

# SPRING 2026



SUCCESS FOR EVERYONE

TRUST NEWSLETTER ISSUE 6





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**Growing Together, Learning for Life**



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# 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 CEO

**Mr T Plumb**



## **Welcome to the Spring 2026 edition of the PolyMAT Newsletter**

As we move into spring, it feels timely to reflect on the theme that has shaped so much of our work this term: resilience. Chosen as the focus of our first ever PolyMAT Conference and carried through the stories in this newsletter, resilience captures the spirit with which our staff, students, and wider community have approached every challenge and opportunity. It has been evident in our classrooms, in our events, and in the way we continue to support one another across the Trust.

Our inaugural PolyMAT Conference was a defining moment. Bringing together over 500 colleagues from across our schools, it showcased the strength of our shared vision and the expertise that exists across the Trust. The collaboration and professional dialogue on display reaffirmed our commitment to continuous improvement and collective excellence.

Across our schools, resilience has been visible in countless ways: in the joy of World Book Day, the empowerment of International Women's Day, the recognition of National School Governors Awareness Day, the celebration of identity during LGBTQ+ History Month, the confidence of young speakers at the Jack Petchey Speak Out Regional Final, and the community spirit of the Bannockburn Fun Run - to name a few.

We were also pleased to speak to so many families on National Offer Day, beginning the journey with students who will join us in September 2026. Their enthusiasm reflects the strong reputation of our schools and the trust placed in us by our community.

Educational visits have continued to enrich learning across the Trust, from sixth form students visiting Auschwitz, to museum trips, to Bannockburn pupils exploring the Natural History Museum. These experiences deepen understanding and build the resilience, empathy, and global awareness that are essential for young people today.

I want to express my sincere thanks to all staff for their professionalism, adaptability, and commitment. Your resilience, whether shown in the classroom, through pastoral care, in operational roles, or in leadership ensures that our students continue to thrive.

As we look ahead to the summer term, I want to thank every member of our community for the resilience you demonstrate daily. It is your strength, your adaptability, and your shared belief in our mission that continue to move PolyMAT forward. Thank you for everything you do.

A special thank you also goes to our colleagues who will be working in our schools during the break. Your continued dedication is truly appreciated.

I wish you all a restful and enjoyable break. I hope you are able to take this time to relax, recharge, and enjoy moments with family and friends.

# FREE SUPPORT SERVICES WHEN SCHOOLS ARE CLOSED



Here's a helpful roundup of free support services available to students and parents/carers across the UK during the holidays when schools are closed but needs still arise:

## Food & Essentials Support

- Holiday Activities & Food (HAF) Programme – Free clubs with meals for children on free school meals.
- Royal Greenwich Holiday Food & Fun – Free meals and activities across Woolwich, Plumstead, Eltham and Thamesmead.
- Trussell Trust Food Banks – Emergency food parcels available nationwide.
- Family Action FOOD Clubs – Affordable food boxes and holiday support.

## Mental Health & Emotional Support

- Childline – Free, confidential support for under-19s (0800 1111).
- Shout – Text CONNECT to 85258 for free 24/7 mental health support.
- ThinkNinja App – Free NHS-approved mental health tools for ages 10–18.
- Samaritans – 24/7 emotional support (116 123).
- www.kooth.com - free, anonymous support.
- Papyrus HOPELINE247 – Suicide prevention for young people (0800 068 4141).
- NHS Mental Health Crisis Helpline – Call 111 and select Option 2 for urgent help.

## Family & Parenting Support

- Family Hubs & Start for Life – Parenting advice, early years support and local guidance.
- FamilyLine (Family Action) – Emotional and practical support for parents.
- YoungMinds Parent Helpline – Mental health advice for parents and carers (0808 802 5544).
- Parenting Smart by Place2Be – Free guidance on children's wellbeing.
- Mind: Parent Support During School Holidays – Tips and support for families.
- Family Lives – Parenting advice including online support and WhatsApp messaging.
- Action for Children – Support for families facing difficulties, including young carers and those in vulnerable situations.
- Barnardo's – Support for vulnerable children, families, and young people including those in care and young carers.

## Online Safety & Protection

- CEOP (Child Exploitation & Online Protection) – Report online grooming or sexual exploitation; resources for children and parents.
- Thinkuknow – Online safety education for children, teens, parents and carers.



