

SUMMER 2024



SUCCESS FOR EVERYONE

TRUST NEWSLETTER ISSUE 1





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Growing Together, Learning for Life



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MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

Mr T Plumb



Welcome to the inaugural edition of the PolyMAT Newsletter

We are privileged to oversee three wonderful schools and look forward to others joining us soon to be part of a family of schools delivering joined-up education and opportunities to the communities of Greenwich and Thamesmead. At this moment, we consist of Woolwich Polytechnic School for Boys, Woolwich Polytechnic School for Girls and Bannockburn Primary School. All three schools embody our vision of "Success for Everyone", which means that we place inclusivity and diversity at the heart of what we do. Those who lead our trust and our headteachers, have all worked for the same community for many years and our commitment to serve is something that makes us very proud. This also means that we know our children and families well and appreciate the support and engagement of everyone. We hope that this newsletter provides a celebration of our schools and an understanding of what we are doing to enhance education in the local area.

The values of care and unity are the drivers of our work every day. They reinforce the fact that we can achieve much more when we bring together and appreciate the variety of perspectives brought by the diversity of our community. Diversity is the theme of this newsletter and we hope that you can see it through the various activities and achievements that our schools celebrate. With around 3600 children, there is a huge variety of talents, dreams, needs and achievements – all resulting in different types of success, unique to each individual. This diversity is magnified by the broad skills and backgrounds of our staff and families. This year, we were very proud to be the first trust in London to achieve the Investors in Diversity Silver Award – an acknowledgement of how we value and celebrate equality, diversity and inclusion. We were also recognised as one of the Top 100 Most Inclusive Workplaces in the country – something that makes us very proud. These achievements are just a step on our journey, as we know that we are forever changing and improving to ensure that our children achieve the very best education possible – and enjoy themselves along the way.

We hope that you enjoy this newsletter, the first in what will become termly editions, which celebrate and showcase the work that we do and the achievements that result. We thank everyone for the support and collaboration which makes these things possible.



OUR SHARED VISION



Our vision is “Success for Everyone”. We aspire for every member of our community, regardless of circumstances or background, to be the best version of themselves - confident, successful students, committed, successful staff, who are committed to growing and developing as practitioners, and engaged stakeholders who unite in celebration. We achieve our Vision through our two core values of CARE and UNITY.

01 CARE

The overriding feel within our Trust is that we care more than anyone else could expect. We care for all aspects of our practice and, in particular, we care for:

- Everyone's safety and happiness
- Everyone's personal development and growth
- Everyone's outcomes
- Everyone's standards
- Everyone's learning
- Everyone's well-being
- Everyone's relationships

This is reflected by the fact that we call ourselves the Poly Family and we are an organisation based on relationships above all else – we are individual people first and students, staff and parents second.

02 UNITY

The value that ensures that our impact is greater than it ever could be if we worked alone. This means that our schools, teams and individuals are always pulled together in ways which share the workload and create solutions from which everyone benefits. We are determined that nothing can divide us when we put the needs of our community before everything else.

MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

Ms Sylvia Perrins



We are very proud to release our first newsletter which celebrates the many achievements in our schools and intends to provide a real feel for what we are about as a trust. Here at PolyMAT, we are very grateful for the contributions of so many people which culminate in making a real difference to the lives of our young people. These people include all our staff, our many volunteers that give up their time for our governance, our families and our partners. It is a team effort and the team is far more than the sum of its parts.

The theme for this newsletter is Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and we were delighted to be listed in the top 100 most inclusive workplaces in the UK in 2023. Our vision of Success for Everyone places inclusion right at its heart – we are here to make a difference and, in order to do that, we need everyone to feel valued, involved and truly part of that large team. This newsletter will showcase how we do that across our schools and celebrate the many achievements along the way.

At PolyMAT, we are committed to creating educational opportunities which break down barriers by overcoming structural difficulties that our young people face. This is why we are a cross-phase trust with strong links between each of our schools. When we have a working environment without barriers, our young people have a much greater chance of finding the success that is right for them. We are committed to growing further within the local area and through a close partnership with our local community.

We believe that PolyMAT schools are great places in which to work and even better places in which to learn. I hope you feel our two values of Care and Unity are shining through in the celebrations in this newsletter.

