

Victory Park Academy Newsletter

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Summer Term 2023

Update from the Head Teacher



As we come to the end of another very successful and hardworking year at Victory Park Academy, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for all your support for the school to enable us to do the best for your children. I feel very privileged and proud to be working alongside some very special and talented individuals (young people, parents and staff team). As such, I am committed to secure the very best possible outcomes and successes in all that we do.

It has once again been an eventful year, and we have celebrated a range of achievements – in sporting, social and academic areas. It has been a pleasure to present certificates and prizes for excellent work and attitude, behaviour and attendance throughout the year.

Since taking the role as Interim Headteacher earlier this year, I have been impressed with the dedication of staff and the support of our parents and local partners in driving achievements and successes forwards.

Plans to embrace as well as develop opportunities for our young people are very high on my agenda. These include, an extended curriculum (offering wider options across the school day), further links with local employers and charities (to increase work placements and social enterprise), working in partnership with other local education providers (to extend programmes and inclusion opportunities), and project work, research and presenting to a wider audience (to enable others understand and value the qualities and strengths of our young people).

To all the young people who are leaving Victory Park this year, I wish you all the very best for a happy and healthy future. Please do keep in touch and come and visit at any time.

All the very best to you all and have a lovely summer break.

Mr E Muca (Interim Head Teacher)

Update from Assistant Head Teacher

Wow what a term! With our ever-growing intake of pupils and, of course our success rate at returning pupils to mainstream school, a huge congratulations should be given not only to our pupils but also to our highly committed and hardworking Team.



Our Attendance rate still surpasses the National PRU average by over 10%, and it is 5% higher than this time last year. Currently, we have 103 pupils enrolled, and we are continuously seeking enriching activities that will help enhance pupils' social and emotional wellbeing while supporting them in developing resilience, relationships and emotional control.

During this Summer term alone, we have had the pleasure of experiencing a wide range of activities, including Base Jump, Garon's Golf, weekly sessions at Southend Combat, Stubbers, Just Ride, visits to local parks, a fire truck tour, See The Signs, President's Sport Day, trips to Southend Pier and local beaches, Adventure Island, Odeon Cinema, B&Q, Pets at Home, Priory Park, Nuclear Races, Hopefield's Animal Sanctuary, Exotic Explorers, Hadleigh Farm/Café for careers exploration, and a visit from the school Nurse for careers guidance, along with Mr Packer's story time..

The last two weeks of term will be focused on preparing the pupils to stay safe during the summer break while offering some wonderful enrichment activities. The pupils have played a significant role in selecting these activities, which include Sports Day,

rounders at the park involving all staff, Tutor Trips, Arts and Crafts sessions, Bake Offs, and Healing and Meditation.

It brings me great pleasure, along with Mr Muca, to announce that we are in a position to provide our staff with a wellbeing afternoon away from the school. This is an opportunity to check in on one other and ensure we that we take care of our staff.

A strong workforce is built upon a combination of diverse talents, continuous skill development, and a supportive work environment that fosters collaboration and growth. As your Assistant Head Teacher, I wish all our pupils, their families and our staff a safe and peaceful break and look forward to the upcoming academic year.

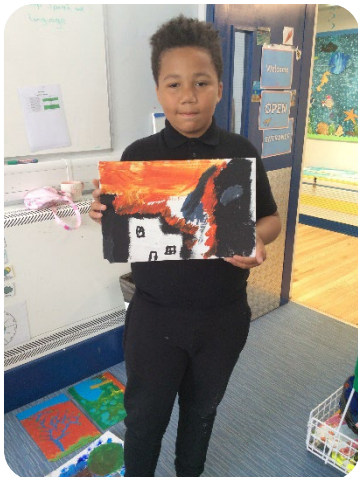
Mrs S Taylor (Assistant Head Teacher)

Primary



In our KS1 group this half term there has been a focus on speech and language and developing our pupils' skills. As part of this pupils have enjoyed creating roleplay shops and vets and inviting members of staff and secondary pupils to attend. This has promoted appropriate conversations

and expanded pupils' vocabulary. We have also been focusing on relationships by playing games together and accepting losing. This has been a difficult skill to learn but pupils have shown great resilience and are beginning to manage this well. Lastly, pupils have been developing their sensory skills and their ability to choose a calming sensory activity. One of our pupils has particularly enjoyed our sensory skipping stones which have different textures on.



In our KS2 group they have been learning about using different mediums to create amazing art work during their art sessions. Fudge is still an important member of our

primary team and pupils enjoy spending time with him during their learning. Fudge also enjoys lots of strokes and cuddles. During maths pupils have enjoyed learning about weight and estimating the weight of objects before using scales to measure them accurately. During English pupils have been reading Fantastic Mr Fox and have just begin writing their own version of the story.



