

SEN Trust Southend



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Welcome to our newsletter which shows a 'small' insight into our amazing cooperation/collective of four special schools who continue to adapt to the demand for places for our pupils with a complex range of special educational needs. This is a small window into the world of our schools this year; how they have continued to grow and thrive, working cooperatively together to meet the needs of our very special children.

A thank you from me and all the Trustees, Governors and supporters of the schools for all the hard work that has gone on this year. A special thank you to all the staff at all levels, for their continued commitment and hard work. Not forgetting a thank you to all the parents and carers who support us in our work and help make our community truly 'special'.

Jackie Mullan CEO

Kingsdown











A Truly Amazing Year!

What a year it has been! We are delighted to share the incredible journey Kingsdown has taken this year, a year that has seen Kingsdown go from strength to strength. It began with Ofsted recognising the exceptional standards of teaching and the quality of education and care and management and leadership across our school. This was closely followed by us winning the prestigious Education Today Awards. These achievements are reflective of the hard work, dedication and commitment of our whole school community. Under the excellent leadership of our new Headteacher, Lisa Stroud, our school has continued to flourish this year and reach new heights of excellence; as always, the Kingsdown team have given their absolute all throughout; their unwavering commitment to our pupils and our school values has been the driving force behind our many successes. Additionally, this year has been marked by exceptional collaboration, with the other schools in the MAT and a range of professionals who have been working closely with the school. The year ended as it began, with a multitude of celebrations marking a year to remember; looking back at the successes and saying goodbye to our leavers knowing they are fully ready and excited to embark on the next part of their journey as they move on to Lancaster School.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to making this such an extraordinary year for Kingsdown!

Championing Student Voice

This year our Junior Leaders and School Councillors have been championing the student voice out in the community. Kingsdown has been an active and proud supporter of the Southend SEND Multi-Schools Council (SSMSC) initiative, since it launched in 2024, with the final meeting hosted at Kingsdown at the end of the academic year. Our young people who have been attending these meetings have been exceptional; they have proven to be dedicated young ambassadors for children and young people with SEND and have not only represented Kingsdown but the wider SEND community with confidence and bundles of enthusiasm. Supported by visual agendas they have passionately shared their ideas and views; through the use of speech, symbols and range of other forms of AAC (Alternative and Augmentative Communication). The meetings have been extremely well led by Fay Velleman and the contributions made by Kingsdown pupils, and the equally outstanding children from the other schools that have regularly attended, have been nothing short of remarkable!

Pioneering the 'Bags About Me' Project

Kingsdown has also taken part in an exciting pilot scheme with SSMSC this year. This project has been specifically for our learners with PMLD (Profound and Multiple Learning difficulties.) We are proud to be the first school in Southend to have benefited from this innovative project. The “Bags About Me” project has given our young people another means of sharing what they like and don’t like with their peers and people who are new or unfamiliar to them. The bags travel with each child everywhere, and this has been giving them a simple but invaluable way of sharing knowledge about their preferences and personality with others, making it clear to the adults and peers working with the individual pupils that they have definite ‘go-to’ activities and items that help them to regulate their emotions, communicate their feelings and provide a source of comfort and wellbeing. The bags have supported meaningful connections in a range of environments and have proven to be an extremely effective way of sharing experiences.

Pete the Penguin Art Trail Adventure

A fabulous huddle of penguins has finally waddled into Southend and Leigh. On 11th July the ‘flippin’ fabulous fun began, to find ‘Pete’. We are extremely grateful to our sponsor, Green Light Solutions, for enabling us to be part of this spectacular event. This extraordinary public art trail, organised by Havens Hospices and Wild in Art has already brought so much joy and creativity to our school and local community. Led with passion by Ali Ward, each and every pupil at Kingsdown shared in the beautiful decoration of the penguin sculpture and each child also made their very own ‘Pete’ out of clay, creating a mini ‘Kingsdown Waddle!’ We hope our

school community located Pete over the summer on the trail and had fun exploring the local area out in the summer sun!

