

Head Teachers' Bulletin – 28th March

Upcoming Events

- 11th Apr Confirmation of School's Staff Structure (Budget Preparation Timetable)
- 14th Apr Heads' briefing online 10.15
- 22nd Apr MATPad goes live for completion of spring report
- 24th Apr DSL network online 4pm
- 28th Apr SEND Network Meeting 2pm @ Pastoral Centre
- 30th Apr – 9th May Budget Review and Feedback (Budget Preparation Timetable)
- 16th May Deadline for completion of Heads' Report / end of spring update to SIP
- 25th Jun – 1st Jul Budget Refinement Period (Budget Preparation Timetable)

Actions from this bulletin

Actions from previous bulletin

Dates in the diary for the next steps on Writing Fundamentals and Quality First Teaching;

- **6th May for Heads** (Part of the Heads' Forum, which should already be in your diary)
- **20th and 27th June for SENCOs, Teaching and Learning Leads** – See notes below

New Updates (since last bulletin)

Aspiring Leaders Programme

Thank you to mentors for making contact with your 'Aspiring Leader'. Feedback from our Aspiring Leaders after day one was that they particularly valued headteacher input that exemplified the themes for the day. A number of you have spoken to Steve, Fiona or I expressing interest in being more involved with the delivery of the programme. With this in mind, the programme outline is attached to the bulletin – day 2 is planned and ready to go, but if you would like to be involved and there is any aspect of day 3 onwards that particularly jumps out at you, please let John know.

Prayer and Liturgy Conference

It was great to see many of you and your colleagues at the Prayer and Liturgy Directory conference on Wednesday. My thanks on behalf of everyone to Alan Dewhurst and Tom Baptist for organising and delivering such an inspiring and thought-provoking day.

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I would like to gather colleagues from across our schools who are leading on this work, after the Easter break, to check in with how we are responding, to look at how we best support one another (particularly anyone who is struggling) and also to think about any areas where our response is best done in common.

I will set a date for us to come together and communicate this when we come back after the Easter break.

Financial Planning 2025/26

The shared services finance team have now commenced updating IMP Planner with your census data and your indicative funding allocations from the ESFA, we hope to have the majority of the data uploaded to the system by the end of this week. IMP Planner will also be updated to reflect the financial planning assumptions, these changes will be automatically applied to any relevant data.

Designated finance officers will be contacting schools to source Local Authority funding data or at the very least estimates regarding the following:

- Early Years
- SEND (High Needs Block Funding and EHCP's)
- LAC and PLAC Funding
- External Local Authority Funding
- Other Local Authority Funding

The following grant funds will be calculated by your designated finance officer:

- Pupil Premium (based on census data)
- DFE National Insurance Grant (2025/26 – Fiscal Year Onwards)
- DFC

In light of the above we would ask as we have done so previously that schools focus their efforts on their staffing structure for 2025/26 ensuring this is as complete and as accurate as possible. As per the financial planning timetable we will be looking to produce an indicative first draft of the Budget Forecast Return w/c 14th April, this will be presented to members of the Trusts Finance and Resources Committee on the 29th April. **Please note the milestone and deadlines contained within the financial planning timetable are not flexible.**

Pay Date Consolidation

As at the 19th March we have responded to all employee requests for financial assistance via our employee salary advance scheme. Any applications received after this date and by the close of working day, Friday 28th March will be assessed and replied to during the course of the Easter break. The deadline for applications relating to pay date consolidation is the 30th April.