NCFD FREDIE AWARDS 2023 WINNERS

NCFD FREDIE Awards 2023 – celebrating the very best champions of Fairness, Respect, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Engagement!

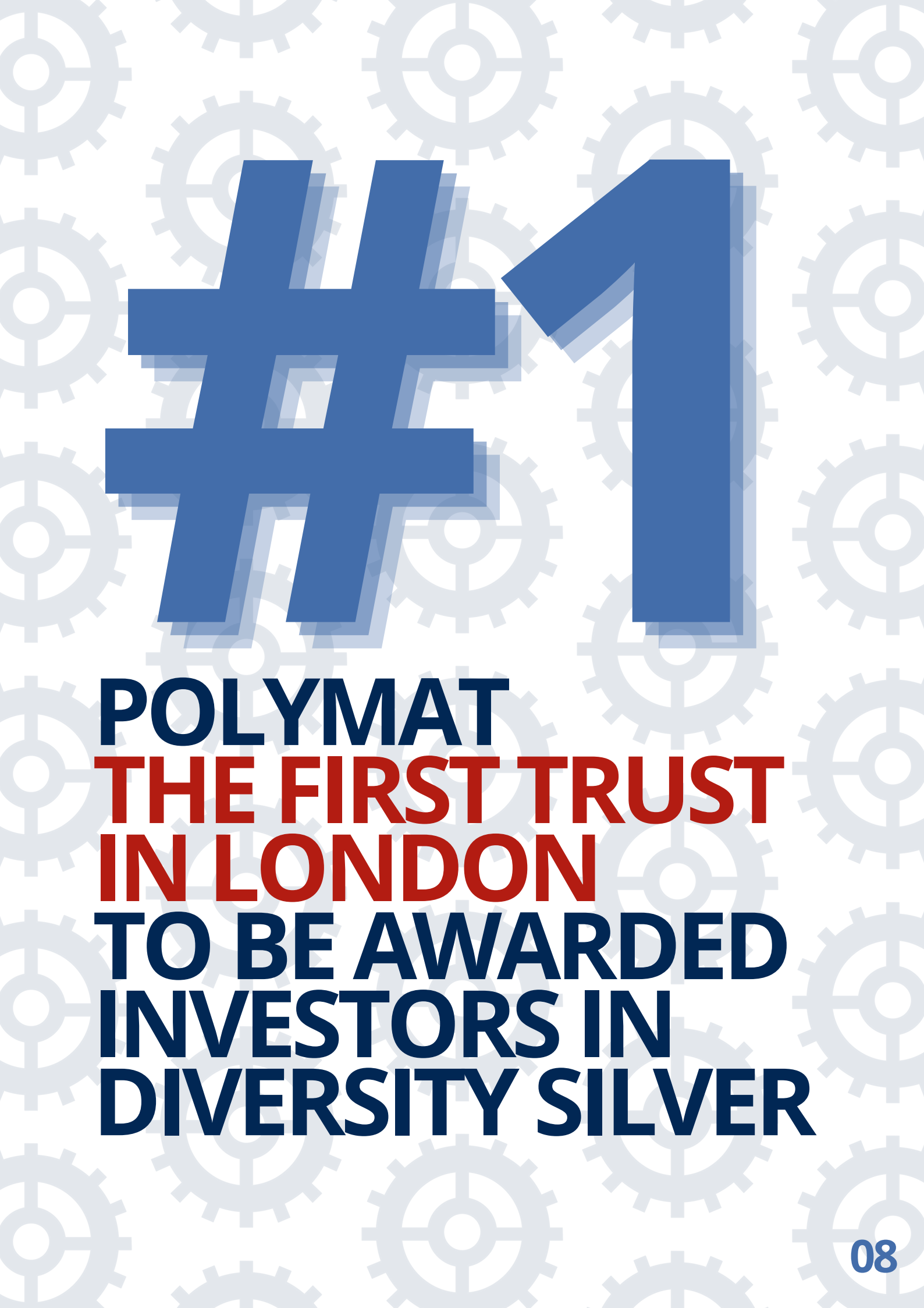
In response to the prevailing cost of living crisis, we've made the difficult decision not to go ahead with the FREDIE Awards Ceremony this year. Our commitment to recognising and honouring outstanding efforts in fostering diversity and inclusion remains unwavering and the publication of the 2023 Top 100 Most Inclusive UK Workplaces is a platform to highlight and celebrate the remarkable achievements of everyone who has committed themselves to building inclusive cultures.