Kingsdown Primary School

Following the consultation process that took place earlier in the year, the Department of Education has now confirmed that Kingsdown will begin the transition to becoming a Primary School, with the transition planned to complete in 2028. Collaborative work has already begun to ensure a seamless curriculum progression from Kingsdown to Lancaster. Working closely in partnership with Lancaster our experienced staff teams will continue to work closely together to ensure that every child's individual needs, progress and well-being remain our top priorities throughout this period of transition. Both Kingsdown and Lancaster schools are committed to making this transition as smooth as possible for all our children and families.

Reading Mentor Scheme

For the third consecutive year, pupils at Kingsdown have taken part in the South Essex College Reading Mentor Scheme. The children have met weekly with the visiting Mentor, Ryan, and it has been wonderful to see their engagement extend their passion and enthusiasm for books, reading and story-telling. The sessions culminated at the end of the school year with a special event celebrating the children's engagement and the reading achievements they have made throughout the year.

Nature Space

We are thrilled to share that our Nature Space has had a recent revamp, and it looks wonderful! The space has been transformed into an inspiring outdoor learning environment that will provide outdoor learning opportunities for all our pupils. It is now a magnificent learning environment to be enjoyed and be proud of, as our pupils enjoy interactive experiences across the curriculum connecting with nature and developing environmental awareness.

Makaton

This September we are pleased to be offering the Level One Makaton Language Training Programme to our school staff team. This exciting opportunity reflects our commitment to supporting our staff develop valuable skills that will unquestionably support the communication needs of many of our children through the ongoing professional development of our staff teams understanding of alternative and augmentative forms of communication. Following staff training, we will be offering our parents the same opportunity and look forward to seeing how this training benefits our whole school community.

MATP Award

Led by our wonderful Emma Clancy, in the Spring Term, Kingsdown was awarded the MATP (Motor Activities Training Programme) Bronze award. MATP originates from the Special Olympics. This amazing achievement highlights and recognises Kingsdown's commitment to promoting inclusive sports; providing opportunities ensuring every child is enabled to participate and thrive in physical activities. The award recognises that Kingsdown demonstrates excellence in inclusive sports provision, providing opportunities for all pupils to develop their physical skills and confidence in fun, motivating and engaging sessions. Our Kingsdown pupils' did themselves proud and we are thrilled they achieved this prestigious award in recognition.

Lancaster



Another Year, Another Step Forward

The past year at Lancaster School has been a time of growth, resilience, and achievement. Staff, students, and families have worked together to create a supportive and inclusive environment where every student is empowered to thrive. From an exciting new curriculum and new buildings to personal milestones and academic progress, the school has celebrated countless successes, both big and small. As the year draws to a close, it's a fitting moment to reflect on the dedication, creativity, and compassion that have shaped another meaningful chapter in the school's journey.

The New Building Work

This year marked a major milestone in the development of Lancaster School, with exciting progress on the new building works. The foundations have now been laid for the much-anticipated new hall, which will provide a modern, accessible space for assemblies, activities, and performances. Meanwhile, construction on the three new classrooms and the hygiene room has moved ahead swiftly—walls are up, windows are in, and the spaces are beginning to take shape. These new facilities will offer improved learning environments and essential resources, reflecting the school's commitment to providing the best possible support for its students.

The ongoing building work is a vital step in supporting the School's continued growth, particularly as the school prepares to welcome an expanded Key Stage 3 cohort next September 2026 taking us up to 160 students. The new facilities will offer tailored learning spaces designed to meet the diverse needs of older students as they move through their educational journey. In addition, the development includes dedicated areas for two St Christopher's Satellite groups, set to begin this September. These new spaces will help ensure a smooth and supported transition for the students, strengthening collaboration between the schools and enhancing opportunities for shared learning and development.

