



# Harrow Virtual School Newsletter

## Inside this issue:

HVS Enrichment: **2**  
[Jamie's Farm](#)  
[StageXchange](#)  
[Harrow School](#)

HVS Enrichment: **3**  
[Strength in Horses](#)  
[Exscitec](#)  
[DebateMate](#)

HVS Enrichment: **4**  
[MyBNK](#)  
[Future Focus](#)  
[Cake Decorating](#)

HVS Enrichment: **5**  
[BALANCE](#)  
[Timpson Review](#)

[Attachment Award](#)  
[KCA Training](#) **6**  
[Feedback](#)

Training Updates: **7**  
[DT Mental Health](#)  
[AC Online](#)  
[DT/DSL Seminars](#)

[Meet The Team](#) **8**  
[PP+ & PLAC](#)

[Acronyms](#)

Harrow Virtual School

Spring 2020

## Welcome from the Virtual School Headteacher

Dear Colleague,

Welcome to our Spring Term newsletter.

I would like to say a big thank you for all your hard work with our students over the past years.

It has been a busy start to the year with increasing numbers of children becoming looked after during the Summer holidays and Christmas holidays. Thank you to all our partners in education in supporting our children with a smooth transition into their new year groups and in a number of cases, new schools. As you are aware transition times can be very unsettling for our looked after children and it is at these vulnerable points in the year that they need our support the most.

I would like to extend special congratulations to our Year 6 and Year 11 students who achieved fantastic results last Summer. Five Care Leavers were enrolled at University last term which brings our uptake to 12%. Harrow remains well-above the national average for care leavers attending university, which currently stands at 6%.

I would like to say a huge thank for completing the Personal Education Plans (PEPs) within timescales. Our PEP returns are now at 100%- well done everyone!!

It was good to see so many of you at our Designated Teachers Network Meeting in October and I look forward to seeing you all again at 8.45, Tuesday 3rd March, The Lyonian Pavillion HA1 3PN.

I hope you enjoy this edition of our newsletter and if you have any news to share please let me know at [mellina.williamson-taylor@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:mellina.williamson-taylor@harrow.gov.uk).

Thank you again for all your hard work and I look forward to working with you to help our students achieve their very best in their education.  
Warm regards

Mellina Williamson-Taylor  
Headteacher Harrow Virtual School  
[Mellina.Williamson-Taylor@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:Mellina.Williamson-Taylor@harrow.gov.uk)



## Jamie's Farm February 2019

Five Harrow CLA, along with students from Barnet Virtual School, attended a residential trip to Jamie's Farm in Monmouth, Wales during February half-term, from Monday 18th to Friday 22nd February 2019.

We wanted our young people to develop their resilience, confidence, team working and independent life skills as well as learn about the environment, caring for animals and growing crops.

Activities included farming, cooking, and gardening, log

chopping, working with horses, playing games and exploring the country side. The group prepared and ate healthy nutritious food which was all homemade and where possible home-grown. The day started with a cooked breakfast, a hearty lunch, a tea time snack and a hot dinner.

The follow-up celebration event took place on Thursday 25th July and was attended by all five Harrow CLA. Our students met up with Jamie's Farm staff at the Waterloo farm. This was a testimony to their positive engagement with

## Enrichment

the trip and their acknowledgement of the beneficial residential activities.

Reports shared from staff at Jamie's Farm following the residential trip outlined the qualities of each young person in addition to observations and recommendations for the schools, carers and other significant people and services to support the students. These reports were detailed and helpful in identifying further interventions such as equine-assisted therapy that was later offered to some of the young people.



**"100% participants found it easy to talk with people."**



## StageXchange by Mousetrap

A series of drama workshops for students in Years 6 and 7 took place in the October and February half terms. The sessions were held at the [Learning Zone in Wembley Stadium](#). The week culminated in a performance which was attended by carers and Virtual School Staff.

As a reward for their attendance and participation on the programme, the young people were offered tickets to an England friendly match in No-

vember and March with their carers and families. Some of the young people were also invited to be mascots and flag bearers. Two from Harrow's took up this offer at both matches.

In addition to this young people also had three varied stadium tours, a goody bag, a badge and lanyard with their photo. [Mousetrap](#) also offered tickets for the young people to attend a West End shows and to attend a workshop

## Enrichment

afterwards. The young people, their carers and other children living in their households attend 'Wicked' and 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat'.