We would like to say a massive thank you to our secondary pupils who spent their occupational studies lesson building a Lego table for primary pupils. Pupils have enjoyed working together to create their own Lego inventions.

We would like to wish all of our year 6 pupils the best of luck in secondary school and wish you all an amazing six weeks holiday

Our New Staff Member: TEDDY!



Teddy is a Maltese puppy, he joined VPA at just 14 weeks old at the beginning of Summer 2. He is a playful yet calming presence in the classroom and enjoys cuddles.

Teddy comes into school three times per week and twice a week attends a puppy school to be trained. He loves life, loves everyone and loves cheese!

What are the benefits of having a School Well-Being Dog?

There are many benefits to having a well-being dog in an alternative school setting, the main one being the health and well-being of both pupils and staff alike. A dog has an immediate calming effect by just being nearby.



Many pupils and staff will pop in just to see him and pupils have admitted he has cheered them up with his calm, affectionate and very gentle nature.

Teddy worked hard reducing some year 11 pupils' exam anxiety and his presence has a soothing effect for pupils in primary, pupils with sensory needs or across secondary.



The role of well-being dogs is to react and respond to people and their environment, under the guidance and direction of their handler. For example, an individual might be encouraged to gently pat or talk to a dog to teach sensitive touch and help them be calm.

Having a dog in school has the potential to help pupils to develop in a range of academic, personal and social areas.

Benefits of Well-Being Dogs

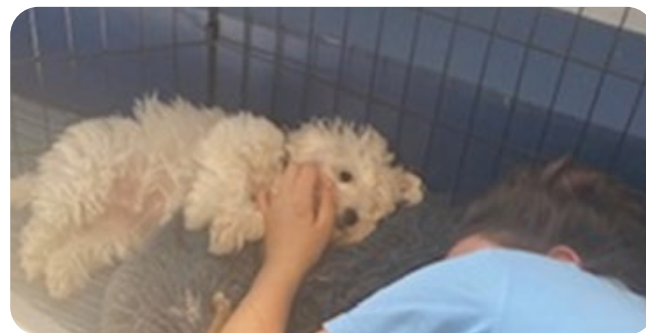
Animal assisted therapy can:

- teach empathy and appropriate interpersonal skills
- help individuals develop social skills
- be soothing and the presence of animals can more quickly build rapport between the teacher and pupil, and
- improve individual's skills to pick up social cue's imperative to human relationships.

Research into the effects of well-being dogs in schools is showing a range of benefits including:

- increase in school attendance
- gains in confidence
- decreases in learner anxiety behaviours resulting in improved learning outcomes, such as increases in reading and writing levels
- positive changes towards learning and improved motivation, and
- enhanced relationships with peers and teachers due to experiencing trust and unconditional love from a therapy dog. This in turn helps students learn how to express their feelings and enter into more trusting relationships.

So How Do Therapy Dogs Help?



The first known therapy dog accompanied Austrian neurologist and the founder of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud.

From pictures and journals, Freud would often have his dog Jofi in his office during psychotherapy sessions. While the dog was originally only in the room as a comfort to Freud, who claimed he felt more relaxed when the dog was nearby, he soon began to notice that the dog also seemed to help comfort other patients during their therapy sessions.

However, the positive benefits of therapy dogs were not discovered formally until Dr Boris Levinson conducted research in the 1960s.

Dr Levinson discovered that his dog had a positive effect on mentally impaired children. When the dog was around and socialising with the young patients, they were more comfortable and showed noticeable changes in their behaviour.

Research has long continued into the validation of animal-assisted therapy, with a most recent study from psychologist Alan Beck and psychiatrist Aaron Katcher.

Using a data-led approach and physiological measurements, they found that when a person interacted or was in the presence of a dog, there were immediate changes in their physical reactions. Breathing became more regular, the heartbeat slowed, muscles relaxed, and there was a significant lowering in nervous system activity which responds to stress.

Since these studies have confirmed the scientific benefits of therapy dogs, they have been hired to support those with phobias, physical impairment and anxiety issues.

References - [How Therapy Dogs Are Supporting School Wellbeing - Textbook Teachers](#)

LEAP & STAG Groups

LEAP and STAG have had a brilliant term enjoying the sunshine at Nuclear Races. They have taken part in



rope swinging across water, climbing, and an assault course (both in and out of water) as well as a huge rope swing directly into a lake! This has helped to build many transferable

skills that they will need to be successful. Over the past term we have worked extremely hard on building a rabbit palace along with a seating area to welcome our pets, Echo the Gecko and 2 Rabbits named Sugar and Spice. The pupils have come up with a rota to share out the responsibilities and care of the pets and looked into what environment will best suit their needs. Our weekly themes have helped to showcase the students' talents across the board including designing business ideas, setting up a tuck shop for the whole school and creating their own Art projects. Rosie, Becky, and the team would like to wish all the students that we have had, the pleasure of teaching in our classes a wonderful summer. We wish those moving on the best of luck and we are looking forward to seeing the students that are returning in September. Happy Holidays!