Our New Curriculum

Lancaster School has introduced an exciting new curriculum, closely aligned with the Kingsdown Curriculum, to better support the individual needs and strengths of our learners. The updated framework is built around six key areas of development: *My Communication Skills*, *My Thinking Skills*, *My Personal, Social and Emotional Skills*, *My Engagement, Wellbeing and Creative Skills*, and *My Movement*. These areas provide a more holistic and flexible approach to learning, ensuring that each student can progress at their own pace while building confidence,

independence, and a sense of achievement. This new structure allows staff to tailor learning more effectively, making every moment in school more meaningful and connected to real-life development.

We have also been developing a new five-year curriculum tailored specifically for our students with complex needs and PMLD (Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities). This topic-based approach is designed to be highly sensory and practical, ensuring that learning is accessible, engaging, and meaningful for every student. Each themed unit provides opportunities for experiential learning through touch, sound, movement, and real-life activities, while still maintaining a clear structure and progression. Importantly, the curriculum remains accredited through ASDAN, ensuring that students continue to gain recognition for their achievements. This new approach supports deeper engagement, greater consistency, and a more personalised learning journey for our most complex learners.

Leadership

Due to the growth of the school, we have recently experienced some important changes in leadership. Sandy has stepped into the role of assistant head, bringing fresh energy and ideas to the team. Additionally, with Sarah's move to Deputy Headteacher, we now have a new Head of Learning specifically for My Communication Skills, ensuring focused support in that area. These changes reflect our school's ongoing development and commitment to providing strong leadership to meet the needs of our growing community.

The school continues to create more opportunities for LSAs to lead on aspects of the organisation and a new HLTA role that will further develop work experience opportunities has been put into place.

Residentials

This year has been a fantastic one for residential experiences, with 40 students taking part in a variety of exciting and enriching trips. One group had the incredible opportunity to fly to Portugal, experiencing a new culture and environment while developing their independence and confidence. Other students enjoyed an adventurous journey to the Isle of Wight by ferry, where they explored the island and built lasting memories. Closer to home, groups also visited Stubbers Activity Centre and Danbury Activity Centre, taking part in outdoor challenges, team-building activities, and new physical experiences in safe, supportive settings. These residentials not only offered fun and adventure, but also helped students grow in resilience, communication, and self-belief—skills that will support them well beyond the classroom.

We also had 17 students gather for a sleepover on the school premises, transforming their everyday classrooms into a lively and fun-filled overnight retreat. Sleeping bags were spread out in the classrooms, and the usual quiet of the school was replaced with laughter, games, and late-night chatter. Staff supervised while allowing the students to enjoy movies, snacks, and group activities that strengthened their friendships.

Phonics Scheme

Following the recommendations in our last Ofsted report, our school has successfully implemented the new phonics programme, *Read, Write Inc.* This structured and evidence-based approach has been carefully introduced across appropriate ability groups to improve early reading and writing skills. Staff have received comprehensive training to deliver the programme with confidence and consistency, ensuring it meets the diverse needs of our learners. Since its launch, *Read, Write Inc.* has already made a positive impact, helping students develop essential phonics knowledge, build their vocabulary, and gain greater confidence in their communication—demonstrating the school's commitment to continuous improvement and high-quality teaching.

ELSA Support

We are excited to continue our ongoing ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) support for students, which has proven to be a valuable resource in promoting emotional wellbeing and resilience.

The ELSA programme is a structured six-week intervention designed to support students' emotional well-being and development. Throughout the six weeks, each student's progress is carefully assessed and monitored by the ELSA, who tailors activities to meet individual needs. Regular evaluations help ensure that the support remains effective and responsive, allowing adjustments as necessary to maximize positive outcomes. By the end of the programme, measurable improvements in emotional literacy and coping skills are typically observed, providing valuable support for the student's overall growth.

Building on the success of our existing provision, we have since expanded our support and welcomed two more trained ELSAs to the school. This growth allows us to offer more tailored, one-on-one and small group sessions, ensuring that a greater number of students receive the emotional guidance and support they need to thrive both socially and academically.



















St. Nicholas



Our New Library and Accelerated Reader

We are delighted to have finished the development of our new Library this Spring. Following the tradition of naming our learning spaces after famous people with SEND, the 'Christie' Library is named after Agatha Christie who, despite her huge success as an author was challenged with Dysgraphia and possibly even Dyslexia.