60% felt that they had learnt a great deal of new skills

60% participants found that they were able to cope when things have gone wrong

53% felt that they had increased in confidence as a result of the project.



Vaughan Library



Observatory

## Harrow School Tuition & Enrichment

A learning based activity followed by a fun activity after school at Harrow School for HVS's CLA, Harrow Young Carers and Children in Need. Sessions took place on Thursday afternoons running from 4-6pm starting since early November continuing until end of June 2019.

Sessions began in the Vaughan Library from 4pm-5pm where children made use of the reading materials and space or used the computers. Harrow

School arranged for teachers and Year 12 students to tutor 1:1 depending on subject requirements. Maths, English, Art even R.E., French and German were requested.

Some of the fun activities the young people engaged in were: Sport, Cooking, Drama Cake Decorating, Visiting their observatory, A Careers Talk, Judo, Pottery and Music.

The outcomes of this programme for our students

range widely from improved confidence, English language development and greater subject knowledge and application. Student's social skills were also enhanced as they engaged with their peers and new staff.

Harrow School have continued to host both the tuition and follow-up enrichment activities this academy year. These still run on Thursdays and are aimed at Year 10s and 11s.

## Equine Assisted Therapy

'Strength and Learning Through Horses' is a charity partnership operating from a specialist stables which exclusively serves vulnerable or disadvantaged young people and adults. All their work focuses on empowering people to make positive change in their lives through building relationships with horses.

### The Programme:

- Developing social skills and communication,
- Team building
- Taking on challenges i.e

getting the horses to run or jump

- Learning to self-regulate – calming strategies

### Highlights:

- Everything - even poo-picking
- Lunging
- Can't pick
- Being with friends
- Stronger than we used to be
- Brushing the ponies

## Enrichment

- Playing with the dog
- Cleaning the horses

### New skills:

- More confidence in myself
- Understand others better
- Stronger than I thought I was
- Now able to hold a horse
- Now able to be patient
- Better at communicating, especially with horses



"The horses were hay-some"



"I really liked the horses!"

## Excitec Discovery Summer School 2019

Excitec is a provider of STEM activities for students of all ages and has over 20 years of experience in organising and delivering Science, Maths, Engineering and Medical Summer Schools. Their programmes are bespoke and provide practical, problem-solving experiences for young people.

### Aims: To

- Experience science, technology, engineering and medicine

- Raise aspirations regarding pursuing Higher Education.
- Motivate students to pursue science subjects post GCSE
- Develop teambuilding, leadership and communication skills
- Experience a series of fun educational activities through problem solving

The target group was Key Stage 4 & 5 and girls were particularly encouraged to

## Enrichment

attend. HVS had equal number of girls and boys attend this summer camp at [Brunel University](#) and all 4 participated in all the activities over the 3 days. This included taking part individually as part of their group in a showcase on the last day. All 4 of our young people did us proud. Feedback from them was very encouraging. They all said the camp was fun, engaging and interesting. They all wanted to attend again next year!



excitec



## DebateMate

Debate Mate focusses on talking skills, on how to present and structure an argument and how to debate with other young people.

### Aims:

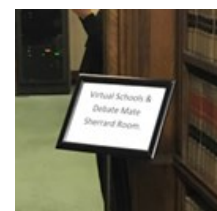
For young people to be able to present themselves well, to be able to talk in public and to present their ideas in a convincing way

Four young people from Year 10 to 12 attended on 19th January 2019. This took place in Middle Temple, the ancient law courts right in the centre of London. It was held in Sherrard Room in the Rutledge Suite. The young people were informed of the significance of the location as it is the room where barristers are taught to present their arguments in

## Enrichment

court.

As a result of this activity the pupils demonstrated increased confidence in speaking publicly and did so at the Excitec activity (see above). They expressed that they would like to take part in this again.



Sherrard Room, Middle Temple





Click on either image to go directly to the website



## MyBNK

This is a two-day accredited workshop which teaches Post-16 students and Care leavers how to manage their money. The course covered a range of financial areas to include:

- Living independently - managing a tenancy
- Buying essentials for everyday living and prioritising spending
- Managing a bank account, internet banking, understanding debit and credit cards
- Working to a budget, savings and avoiding debts

The workshop took place from 16th to 17th July 2019 and was attended by two Harrow Care leavers. This was a combined session with care leavers from Ealing Virtual School. Throughout the session our young people had opportunities to ask questions about things they were unsure of or concerned about.