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Items from previous bulletin for reference

Writing Fundamentals and Quality First Teaching – Next Steps

Tue 6th May (As part of Heads' Forum) - A session for Heads:

- Sharing lessons learned from the Writing Fundamentals work, outlining the next steps and the role that Heads' play.
- Sharing the work of the SEND Network and Quality First Teaching Group – outlining what we have heard about the challenges faced in the classroom and the next steps to how we plan to address this

20th and 27th June a.m. Half-day sessions for Leaders with responsibility for T&L, curriculum, SENCos – basically anyone who is in a position of influence in our schools:

- Session 1 will include the information shared with Heads and would move onto exploring Teacher Clarity.
- Session 2 will explore modelling and the “example of the board”. This input will then be followed up by short, recorded training videos that schools can use.
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SEND Network meeting

The SEND network meeting is at 2pm on Monday 28th April at the Pastoral Centre. The agenda will be:

Review Action Plan

Feedback from QFT group

Setting a Trust Vision for SEND

Members of the network are reminded to send us their school's vision for SEND

Centrally Procured Compliance Services

There is a material variation in quality and detail of compliance services procured by schools within the Trust. We have recently completed a number of tenders for specific compliance services as follows:

- Hollinsend Fire Safety
Fire Risk Assessments, Fire Extinguisher Services and Fire Door Servicing
- Black Sheep Compliance
Legionella Compliance and Services

The costs for risk assessments and servicing associated with the above areas will be borne centrally and then form part of the annual recharge. We will continue to look for opportunities to consolidate common procurement activities and provide further updates when available.

Consolidated Pay Date – Employee Salary Advance Request

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As you will be aware we are introducing a consolidated pay date for all schools within the Trust, details of the process, FAQ's and an Employee Salary Advance support package have been developed and shared to support colleagues with this transition, our first consolidated pay date will be the 30th May. To date we have received a total of 16 requests for financial support via the Employee Salary Advance programme, we have adopted a non-contentious approach to our decision making and all applicants have now been provided with an offer. Requests for financial support via the Employee Salary Advance programme will be accepted up until the 30th April, an updated FAQ's and details of the deadline will be distributed to colleagues next week.

Curriculum Procurement – Year End Deadline

In line with last year's approach, we will be introducing a deadline for all curriculum related procurement activity, further details will be shared with School Business Managers in due course.

Headteachers Report on the Spring term

The deadline for completion of the Headteacher's report and the end of spring term update to the School Improvement Priority documentation on MATPad is Friday 16th May.

The MATPad form section for completion of these will be live from Tuesday 22nd April.

Recent School Improvement visits have been really helpful in informing further adaptations to the format of the headteacher report. As a result there are a small number of minor changes in order to provide greater clarity over what is being asked for, and also to improve the quality of information being provided to LACs. John will go through these changes at the headteacher briefing on Monday. There is also a document attached to the bulletin that outlines these, and that also contains the instructions that were sent out earlier in the year that you might find it useful to refer to.

Several of you have said it would be useful to have another opportunity to see other headteacher reports. Anita will share a link to a shared folder with these at the start of next term – just **a reminder to let Anita know if you would prefer your report not to be shared for any reason.**

Inset day

A reminder that it was agreed by Heads to always have the first Monday after February half-term as a Trust-wide inset day so a whole-trust programme can be planned for that day.

Term dates 2026-27

Please let Anita know as soon as possible if you plan to set term dates in line with the proposal (attached for your convenience). If there is any difference that you expect to be appropriate for your school community, please highlight this.

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Letters for Parents to send to the Home Office

We have been advised by the Trust Solicitors, Winckworth Sherwood, that schools should not write letters for parents to use as evidence of a right to remain in the country. The solicitors say that unless contacted directly by the Home Office, this is not something we should become involved in.

Read Write Inc Training

St Alban's has a member of staff who needs RWI refresher training, and Our Lady and St Joseph's school needs 2 places on RWI training. If you have training booked in before summer and have space, please let Anita know.

Save the Date (Heads) – Thursday 10th July

We have another opportunity to work with Jes on Thursday 10th July, building on work from previous sessions he has led with us. We need to confirm details, but for now ask you to save the date. We would plan for a session in the morning as we have done before.

note that we expect you may need to tweak the spreadsheet slightly as not all schools' categories are exactly the same.