

# CEO Briefing



**Welcome back** to everyone connected with our Trust family: what a glorious week of weather in which to return to school. I have to say that my 3-piece suit would have felt a lot more comfortable during the rain and heavy cloud I had on my August holiday in Cornwall and, vice-versa, the shorts and t-shirts I packed would have been a lot more comfortable this week! Still, the lovely weather has perfectly reflected the joy our pupils have expressed in returning to school this week, and it's been lovely to see and hear so much about the start of term. It's my privilege and pleasure to **welcome the Willows School community** to our MAT: the school converted on the 1 September 2023 and I'm so excited about the positive difference we will make to one another.

I'd like to say a huge **"well done"** to all our pupils who achieved a wide range of qualifications in their summer exams: we're all so proud of them, and the Board of Directors and I are incredibly grateful for all the hard work that our staff put into enabling our pupils to make those achievements. I also know that our successes go far beyond formal qualifications, and last year ended in such a positive way for all of our schools.

Whilst so many of us were enjoying the summer holidays and getting some much needed R&R, staff in the central Trust team were working relentlessly to ensure some big change projects were completed across a number of our schools, ready for the start of term. This included big ICT projects, new building installations at **Beech, Coppice and Pennine View**, and taking on a brand new site in **Forest View**, which is our new key stage 4 & 5 learning campus, shared by Hilltop & Kelford. We've also had to do a lot to support our partner school, Holgate Meadows, in the face of some unexpected site safety issues. I think we had 23 projects on the go, totalling £4m or more, so I'm so grateful to **Joel Hardwick, Nathan Bingham, Lana Stoyles and their fabulous teams** for the work they've done to help our schools manage those changes seamlessly, with our school leaders. It literally wouldn't have happened without them.

We also had an even bigger summer of extended schools activity, with more of our schools offering provision in more areas than ever before. I'm so grateful to **Jacky Tattershall, Amanda Hobson, Lauren Oakley and all our amazing school leaders and staff** for making the summer a more inclusive and supportive one for children and families. Thank you!

We start the new school year with a family of 15 schools, and a number of new partner schools who will likely join our Trust over the next 12 months. We also have big plans for our **Nexus Learning Institute**, and we've already kicked those plans off with our **pioneering level 3 qualification for teaching assistants**. Our Trust now represents the specialist and primary sector **on national bodies**, and we're working with partner schools from across the country to deliver our brief as the national lead for the **DfE's Flexible Working Ambassador programme**. Despite all of the challenges in state education, I feel an overwhelming sense of positivity and optimism about what 2023-24 holds. I cannot wait to share in those success with all of you, over the next 12 months.

*Warren*  
**Warren Carratt**