Our new library consists of various shelving and book displays along with areas of different types of seating including the students' favourite 'Igloo' area. In addition to students being able to drop in and out of the library, each class is also timetabled for a weekly session of reading and Library skills. More books have been ordered to make the library as accessible as possible to readers of all types.

The library has been arranged to support and encourage our students' reading journeys. All student reading books are linked on our Accelerated Reader system. Following a reader assessment on Accelerated Reader each student is assigned an Accelerated Reader reading range. They can then choose a book from this range knowing it will be appropriate in terms of accessibility and challenge.

Once a student has finished a book, they are able to log on to their Accelerated Reader account and complete a quiz on the book. Information from the quiz is then included within Accelerated Reader and used to identify progress and inform the suggested range for each student.

More information on Accelerated Reader can be found here: [Accelerated Reader | Renaissance Learning](#)











Our French Adventure

In May we went on our first overseas residential trip for many a year. As part of our 'Eurovision' Quest a large group of us spent the week in Normandy, France. At 2.00am (Yes 2.00am!) 42 children and 14 staff met outside school, boarded our coach and set off to Portsmouth. From there we boarded the Portsmouth to Caen ferry and set sail on the six-hour crossing. After disembarking the ferry, it was back aboard the coach for the final leg to our home for the week, at Château Beaumont, Normandy.

We had a busy but fantastic time. The students navigated their way so well through long journeys, new sights, new smells and new sounds and impressed us at every turn. Highlights included: - a visit to Mont St. Michel where we walked the medieval streets and scaled the ramparts; the views were incredible. - a number of students being brave enough to try a snail; some of them went back for seconds! - a trip to an outdoor market where we soaked up the French culture and some of us enjoyed a crêpe, too. - activities at the château where we did some musketeering, some archery and an awesome zip wire.

Before we knew it the time had come to return home, with not just souvenirs from the market, but also with a wealth of memories of fun times in France. It was a long way to go but it was certainly worth it. We were so proud of our students, they were truly magnifique!









When The Adults Change Everything Changes, Partner School

Over the past five or so years we have been on a real journey at St Nick's, one which continues today. Initially we purchased a copy of 'When the Adults Change, Everything Changes' for every member of staff, and, in class groups read a chapter or two each half term as part of 'Monday night book club'. The staff teams would agree on three strategies to focus on for the half term which were then voted on by the whole staff body and the most successful ones were then taken forward as the whole-school approach to behaviour management and would form part of the behaviour curriculum. This format ran for a period of time until the whole book was completed. From this work we now use many WTAC strategies that form part of our behaviour curriculum and underpin our relationships policy. Consistency and modelling from the top has been crucial to set the culture that we wanted for St Nicholas. And so, to this year, and the exciting news that our hard work has been recognised and we have been accepted as a WTAC Partner School. You can read all about our journey here on the WTAC website: [St Nicholas School | WhenTheAdultsChange](#)



Read Write Inc.

Like other MAT schools we have introduced Phonics via the Read Write Inc. scheme. In the autumn term initial training from Read Write Inc. was delivered for all staff. This has been followed by the implementation of 14 phonics groups involving approximately half the school, each running three times a week. A weekly Phonics staff training session take place on Mondays where good practice, reminders and additional training are shared. Our students have taken to regular phonics sessions well and, with the odd tweak like replacing 'Fred Talk' with 'Sound Talk' to appeal more to secondary MLD students we have found the scheme works well for us. This is evidenced in end of year progress data for English, where every student receiving phonics has met their end of year progress expectations.



Ballet at The Royal Opera House

Back in March we were lucky to be successful in a ticket ballot for heavily subsidised tickets and a travel grant to take the whole school to the Ballet. We attended a school's matinee of Romeo and Juliet at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden. We were a little apprehensive about how the students would cope with three 45-minute acts containing no words but didn't need to

worry. Our students were in awe of the beautiful building and the ballet itself held their interest, for the most part, all afternoon.