# FREE SPRING ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS



Here's a list of fun, free activities for all ages that can keep students engaged, active, and creative over the spring break:



## **Build a Cardboard City**

Using recyclable materials, design and build your own city: houses, shops, bridges, cafés, parks and more. Add street names and small details to bring it to life.



## **Mini Film Festival**

Use a phone to film your own mini-movie such as a stop-motion animation, documentary or news broadcast. Edit using a free app and hold a mini screening.



## **Recreate Famous Paintings**

Choose a famous artwork and recreate it using only household objects. Photograph your recreation.



## **£2 Cooking Challenge**

With just £2 to spend on ingredients, see what kind of meal or snack you can create. This works well as a friendly competition.



## **Emoji Story**

Write a story using only emojis, then swap with a friend or family member who has to translate it back into a written story.



## **Colour Hunt Photo Challenge**

Pick a colour and explore your local area taking photos of anything that matches it. Turn your photos into a digital collage.



## **Ten-Minute Walk Challenge**

Set a timer for ten minutes and walk anywhere you like. Many people find they continue walking once they get started.



## **One-Song Clean-Up**

Choose one song and tidy as much as possible before it ends. It's a quick way to reset a messy space without feeling overwhelmed.



# ONE TRUST, ONE COMMUNITY: OUR FIRST POLYMAT CONFERENCE

Friday 13th February marked a milestone moment for PolyMAT as we hosted our first ever Trust-wide conference - a truly memorable day that brought together staff from every school across the organisation, alongside our governors, trustees, and invited external guests. With more than 500 people in attendance, the event was a powerful celebration of unity, purpose, and shared ambition.

We were honoured to welcome Jeffrey Boakye as our keynote speaker. His compelling words, rich insights, and dynamic speaking style captivated the entire room and set an inspiring tone for the day. His message encouraged reflection, challenged perspectives, and left colleagues feeling energised about the work ahead.

We were also delighted to be joined by Kate Cairns, Founder of KCA, and Heather Daulphin, KCA Associate. During the panel discussion, they shared deeply personal experiences and professional expertise, offering a thoughtful exploration of community resilience and staff wellbeing. Their session resonated strongly with colleagues and provided meaningful strategies and ideas to support our continued growth as a Trust community.

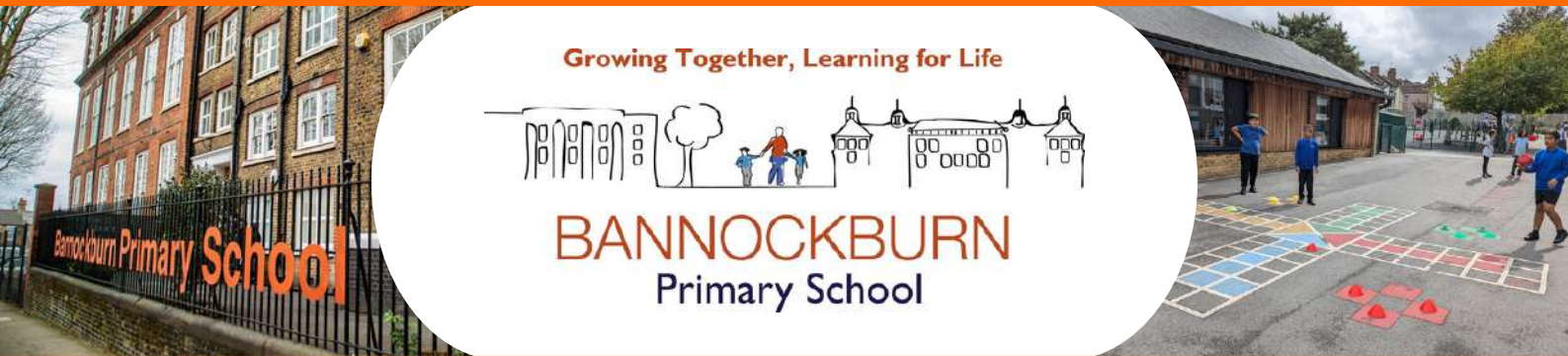
A heartfelt thank you goes to the many staff members who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to bring this large-scale event to life. Your dedication ensured the day ran smoothly from start to finish. We are also extremely grateful to the colleagues who led our afternoon breakout sessions - your knowledge, time, and contributions enriched the experience for everyone.

