



GEP ACADEMIES WEEKLY BULLETIN WEEK COMMENCING 19th OCTOBER 2020

Reminders for this coming week:

**GEP BOARD
MEETING**
19.10.20
13.00 - 15.30

**GEP CENTRAL
TEAM MEETING**
20.10.20
10:00 – 11:30

Forthcoming meetings:

**GEP AUDIT
COMMITTEE**
05.11.20
13.00 - 15.30

**MATHS SCHOOL
WORKING GROUP**
06.11.20
15.30 - 16.30

**GEP/AST JOINT
EXECUTIVE
MEETING**
09.11.20
10.00 - 11.30

**GLAC CHAIRS
MEETING**
10.11.20
16.30 – 18.00

PAY COMMITTEE
17.11.20
16.30 – 18.00

**GEP/AST ALL
HEADS MEETING**
19.11.20
08.00 – 11.30

Thank you...

... for everything

The bulletin this week is unashamedly concentrating on one thing. Thanks. Often a short word, sometimes given as an afterthought and comes in many forms. Ta. Cheers. Appreciated. Nice one. This list goes on. The song might suggest sorry is the hardest word to say – but I think thank you might be the easiest to say – but sometimes the hardest to convey.

This week – all we want to say is thank you.

This half term has been different. It has been challenging. For class teachers the demands and expectations placed upon you have been building and continuous. We all know that all these are for the right reasons. Reasons which ensure that our calling for making a difference through education can be carried out safely and consistently. A call which all of us value and accept wholeheartedly. Regardless of your view of risk assessments, national strategy, local implementation or school specific adoption – we have all stepped up to the plate without question. This is appreciated. This deserves our thanks.

Handwashing, playground zones, remote learning, blended learning, zoom meetings/briefings/training/governance/induction/parents' evenings have all been undertaken in good spirit and an overwhelming desire to make the best of the times we are in. Thank you.

Public consciousness, expressed through media and political expression, has not acknowledged the role of those in the teaching profession and schools enough in my view. However, I do not speak to a parent, or child who is not much more thankful and grateful for our efforts. Yes, I understand we have individual cases of concern but our trust community perception is one of thanks and support for our endeavours.

So, when half term comes. And it will come. Enjoy it. Rest safe in the knowledge that we are thankful. Thankful of you and all you do.



Actions for Heads:

Thank you.

- Please keep sharing your attendance returns to the DfE with Gaby this week to allow a trust oversight
- Deadline for the completion of the Annual Report and to return to Ali Larcombe Fish is this Wednesday 21st October. You can access the [template here](#).
- Notes and actions from the heads meeting can be [accessed here](#)

Actions for Governors and Trustees:

Thank you.

Linda Wilding was elected as chair of GEP's Resources Committee. The committee agreed updates to the trust's finance policy, whistleblowing policy, and in principal changes to the pay policy (pending consideration of further feedback from stakeholders).

Members and trustees bade farewell to Baroness Sharp, who gave notice of her resignation as a Member of GEP on 9th October. Margaret who has always been actively involved in education issues is now taking a well-earned retirement but will continue to follow our progress with interest. Fergal Roche, chair of the trust's board, thanked Margaret for her service on behalf of the trust.

You can view the many courses available through the [joint training programme](#). The next course is entitled [premises and buildings: school estate management](#) and is taking place on Wednesday 11th November 2020 at 6.30pm.

School Improvement Update:

Thank you.

A message from Graham Tuck, our Director of Secondary Education.

Over the last few weeks, I have met with the trust's four secondary heads and their school's leaders of teaching. Crucially, we have begun conversations about how pedagogy can be further developed, not only within individual schools but also by focusing on trust-wide themes. For example, all our leaders of teaching have identified that how we use assessment supported by effective teacher feedback is, for their schools, a key development strand. This theme resonates with the writings of academics such as Daisy Christodoulou and John Hattie, the current Ofsted inspection framework and the findings of organisations such as the Education Endowment Fund and Sutton Trust. The latter, in particular, emphasise the impact of high-quality feedback on disadvantaged outcomes. Moving this theme forward with our schools' leaders of teaching will form a key part of my work within the trust over the coming months.