Congratulations to every organisation and individual who works tirelessly to make their workplaces better, even if you have not placed in the Top 100 Most Inclusive UK Workplaces this year, you should be proud of your efforts.

We're excited to announce that plans for the 2024 FREDIE Award Ceremony are already underway, and we look forward to bringing our community together once again to celebrate Fairness, Respect, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Engagement (FREDIE).







#1

POLYMAT
THE FIRST TRUST
IN LONDON
TO BE AWARDED
INVESTORS IN
DIVERSITY SILVER



Investors
in Diversity
Silver UK

Until
September
2025

At PolyMAT, we are always looking for ways we can improve, including learning from within the education sector and beyond. Towards the end of 2022 we decided to begin working with the National Centre for Diversity (NCfD) in order to improve our practices across their 'FREDIE' attributes of:

- **F**airness
- **R**espect
- **E**quality
- **D**iversity
- **I**nclusion
- **E**ngagement

PROUD TO BE™
FREDIE
Fairness In The Workplace

We began by evaluating our current strengths and identifying areas for development. This included augmenting our current student and staff voice work with specific surveys organized by NCfD and benchmarked against their national data. In addition, policies and practices were reviewed by their expert team to provide us with recommendations based on the best practice internationally. A Steering Group including governors and staff ranging across different teams was formed and the Trust appointed Jodie Mathurin-Thomas to coordinate our work. We co-created an action plan with NCfD which was implemented throughout 2023, leading to us being awarded the Investors in Diversity accreditation and being named one of the Top 100 Most Inclusive UK Workplaces in 2023!

The first stage of our action plan was gathering additional information beyond NCfD's surveys. This included improving our exit interview processes, finding ways to increase survey completion and identifying improvements which would make our workplaces more inclusive.

From the information gathering process, we also found that overall staff had received a good level of training around FREDIE. However, there were some areas where we could improve, so we provided training within normal working hours, including time for colleagues to discuss and share their experiences.

The next area we worked on was supporting our leaders in improving their practice even further, delivering training on the Ethical Leadership in Education Framework and providing opportunities for leaders to come together and discuss dilemmas and ways we could improve further.



Investors in Diversity Silver UK

Until September 2025

Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education

SELFLESSNESS | School and college leaders should act solely in the interest of children and young people.

INTEGRITY | School and college leaders must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. Before acting and taking decisions, they must declare and resolve openly any perceived conflict of interest and relationships.

OBJECTIVITY | School and college leaders must act and take decisions impartially and fairly, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias. Leaders should be dispassionate, exercising judgement and analysis for the good of children and young people.

ACCOUNTABILITY | School and college leaders are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

OPENNESS | School and college leaders should expect to act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from scrutiny unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

HONESTY | School and college leaders should be truthful.

LEADERSHIP | School and college leaders should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles, and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs. Leaders include both those who are paid to lead schools and colleges and those who volunteer to govern them.

Schools and colleges serve children and young people and help them grow into fulfilled and valued citizens. As role models for the young, how we behave as leaders is as important as what we do.

Leaders should show leadership through the following personal characteristics or virtues:

TRUST | leaders are trustworthy and reliable

We hold trust on behalf of children and should be beyond reproach. We are honest about our motivations.

WISDOM | leaders use experience, knowledge and insight

We demonstrate moderation and self-awareness. We act calmly and rationally. We serve our schools and colleges with propriety and good sense.

KINDNESS | leaders demonstrate respect, generosity of spirit, understanding and good temper

We give difficult messages humanely where conflict is unavoidable.

JUSTICE | leaders are fair and work for the good of all children

We seek to enable all young people to lead useful, happy and fulfilling lives.

SERVICE | leaders are conscientious and dutiful

We demonstrate humility and self-control, supporting the structures, conventions and rules which safeguard quality. Our actions protect high-quality education.