Hair & Beauty



This term, pupils have been working hard to complete their qualification in Hair and Beauty, with 5 year 11's achieving this and 2 year 10 pupils.

Meanwhile, new pupils have been starting from the basics, learning about hand care, the consultation process and client care and communication.

Other pupils throughout the school have also been able to enjoy a pampering experience as part of their enrichment experience.

Enrichment & PE

Wow what a great year it has been on the enrichment and PE side of things here at VPA!

Firstly, I must congratulate the Year 11s that have passed their Level 2 NCFE PE qualification, your hard work and effort towards the end of the year was very impressive to make that final push in completing the folders on time. WELL DONE!



Secondly, we have been on lots of trips this year including a few Stubbers trips, Football at Chase, Combat with SCA every week, Adventure Island, Garrons Badminton to name but a few.



All have been participated in with great enthusiasm and effort.

Here at VPA we love a bit of Base-jump! The top 8-10 points winners have had the chance to go every week for at least 12 weeks and have all enjoyed playing tag and doing flip competitions and as per the last newsletter Mr B can still only do a seat drop! We hope to go back in September to the newly named and refurbished Oxygen.

See you all in September.

Literacy & Numeracy Targets

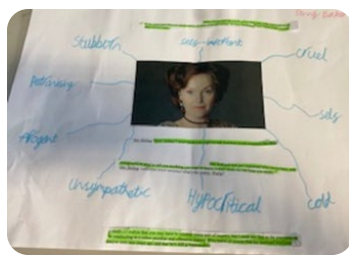
Every pupil within the academy has an individual literacy and numeracy target set each half term which is monitored throughout each subject. During the summer 1, 92.5% (49/53) of pupils either met or partially met their literacy target and 88.7% (47/53) met or partially met their numeracy target. 62.9% (22/35) of Pupil Premium (PP) have met their literacy target and 50% (14/28) met their numeracy targets. Non-Pupil Premium (non-PP) 57.1% (8/14) met both their literacy and numeracy targets. 5/14 (35.7%) of Non- Pupil Premium partially met both their literacy and numeracy targets. Spellzone and Literacy Planet are being trialled for extra support with spelling. We are looking to invest in a platform for September to support Maths such as Mathletics and Times Tables Rock.

Lexia & RWI

As an academy, we have continued with our extensive screening and assessment process and continuously updating the school development plan regarding reading, comprehension and SEND assessment. We have and are providing training that teachers' need, particularly for the teaching of reading and pupils with SEND. Interventions: all pupils are enrolled onto 'Lexia' our literacy intervention. The identified lowest 20% of pupils in each of the WRAT areas receive additional intervention in reading (1-1), spelling, and comprehension (Speech and Language therapist support is in place with four trained staff, (SALT) with screening and action plans for identified need of support.

VPA is providing EAL resources; smaller class sizes; in lesson support; 1-1 support in lesson and outside of lesson. We have introduced Read, Write Inc and 12 members of staff are trained, this is up and running- results are showing progress. Fresh Start data shows the six-week analysis for progress confirms all pupils have made the required levels of progress. We have a timetable of sessions for targeted pupils which has been amended to focussing on three pupils having daily sessions, this is the advice provided by Fresh Start trainers. Reading continues to be a priority in every lesson across the curriculum.

English



Pupils in year 10 have studied 'An Inspector Calls' play by JB Priestly. It is set in 1912, however was written after the Second World War. It is

a murder mystery play which questions society's role in social responsibility. Pupils have learnt about the historical context and the class system.

We used the film 'Titanic' to help with the differences in class and the power the rich upper classes held over the working classes. From this, we completed a piece of creative writing focussing on sentence structures and sentence starters.



Year 9 have been working on creative writing skills. We began by using an image – we used a haunted house and looked at zooming techniques using descriptive language.

We had a Speaking and Listening debate on what had happened to the Titan submarine and followed this in the news until it was discovered.

Inductions



All new students come to me for induction to make their transition into Victory Park Academy, welcoming and engaging in the Academies curriculum.

They are assessed on their levels of reading comprehension & Mathematics, enabling the Academy to place the students into the correct level that they are working towards.

Within the Academy we strive to support all students to achieve the best outcomes for their future.

Fresh Start

The Academy offers a Fresh Start reading intervention for students that needs support, which is a reading programme to help build confidence and support them to progress in their reading & writing.



We have been supporting a number of students from Primary to year 11, their levels have progressed significantly within this programme.