Having all our staff together under one roof was a striking reminder of how far we have come as a Trust, and just how many of us are working collaboratively towards the same vision. The PolyMAT Conference was more than just an event; it was a celebration of our collective strength, our shared values, and the vibrant community we continue to build.


Here's to the next chapter and to many more opportunities to come together, learn together, and grow together.



# OUR FAMILY OF SCHOOLS




**Growing Together, Learning for Life**



**BANNOCKBURN**  
Primary School



  
Woolwich Polytechnic  
**School for Boys**



  
Woolwich Polytechnic  
**School for Girls**

# RESILIENCE IN ACTION

As we look back on a term shaped by connection, collaboration, and our first ever PolyMAT Conference, the theme of resilience has resonated strongly across our Trust. Inspired by the discussions and insights shared in February, each of our headteachers has taken the opportunity to reflect on what resilience looks like within their schools - how it is lived, modelled, and nurtured every day. Together, their perspectives highlight not only the strength within each community, but also the collective determination that drives us forward as one Trust with a shared vision.



# BUILDING RESILIENCE IN OUR SCHOOL

Growing Together, Learning for Life



**BANNOCKBURN**  
Primary School

Resilience is a word we use often in education, but it is important to remember that resilience is not something we are simply born with. It is something we develop over time through our experiences and through the protective factors that surround us. This understanding links closely to our school's focus on growth mindset: the belief that abilities can be developed through effort, learning and support.

Over the past year we have explored the idea that resilience is not about avoiding challenges or pretending things are easy. Instead, resilience is about adapting when things become difficult and trusting in our ability to keep going. For adults and children alike, resilience grows when we experience challenge and learn ways to respond constructively.

We remind each other and ourselves to take into account the protective factors that help people develop resilience. Some pupils may not yet have had the experiences, relationships or stability that support them in managing difficult moments. We try to pause more often to understand the underlying need behind a behaviour or reaction. Rather than asking, "How do I make this child resilient?" we can ask, "What protective factors can I strengthen in this classroom?" When we do this well, resilience grows naturally.

There are several ways we can build these protective conditions. Creating safety and predictability through clear routines, shared values and calm responses helps pupils feel secure. Being a stable, caring adult while maintaining high expectations builds trust and confidence. Teaching coping and problem-solving strategies gives pupils tools to navigate challenge. Finally, ensuring pupils feel a sense of belonging and opportunity allows them to develop confidence in themselves and their learning.

Alongside our approach to teaching and learning and the strong sense of community within our school, we also offer a range of opportunities that support pupils in developing these protective factors. Coaching through Drama provides children with strategies and confidence to express their ideas and develop their voice. A mindfulness extracurricular club helps pupils practise calmness and reflection, while lunchtime interventions support children in learning how to approach different situations and manage their emotions. We also have a bereavement and loss mentor who provides specific support for children facing particularly challenging experiences.

Pupil voice is another important part of building resilience. Programmes such as Speech Bubbles help children build confidence when sharing their ideas with peers, while all pupils in Year 2 and above are part of pupil leadership groups that contribute to school actions and support others. Our assemblies also reinforce these ideas, particularly when resilience is our value of the month, helping pupils reflect on perseverance, effort and learning from challenges.

A stable classroom environment can act as a protective base for children, particularly when life outside school may feel less predictable. Resilience can fluctuate depending on the circumstances individuals face, which is why knowing our pupils well and building strong relationships with families is so important.



# BUILDING RESILIENCE IN OUR SCHOOL

Growing Together, Learning for Life



**BANNOCKBURN**  
Primary School

We are also working proactively to reframe what “good learning” looks like. Many pupils equate ease with success. However, meaningful learning often involves difficulty, persistence and revisiting ideas. By valuing effort, curiosity and improvement, not just correct answers, we help pupils understand that struggle is a normal and valuable part of learning.

Finally, resilience is not only important for pupils; it is vital for staff as well. A supportive professional culture, shared strategies and strong teamwork help ensure that adults feel equipped to manage the challenges of their roles.

As part of this work, we are also supporting pupils as they prepare for their transition to secondary school. For those moving on to schools within our trust, we have the added benefit that our strong relationships allow us to maintain communication with families and continue supporting pupils as they move through the next stage of their education.