As a headteacher working in Surrey, I have vivid memories of two sixth form groups I had the privilege of teaching. The one group was a dream assignment – teaching Shakespeare's Henry V to an enthusiastic class of Year 13 A level students. English is my degree subject - and my passion – and so for me these lessons were the highlight of the week. In contrast, the second group – one that I had picked up following the sudden departure of a Psychology teacher after only three weeks in the job – was a potential nightmare. You see, I have no qualification in the subject (although I loved the TV series "Cracker") and, to make matters worse, this Year 13 group contained two students ambitious to study Psychology at Oxford. But here's the thing. The Psychology students did well. All of them. Some of them, including the two Oxford candidates, did exceptionally well. But for the English students it was less rosy. That's not to say it was a disaster – most hit their target grade but not all and some ... "disappointing" is probably the word that describes it.

So why did this happen? Looking back now, I realise I taught A level English in a way that I had always taught it. Ersatz university tutorial meets "Dead Poets' Society". In my head, my subject knowledge and ability to entertain and inspire would ensure that all my students flourished and achieved. But they didn't – well, not all of them. I should have seen the warning signs. In one essay I had asked students to reflect on Henry V's kingly qualities prior to the Battle of Agincourt. In response, one student wrote that it was clear Henry was a great king because "even when he was stressed, he spoke in poetry."

In Psychology, I had had to do something different. Think much more intentionally about the concepts I wanted students to master and the building blocks that they (and I!) needed to construct to get there. Crucially, I had to decide how I would use assessment and feedback to help individual students secure the next stage of their learning.

You will see from the above why the quote I used in the previous bulletin is important to me: "It really comes down to not who teachers are, not what they do but how they think. And if they think that primarily their job is to evaluate their impact, then all the good things follow." However, perhaps even more apposite on this occasion is something from Dylan Wiliam as he argues for a culture where all teachers improve so that all students succeed: "Every teacher needs to improve, not because they are not good enough but because they can be even better."

School Operations:

Thank you.

The focus at the Governor training taking place on November 11th is compliance and good estate management. During this session, participants will learn about how the governing body's responsibility fits in with the overall estates, planning, strategy, and compliance, within a building and facilities context.

Good Estate Management for Schools (GEMS) – update

The DfE has published an updated version of [Good Estate Management for Schools](#).

DfE has advised that the last version was well received and that there hasn't been a large amount of unnecessary changes. While some of the changes are due to new guidance or legislation, most are in response to feedback from users in schools and responsible bodies. The latest update includes:

- An easy to read list of the benefits of good estate management.
- The GEMS Self-Assessment Tool, which is now interactive. It can be completed online and will automatically generate an action plan.
- Another interactive tool to help track compliance with health and safety and building regulations and inspections.
- An updated version of the popular "Top 10 questions for governing boards."
- Another new tool to help prioritise maintenance projects and tasks.
- A comprehensive checklist to reduce energy and water usage.

For those totally new to GEMS, DfE has produced a [short animated video about the GEMS resources](#).

Navigation has been improved and links and signposts to further information reviewed, so they are up to date at the time of publication. The section on Health and Safety has been refreshed. It includes more information on responsibilities, and updated guidance and links from the Health and Safety Executive.

Updated Asbestos guidance

DfE has also updated the guidance on [Managing asbestos in your school](#). Changes include:

- Updates on the day-to-day management of asbestos, and what to do if things do go wrong
- The legislative framework
- New case studies to help manage asbestos effectively/improve practice

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Jack's visits and meetings this week:

Board meeting	19.10.20	13:00 – 15:30
Fergal Roche & Andrew Isherwood	19.10.20	15:30 – 16:30
SCITT meeting	20.10.20	09:00 – 10:00
GEP central team meeting	20.10.20	10:00 – 11:30
Boxgrove HTPM	20.10.20	12:30 – 14:00
George Abbot HTPM	20.10.20	15:30 – 17:00
Fullbrook 6 meeting	22.10.20	10:00 – 11:00
GEP COO PM	22.10.20	12:00 – 13:30
Fullbrook SLT	23.10.20	13:00 – 14:30
Fullbrook HTPM	23.10.20	14:30 – 16:00