COURAGE | leaders work courageously in the best interests of children and young people

We protect their safety and their right to a broad, effective and creative education. We hold one another to account courageously.

OPTIMISM | leaders are positive and encouraging

Despite difficulties and pressures, we are developing excellent education to change the world for the better.



We also evaluated our HR processes, becoming a Disability Confident Level 2 Employer, revamping our job adverts with more inclusive statements and checking our language using a gender bias tool. We have invested in software which anonymizes applications to remove any unconscious bias from our shortlisting processes. In addition, whilst our gender pay gap is smaller than within education generally, we have invested in financial software to enable us to further analyse and improve our practices in this area.

Finally, we received feedback that not everyone within the organisation was fully aware of the mental health and wellbeing support we offer plus other FREDIE activities and events. Therefore, we have significantly improved our communication of these both externally through our social media and websites and internally through newsletters, briefings and displays.

The journey and process were important parts of our development - hard work but well worth it! We're excited to maintain FREDIE as the core feature of our daily as well as strategic work in order to truly live our values of care and unity. We're also so grateful to all our staff, students, parents and stakeholders for engaging so energetically in this really important work.

MESSAGE FROM OUR COO

Mrs Alexa Rendell



Disability Confident Employer Scheme

We are proud to have achieved level 2 in the disability confident employer scheme. We are fully committed to making improvements and adjustments, not just for future employees, but for our current body of staff too. We recognise that our staff is our biggest asset and we are fully prepared to care and invest in them, as we would any other asset.

The Disability Confident Scheme is a government initiative that allows PolyMAT a unique opportunity to lead the way in our community, to recruit and retain disabled people and an opportunity to discover those individuals with a disability that our schools cannot do without. This scheme has given us the confidence, to challenge attitudes, increase our understanding of disability and remove barriers. Where necessary, we are able to make often small changes to enable all employees to thrive at work.

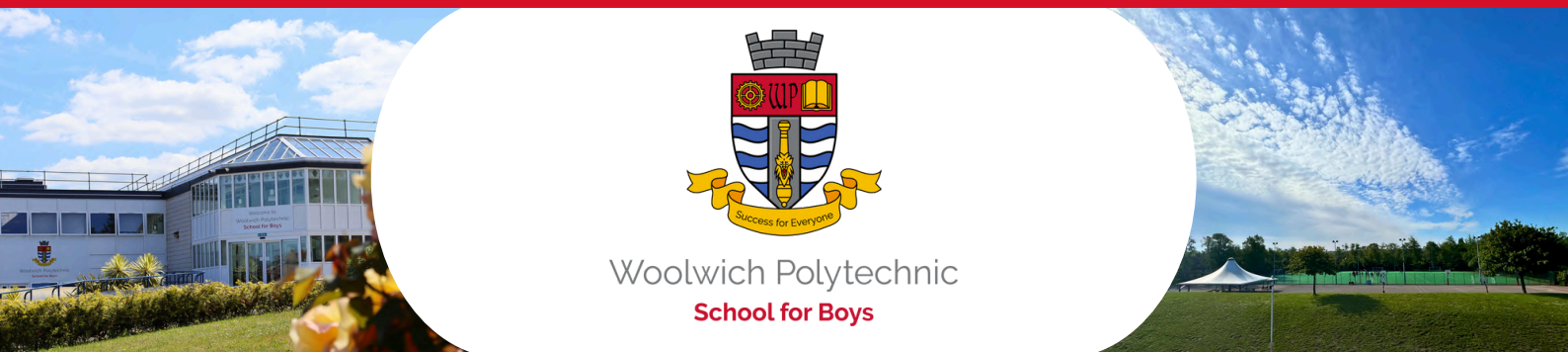
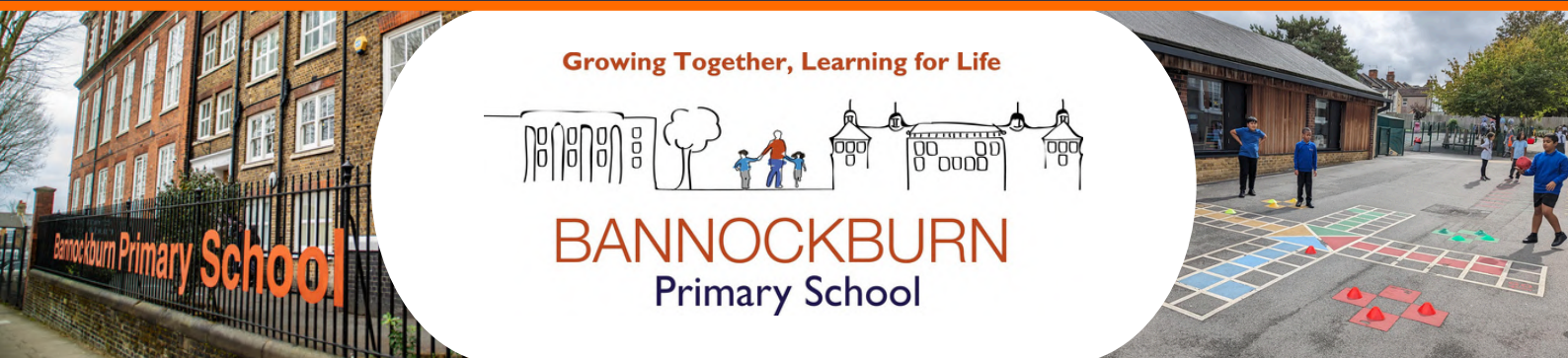
As part of this scheme, we have signed up to 5 commitments:

- Inclusive and accessible recruitment
- Communicating vacancies
- Offering interviews to disabled people
- Provide reasonable adjustments
- Support existing employees

In continuing our Disability Confident journey, we are ensuring that disabled people have the opportunities to fulfil their potential and realise their aspirations within the PolyMAT family of schools. The next step on our journey is to reach level 3 of the scheme; this means we will become a Disability Confident Leader. We are excited by the prospect of becoming a disability champion within our local community, and it about so much more than just getting a certificate.



OUR FAMILY OF SCHOOLS



WOOLWICH POLYTECHNIC SCHOOL FOR GIRLS



**Headteacher
Ms L Williams**

Friday 7th June 2024 was a significant day in the history of Woolwich Polytechnic School for Girls. Since the school's establishment in 2019, time has flown by and the days of having only one year group in the school feels like a distant memory. On Friday 7th June, we celebrated our first year with a full cohort (years 7 to 11) by capturing our first ever whole school photograph.

Throughout this year, our students, staff, parents/carers have shown such resilience and commitment. The last 5 years has involved everyone working incredibly well together to overcome barriers and provide the best education for our students. Of course, this especially applies to our founding Year 11 cohort as they embarked on their first ever external examinations. I am so proud of both our staff and student bodies. The hard work and dedication involved in devising a successful Key Stage 4 journey is tremendous and I am so grateful to all of our staff for always putting our students first. We are all looking forward to celebrating our success with our founding Year 11 students and their parents on results day in August. At a time when our Year 11s look forward to their future, we should also acknowledge the past: our founding cohort have been fantastic role models for the rest of the school and have set the bar high in terms of standards and achievement. We wish our year 11s the very best of luck on the next stage of their academic careers – most of them will be staying with us as they move to the Poly Sixth Form next door.

The theme of diversity is central to our vision of 'Success for Everyone' because success looks different for each individual. We want our students to be able to celebrate a taste of success every lesson, be that academically or personally. Our staff had training on inclusive classroom strategies throughout the year to support them in creating inclusive classrooms to meet the needs of our diverse student body. I sincerely hope that every individual has had their tastes of success this year and that they are proud of what they have achieved. Recognising diversity also plays a central part in our wellbeing which, in turn, plays a vital part in our success.



It is important that our students, as well as our staff, are looking after their mental wellbeing. We have raised awareness of the importance of this through assemblies, workshops, tutor time, 1-2-1 conversations and parent mornings. We have also emphasised the importance of supporting each other to create an environment where everyone looks out for each other's wellbeing including our own. We all face a variety of challenges every day and it is important that we provide the tools and skills for our students to overcome life's challenges and to become stronger because of it.