We have already booked to return in October for The Magic Flute



Waddle-on-Sea

St Nick's has also joined the Waddle-on-Sea gang. Our very own baby penguin, Persephone, is on display in one of the 'mini huddles' for the summer in the Royals shopping centre. Our design was based on an idea to show the four seasons by Ellie-Rose, one of our Year 8 students. Be sure to check it out this summer!



And finally, from Penguins to Chickens!

Only last week we welcomed 8 new hens in to our animal enclosure. The ladies are settling in well and getting to know our one surviving older hen. Each class takes it in turn, to feed and clean our Guinea pigs and rabbit and to feed, clean and collect eggs from the chickens.



St Christophers





Vision and Values Refresh

Following staff consultation, we have successfully adapted our school's vision and values to better reflect our current educational priorities and community needs. This collaborative process has strengthened our shared commitment to providing exceptional education for all our pupils.

'Lighting the way for everyone to thrive'

Values: Nurture, Inspire, Empower.

New Building Development

Construction is well underway on our exciting new four-classroom block at the back of the school site. This purpose-built facility, scheduled for completion by Christmas 2025, will enable us to return to our preferred class sizes and enhance our learning environment. The new building has been specifically designed for our Early Years and Key Stage 1 pupils, with each classroom benefiting from its own dedicated outdoor learning space.

Playground Enhancement Project Last summer saw the completion of our comprehensive playground revamp, which has transformed our outdoor learning environment. The new equipment has been carefully selected to support pupils' sensory regulation needs whilst encouraging collaborative play and social interaction. Staff have observed significant improvements in pupils' ability to self-regulate during break times, with the varied equipment providing appropriate outlets for different sensory preferences and energy levels.







Community Fundraising Success

Our school community rallied together for an inspiring fundraising campaign led by Headteacher Dan Woodman, who completed the London Marathon. The initiative saw remarkable participation from staff and families, with contributions including a sponsored head shave, mini marathons, obstacle races, and even a hand-crocheted blanket raffle. The collective effort demonstrated the strong community spirit that defines our school.

Speech and Language Support

We were delighted to welcome three Speech and Language Teaching Assistants (SALTAs) who joined us in this role last September. These dedicated professionals, previously Learning Support Assistants, have completed rigorous training and have been delivering targeted interventions throughout the year. We are particularly proud that one team member has been accepted into a four-year training program to become a fully qualified Speech and Language Therapist.

Lancaster School Partnership

In September, we will be launching an innovative satellite provision at Lancaster School, with two of our groups relocating there for one year while remaining on The St Christopher's roll. This partnership offers multiple benefits: reducing numbers on our main site during building works, fostering closer collaboration with Lancaster School to share best practices, and providing our pupils with valuable transition experience. Following this pilot year, our staff will return to St Christopher's as Lancaster School begins accepting pupils from Year 7 onwards.

St Chris Waddle Takes Flight. Finally, we were thrilled to participate in the Havens Hospice Waddle on Sea Event, creating our own decorated penguin sculpture affectionately named St Chris Waddle. Our pupils took immense pride in seeing their collaborative artwork displayed alongside penguins from across the community before they begin their journey to support this vital local charity.

What an absolutely fantastic year we've had! As we reflect on the past twelve months, we're filled with pride at the incredible achievements of our pupils and the unwavering dedication of our staff team.

Our colleagues have worked tirelessly to create meaningful learning experiences, adapt to new challenges, and ensure every child has flourished in their own unique way. From celebrating small victories in the classroom to major milestones in our pupils' development, the commitment and creativity shown by everyone has been truly inspiring.

The progress we've witnessed - whether in communication, independence, or personal confidence - is testament to the collaborative spirit that makes our school community so special.

As we look ahead to the new academic year, we're excited about the opportunities that await. With fresh ideas, renewed energy, and the same passionate commitment to putting our pupils at the heart of everything we do, we know the year ahead will bring even more reasons to celebrate.

Here's to another year of making a real difference!



