherine Semar Junior School.

I feel that the work we do is so important. It's a privilege to be a constant for these young people, someone who they can turn to to celebrate the joys that life brings, but also someone who they can share the heartbreak and struggles of life with. I am so glad to have the opportunity to be someone who listens and doesn't judge, but gives space for young people to talk and be themselves. These relationships don't come overnight, they take time to nurture and develop, gaining the young people's trust. But when that trust is achieved, the conversations you have with the young people are real and authentic. Don't get me wrong, some weeks there can be a lot of silence, and there isn't much conversation, but other times they come loaded with things to talk about.

One of the young people I see had missed some of his formative years at primary school due to Covid. He started year 7 and found it tough to adapt to secondary school and the expectations of teachers. Each week it felt like he was getting into more trouble, with more and more detentions. Week after week we would talk about the same topic, his behaviour, and the expectations that teachers and the school had of him. He felt like all the teachers were against him and that their minds were made up about what kind of young person he was and there was nothing he could do to change that.

Come September, at the start of year 8, this young person walked in to our first session, sat down and said, 'it all makes sense now Matt, I have finally listened to what you have been saying all last year, I want to get more achievement points this year instead of detentions.' This is what it is all about, being a constant support week in week out, even if it means saying the same things over and over again, but ultimately not giving up on these young people.



Matt Williamson, Youth & Children's Leader, St Mary's Church, Saffron Walden

A MESSAGE FROM OUR TRUSTEES

You are probably reading this newsletter because you have a heart for young people and for their well-being, and because you know that the ultimate key to seeing them thrive lies in the Good News of Jesus Christ. If you are a regular supporter of SVST you will have a good idea of how much Kt and Nicola are doing to bring the love of the Lord Jesus into the lives of young people and of others as they go into schools.

At SVST we have a vision to expand our work, and we would love to be able to recruit more workers to make what we do even more effective. We are only too aware, however, that we cannot even continue to do what we are doing without your support, both through prayer and through giving.

I hope that you will enjoy reading this newsletter! Please use it to inform your regular prayers. But might I also ask you to consider what further part you might play in the fulfilment of our vision of seeing even more children and young people being impacted by the love of Christ?

Nigel Courtman, Chair of Trustees

NICOLA'S NEWS

Since our last newsletter I have had the pleasure of spending every Monday at Radwinter Primary School and every Friday at Birchwood. It is an absolute joy and privilege to be back in school regularly and to be made so welcome at both schools. At Radwinter, we began the term by running an Easter workshop, spending time looking at the events of Holy Week in the morning and in the afternoon, the children had the opportunity to reflect on and respond to what they'd heard through some Soul Space activities. Following on from this, I have spent time getting to know the year sixes, meeting with them on a one to one basis and generally helping them to prepare for their transition to secondary school. One particular highlight has been the Soul Space which we hosted a couple of weeks ago – the children spent time reflecting on things that they wanted to celebrate about their time at primary school as well as considering the things that they were both apprehensive about and looking forward to. The adjacent photo is of a full size door that I took in – the children were very excited to be able to draw and write on it! We used it as a reflection activity to think about the opportunities that lie ahead. In September I shall be working across all year groups, providing pastoral support, leading collective worship, running some outdoor prayer/ reflection activities and we also hope to run a special Soul Space at Christmas time. There is much to look forward to!

Thank you to everyone who enables this work to happen, it is so needed and very much valued and appreciated by the students, teachers and schools.

Nicola Williamson – nicola@svst.org.uk