It didn't take long for our new Year 7s, when we welcomed them through our doors in September, to become Poly and Proud. Our Year 9 students are now ready for their next academic journey into key stage 4 and our Year 10 students are already the next set of role models for the rest of our student body. All of our students have developed and grown and will continue to do so. We look forward to continuing our journey as a Poly family.

We are looking forward to honouring the amazing achievements of our students during the last week of this summer term. This comprises our celebrations evening, our summer concert and our culture day. Our diverse community is something we are really proud of and each year we celebrate culture day by the whole community wearing our cultural dress to celebrate our heritage. It is important that our students take pride in this and appreciate the differences within our community. It brings us all together.

I feel extremely privileged to serve this community and it is inspiring to know that all our successes so far have been possible because of the care and unity shown by our dedicated staff, students, parents and stakeholders.



CLAPPING YEAR 7 ON THEIR FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL



'WEAR A COLOUR DAY' - REPRESENTING THE 11 COLOURS OF THE LGBT+ FLAG



Woolwich Polytechnic
School for Girls

FIRST OFFICIAL WHOLE SCHOOL PHOTOGRAPH

FRIDAY 17TH JUNE 2024



WOOLWICH POLYTECHNIC SCHOOL FOR BOYS



**Headteacher
Mr T Lawrence**

As I write this message towards the end of the academic year 2023-24, I am aware that temporal distance begets nostalgia. I can look back at so many successes, represented by so many students and colleagues, that suggest a better future.

Yet, I also acknowledge the challenges that face us as a school and wider community, from which hope should arise as well, and not a just vain hope.

Autumn term is always focused upon transition: our new year 7s settled in well and continue to become more and more Poly and Proud; our year 9s chose their KS4 options; our year 10s started their GCSEs and have been excellent students, boding well for next year; our year 11s became the charming and dedicated young men we always knew they would be; our key stage 5 students overcame the chasm of GCSE to A Level, doubtless surprising themselves with how much content and deeper understanding they were capable of managing in their brains. Year 8, so easily the forgotten year, have proven themselves on the sports field again and again and have partaken in wider curriculum drives like our recent Healthy Eating Week. With diversity being our central theme this year, staff have received training throughout the year on inclusive practices to ensure all our students flourish and can access the curriculum: inclusion of all talents is essential for a well-functioning society, which we hope to promote from our school base.

Spring term brought an Ofsted inspection, which validated so many of the school drives, whilst also acknowledging the areas that we continue to work on. Amidst the pressures that Ofsted brought, all staff were working exceptionally hard to get our examination groups ready for their final exams. Year 10s had a highly successful work experience: I had the pleasure of visiting a number myself and know that the overwhelmingly positive feedback from their 'employers' was the norm across the year group. Year 9s crossed the threshold into key stage four by choosing their options, whilst years 7 and 8 came back from the winter holidays to face exams and be taught the rigours of revision techniques.



Summer term brought an earlier-than-ever exam period which is coming to a close as I write this. I feel a great confidence that the students entered their exams being as well prepared as any previous year group, even noting still the privations of the pandemic hanging over them. This term is always exhausting for the whole of our community: any last-minute attempt for students to master a detail, a question, a skill is exploited, knowing that these small incremental gains produce results of which to be proud. And as summer term draws to a close, the focus of the school – never winding down – moves onto celebration and enrichment with year 12 work experience, Sports Day and activities week. We celebrate the many achievements and cultural events throughout the year but summer term is when both come together in our diverse community to give recognition to students in their graduation ceremonies, acknowledging the achievements in a broad range of subjects and aptitudes: our school is a microcosm of the community it serves. Yet, correspondingly, staff also have an eye on the new academic year...

A key aspect of recognising diversity is the need to treat everyone as a unique individual. The summary above will never do justice to all the conversations that have made a difference, the smiles of recognition, the challenging conversations, the infinite little occurrences that collectively keep the school engine running. I am grateful for all those small, seemingly inconsequential events at the time but be assured that they have indeed had great consequence in the young lives that change and develop and delight. They may not totally erase traumas experienced but they are a necessary talisman to cling to, reminding us all of why we do this job, reminding us of where the joys of the job are in those frustrating moments, reminding us of our great purpose.