Resilience does not grow in isolation. It grows through relationships, environments and opportunities. By creating safe, predictable and supportive school communities, we give every child the conditions they need to develop the resilience that will support them throughout their lives.

**Headteacher  
Mrs R Ford**

# LET'S GROW TOGETHER



# BANNOCKBURN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Headteacher  
Mrs R Ford



Follow all the latest school news and events on Bannockburn's Blog [here](#)



# CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR RESILIENCE: HOW OUR SCHOOL SUPPORTS EVERY CHILD



Woolwich Polytechnic  
School for Girls

As a growing start up school, Poly Girls has had to build its culture, systems, and identity from the ground up. This journey has required adaptability, compassion, and collective strength. Our resilience is rooted in relationships - staff and students learning, evolving, and navigating challenges together.

As a girls' school, we frequently navigate issues such as:

- Anxiety and low mood
- Self harm and emotional overwhelm
- Friendship breakdowns and social tension
- The pressures of academic performance

A significant part of this is teaching students how to cope with exam stress and anxiety. This has required us to:

- Build emotional literacy and self-awareness
- Teach practical strategies such as time management, self-regulation, and healthy routines
- Provide safe spaces and trusted adults for students to talk to
- Model calm, supportive, and solution based responses

By prioritising mental health education, we empower our students not just to survive stressful periods, but to develop lifelong coping skills.

## **The Power of Authentic Relationships**

Relationships sit at the heart of Poly Girls. Our students need to feel seen, heard, and valued. Staff often share their own experiences of struggle and success - showing that resilience is not about perfection, but about perseverance. This authenticity helps students:

- Understand that challenges are normal
- Learn that strength can be found in vulnerability
- Recognise the battles women face and the victories we achieve
- Build trust and a sense of belonging

Through connection, our girls gain confidence that they are not facing life's pressures alone.

## **Collective Strength and Shared Resilience**

Resilience at Poly Girls is not an individual endeavour - it is a community value. We acknowledge hardship while reinforcing the belief that we can overcome challenges together. We do this by:

- Listening to student voice
- Encouraging collaboration and kindness
- Celebrating emotional and personal growth
- Teaching that setbacks are opportunities for learning

Our collective resilience is what enables our girls to rise, and what defines us as a school.

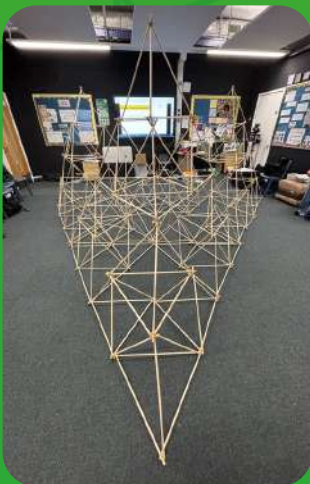
Poly Girls is a place where resilience is taught, modelled, and lived. We face challenges openly, support one another fully, and believe deeply in our students' ability to grow. By nurturing strong relationships, prioritising mental health, and empowering girls with the tools to manage stress, we are preparing them not only for exams - but for life.

**Headteacher**  
**Ms L Williams**

# WOOLWICH POLYTECHNIC SCHOOL FOR GIRLS



Headteacher  
Ms L Williams



Follow all the latest school news and events at WPSfG via our facebook account [here](#)



# HOW INDIVIDUAL RESILIENCE RELIES ON RELATIONSHIPS AND SUPPORT NETWORKS



Woolwich Polytechnic  
School for Boys

Resilience is often portrayed as an entirely personal quality - a matter of inner strength, determination, and perseverance. While individual traits certainly play a role, modern psychological research and human experience both point to a more interconnected truth: resilience is fundamentally a social phenomenon. People thrive, recover, and grow not in isolation, but through relationships and support networks that reinforce their emotional, cognitive, and practical capacities. In essence, resilience is not only about how strongly one stands, but also about who stands beside them. If there were ever an environment that showed this truism, it is a school.