Occupational Studies



This year in Occupational Studies our pupils have been covering a broad range of topics to explore potential interests and possible career options for the future. We have been learning about a variety of skills in horticulture as well as decorating and bricklaying. We have seen great engagement in this subject from KS3 pupils as

well as our year 10's and 11's who have been working towards their NCFE qualification, many of which have received level 1 and level 2 awards in this. Great work everyone and thanks for all the hard work.

Princes Trust

This year in Princes Trust our pupils have been learning about topics aimed at helping them examine themselves and the world around them. Pupils have been working on how to prepare for a healthy lifestyle, how to understand their interpersonal and self-management skills, the benefits of participating in exercise and what are the advantages of good teamwork skills. Pupils have really developed in these areas and now have a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them.

Art



Over three days in June, seven Year 11 pupils created their final pieces for their GCSE Art

qualification based on the theme of 'lock'. They had worked hard for the previous three months researching and experimenting with different ideas and materials. They showed a lot of dedication and perseverance to complete their work and all pieces look impressive. Well done to everyone involved!

KS3 Maths

From the start of the year pupils have been working really hard and have covered a range of topics including sequences, converting amounts, balancing equations, one and two step equations, averages and calculating the area of a circle.

If a circle has the radius of 4, what is the area of the circle?

Exams News



With all the examinations now complete for our Year 11 pupils, Victory Park are predicting that 20 out of the 23 (87%) Year 11

pupils will achieve at least five GCSE or equivalent qualifications this June. This year, the Academy has offered over 14 different qualifications ranging from traditional GCSEs to more practically based subjects

such as Hair & Beauty, Food Technology and Construction. Good luck to our Year 11 group, results day this year is on Thursday 24th August. The VPA office will be open from 9:00 until 11:00 on this day for collection of results in person, otherwise they will arrive in the post the following day!

Careers



The Careers advice and guidance service at Victory Park (Connexions) along with the support of our staff have been busy discussing the

options open to young people after they leave school. We have been helping them with applying to colleges or apprenticeship schemes to guide them to their next steps after they leave us. We have also run a very successful careers fair with local businesses and college providers in attendance. Our year 10 and 11 pupils also got to visit a careers fair at The Forum in Southend which offered even more options to our pupils for when they make the next step. I am optimistic with all the support we have offered that our pupils will be making some positive next steps when they leave.

GDPR

The school has carried out its annual GDPR audit with everything meeting the necessary requirements. All staff are adhering to the rules ensuring pupil data is protected. All staff have received the latest training and are up to date with all new policies, which was reflected in our external audit.

A Message from our Counsellor and Mentor



It's been a great summer term, lots of positive contact with students in primary and secondary, 60 sessions in total! This is amazing, students should be proud of themselves for engaging in therapeutic sessions. I now work two days

a week and this has allowed some real continuity and opportunities to meet a student quickly. I use the traditional counselling room if students wish or can often be seen walking the streets around the school

and St Jones Park drinking a lemonade with these amazing young people. As a mentor, I have been working on goal setting for the students. It's a useful exercise and can help with objectives such as returning to mainstream school. I am loving my time at the school and proud to be part of the VPA family. Please let your tutor know if you want to meet up with me or ask me directly on Tuesdays and Thursdays when I am in. Have a peaceful summer break, you deserve it.

Many thanks

Andrew Packer - Counsellor and Mentor

A Message from the Designated Safeguarding Lead



As we draw closer to the end of this academic year and look forward to the summer!!

I would like to thank all pupils and staff at VPA for the continuous work and engagement. This term has seen some great community spirit with monthly visits from our CYP policing team, they have interacted with the pupils and partaken in their lessons.

Also, this term with thanks to the AIPT team for delivering a highly engaging "See the Signs" workshop across all key stages.

We also had 2 parent workshops this term, 1 for See the signs and 1 for Online Safety.

I hope to continue and increase this level of community engagement in the new academic year with more visits and support from our amazing local outside support agencies.

Have an amazing summer break and I look forward to welcoming you all back in September.

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Message from the SENCO



It has been an exciting year at Victory Park. Students and staff have now got access to a Sensory room, which is regularly used by our primary and Leap group, we have welcomed a new mentor to our team and we have a growing animal brood, which this term

welcomed 2 new rabbits. Our students are responsible for the welfare and upkeep of the animals and take pride in ensuring their welfare. Our sensory room allows for opportunities for our staff to deliver guided journeys, have timeout from the classroom ensure students have access to a sensory diet in their timetable. This term we have expanded our LEAP group to support more students within the academy and allow us to deliver more bespoke curriculum opportunities.

Key Dates

Last Day of Summer Term

Friday 21st July 2023

Summer Break

Monday 24th July 2023 to Tuesday 5th September 2023

First Day of Academic Year 2023/2024

Wednesday 6th September 2023