WORLD BOOK DAY



CULTURE DAY



When we joined PolyMAT this year, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion were already a central part of our practice at Bannockburn Primary School. Indeed, the common nature of our values and priorities was a major reason for us choosing to join as it was clear that PolyMAT were highly inclusive wanted us to be ourselves, just as we want our children to be themselves.

Promoting EDI is a collective effort to create a positive, respectful, and collaborative environment. Each year we work co-constructively to ensure that every child feels valued and respected. As a school we have proudly signed up to the Royal Greenwich Equality and Equity Charter.

This term there has been a series of exciting transition events taking place to ensure all children are supported when moving to the next phase of their education. Additional transition visits have been organised for vulnerable children, including those with SEND or SEMH requirements.

One of the benefits of being part of PolyMAT is that our children who are starting at PolyMAT secondary schools have enjoyed bespoke visits where they were warmly welcomed by staff and pupils, with their initial worries about secondary school being put to rest. They will also have staff from Bannockburn visiting and supporting them over the coming years – they're still our children too! We have also been working hard on transition opportunities for our Year 2 children transitioning from the High Street site to Manor Way site next year. Further visits for children and parent tours have been arranged to support those with SEND or SEMH needs.

In addition to our termly focus areas, EDI is threaded throughout our daily practice in a variety of ways:

Integration through the Curriculum

- Incorporating EDI Themes: We weave EDI themes throughout all subjects to ensure that our curriculum reflects diverse cultures, abilities, and life experiences.
- Diverse Materials and Resources: We use materials that reflect different cultures and life experiences, promoting an inclusive learning environment.
- Assemblies and Celebrations: Our assemblies feature stories and examples that celebrate diversity, with a particular focus on the heritage of our local community.

Staff Training

- Unconscious Bias Training: All staff participate in unconscious bias training, including anonymous bias testing to improve individual practices.
- Inclusive Classroom Strategies: Ongoing staff training helps teachers create inclusive classrooms and manage diverse student needs effectively.





Child and Parent Engagement

- Child-Led Diversity Initiatives: We encourage children to lead diversity initiatives through the curriculum, Peer Learning Groups (PLGs) and facilitated discussions that foster empathy and understanding.
- Parent Diversity Group: This group meets twice a year to involve parents in our EDI initiatives and gather valuable feedback.

Policies and Practices

- Transparent Procedures: We ensure that our procedures for reporting and addressing EDI issues are accessible and transparent.
- Policy Reviews: Regular reviews of school policies ensure they promote inclusivity and reflect our commitment to EDI. Our Behaviour and Relationships Policy includes clear practices to prevent and take consistent action against discrimination and bullying.

Additional Inclusion Initiatives

- Speech Bubbles and Love to Communicate: Activities designed to help children communicate effectively and confidently.
- Educational Visits for Vulnerable Pupils: Pupils experience diverse environments and opportunities, broadening their understanding and appreciation of different cultures and lifestyles.
- Coaching Through Drama: An intervention that focuses on anxiety, self-esteem and managing emotions.
- Full Time Assistant Educational Psychologists: Support children, following expert advice from an Educational Psychologist.

In conclusion, our unwavering commitment to foster an inclusive and supportive community at Bannockburn Primary School ensures that every child has the opportunity to thrive and feel safe. Together, we can continue to nurture a welcoming environment where diversity is celebrated, and every individual is valued.





Are you looking



to join

PolyMAT?

BECOMING A POLYMAT SCHOOL:

If our vision and values strike a chord, we would welcome the opportunity to work with you and see if you would like to become part of our trust. We are open to collaborations with schools in the South East, if your school is interested in becoming part of PolyMAT, please reach out to: contactus@polymat.co.uk

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A NEW CHALLENGE?

At PolyMAT, we place great emphasis on creating a workplace that is happy and fulfilling and puts people on a journey of development, both professionally and personally. We feel truly blessed with the amazing staff that we work with and their never-ending drive to do special things to help our students. We are ambitious and dedicated and will always place the quality of education before any other desires. If you are interested in working with us, please contact one of our schools directly, and we will be very happy to discuss opportunities with you.

If we do not have any vacancies matching your interests, please join our Talent Pool at [MyNewTerm](#) and we will review your application.

Tim Plumb
CEO of PolyMAT