At its core, resilience refers to the ability to adapt positively in the face of adversity. Whether an individual is confronted with stress, trauma, uncertainty, or significant change, the process of coping and recovering is deeply influenced by the connections they maintain with others. Supportive relationships act as protective buffers, reducing the harmful impact of stress and offering a sense of security and belonging. The simple knowledge that someone cares, listens, or understands can significantly alter a person's emotional response to hardship. Children know this and the adults who work with them know this, too; however, the same maxims also apply to how we as adults in a school work to support each other.

Human beings are wired for connection. Children develop resilience largely through attachment figures who model coping strategies, provide comfort, and encourage exploration. Adults, too, draw strength from partners, friends, colleagues, and mentors who reinforce their self-belief and help them regulate difficult emotions. Without these anchors, individuals often find it harder to maintain perspective, motivation, and hope when confronted with challenges.

Support networks do more than offer emotional reassurance - they expand the resources available for problem-solving. When facing complex difficulties, other people offer new viewpoints, practical solutions, and shared experiences that reduce feelings of isolation. A resilient person does not navigate hardship alone; rather, they utilise a network of insights and strengths beyond their own. This collaborative dimension of resilience often leads to more effective and sustainable coping strategies.

Furthermore, relationships nurture the sense of identity and purpose that fuels resilience. Being part of a community - whether a family, workplace, school, or friendship group - reminds individuals that their efforts matter and that they have a role to play. This sense of meaning helps people persevere during adversity. When life becomes overwhelming, knowing that others rely on us, value us, or walk beside us can rekindle motivation that might otherwise fade.

It is also important to recognise that resilience is reciprocal. As individuals support others, their own resilience grows. Helping someone else fosters empathy, strengthens connections, and enhances personal confidence. Over time, these mutual exchanges create resilient communities - groups of people who collectively withstand pressures that would be insurmountable alone.

**Headteacher  
Mr T Lawrence**

# WOOLWICH POLYTECHNIC SCHOOL FOR BOYS



Headteacher  
Mr T Lawrence



Follow all the latest school news and events at WPSfB via our facebook account [here](#)



# CELEBRATING OUR 200TH YOUTUBE VIDEO



On 20th February, PolyMAT reached an exciting milestone: the release of our 200th YouTube video. Even more fittingly, this special upload celebrates two of our core values – care and unity – by showcasing the wonderful pets belonging to staff, students, and families across our Trust. It is a joyful reminder of the community spirit that makes PolyMAT so unique.

Reaching 200 videos is no small achievement. Each piece of content we share represents hours of planning, filming, editing, and creative collaboration. Behind every upload is a dedicated effort to shine a light on the incredible staff, students, and school communities that make up our Trust. Every story we tell matters, and every video reflects the passion and purpose that drive our work.

To date, our videos have been watched for a combined total of over 2,100 hours - the equivalent of watching PolyMAT content nonstop for more than 83 days. This milestone is possible because of the continued support of our community. Every view, like, comment, share, and subscription has helped our channel grow far beyond anything imagined when we launched it back in December 2020.

Since releasing our 200th video, we have continued to build on this momentum, adding a further five videos to our channel - each one contributing to our mission of celebrating the people, stories, and achievements across PolyMAT.

As we celebrate this moment, we also look ahead with excitement for the stories yet to be told. Thank you to everyone who has supported our journey so far. We are proud of what we have built together, and even more proud of the community it represents.

Explore our channel and enjoy our 200th video – and click the images below to watch our latest uploads!





# 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](mailto:contactus@polymat.co.uk)

## ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A NEW CHALLENGE?

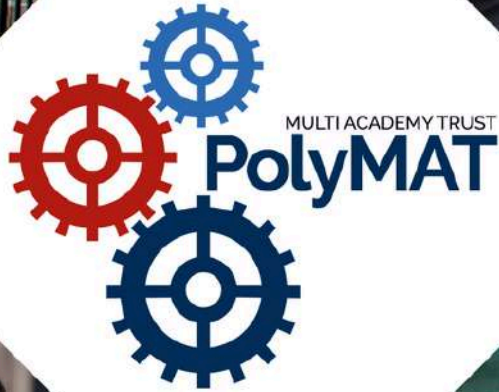
At PolyMAT, we place great emphasis on creating a workplace that is happy and fulfilling and puts people on a journey of development, both professionally and personally. We feel truly blessed with the amazing staff that we work with and their never-ending drive to do special things to help our students. 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



Bannockburn Primary School





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