The workshops were successful. The young people reported the following:

*'A very good informative course with a great trainer'*

## Enrichment

*'It would be beneficial for younger care experience children, as this would help them to think about their finances earlier'*

*'Learning about different interest rates and developing good budgeting habits'*

*'The most successful people spend time every month on planning use of their funds'*

The added bonus of the course is that the accreditation will strengthen care leaver's applications for housing.

## Future Focus



King's College London Chapel

- On Saturday 20th July 2019 a group of ten Harrow CLA students attended the Future Focus event at King's College London. The trip was organised in partnership with Harrow Children's Services and King's College London in order to promote the education of care experienced young people. The activities included sessions delivered by King's College student ambassadors.

The Programme:

- Interactive workshops about going to university and the application process
- Talks from student ambassadors about their experiences of university life and the benefits of further education
- A tour of King's College London Campus
- Discussions on transferable skills, 'Turning your likes

## Enrichment

into careers'

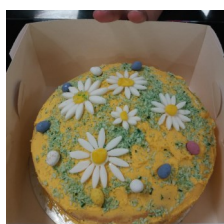
The evaluation questionnaires provided evidence that the young people enjoyed the experiences at King's College London and were more open to the idea of university in the future .

**Feedback:**

*"It was really fun!"*

*"The day was very good."*

*"I enjoyed learning new things."*



## Baking & Cake Decorating Day

A one day baking and cake decorating class took place on Thursday 11 April over the Easter holidays at Harrow Council's Harrow Cookery School in Civic 7. The primary and lower secondary students from Harrow and Ealing Virtual Schools baked a Victoria Sponge Cake, made the butter icing and buttercream and learnt intricate decorations and cake toppings.

**Learning Aims:**

- Kitchen health and safety
- Culinary and personal skills by following teacher modelling and working from a recipe
- Listening skills
- Working in pairs and sharing tasks-some with those they only met that day
- Using electrical equipment – food mixer and scales

**Feedback from Carers:**

*"I would certainly recommend*

## Enrichment

*this experience to other carers as the experience the children come away with is so satisfying and rewarding."*

*"The environment was also exceptional."*



Harrow Cookery School

## BALANCE - Social, Emotional & Sensory Day

This was a half-day pilot emotional regulation programme for primary and secondary school children looked after during the Easter break. The programme was developed and delivered by Sara Dawson, Clinical Psychologist, and Michelle Tyson, Education Support Officer with the aim of introducing fun and creative ways for young people to notice and regulate their emotions.

Activities focused on making use of children's senses of sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing; including mindful

eating, listening to different types of music and sounds and noticing how this impacts on their mood, experiencing different soothing and invigorating smells, making mindful glitter bottles. Young people left with their own personalised sensory preference list, hand-made glitter bottles, and bellies full of pizza from the provided lunch.

Feedback from the young people involved and their foster carers was very positive and so the team plan to host

further Balance sessions in the future.

*'The strategies had been helpful... X is using some of the strategies introduced in the programme and her behaviour and ability to express herself were continuing to improve' (Foster Carer)*

*'X's behaviour had improved, and their relationship with one another felt much stronger' (Foster Carer)*



**"...their relationship with one another felt much stronger."**

## Timpson Review of Exclusions (DfE May 2019)

The Timpson Review made 30 recommendations to make sure exclusions are used appropriately. The Government welcomed the review and agreed to all 30 recommendations in principle.

Schools will be made accountable for the pupils they exclude and off-rolling will be clamped down.

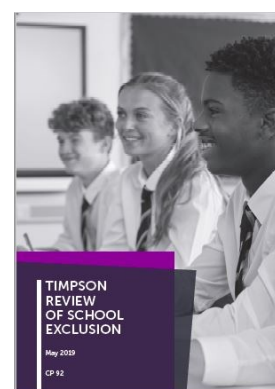
Analysis shows 85% of all mainstream schools not expelling a single child in 2016/17,

but 0.2% of schools having expelled more than ten pupils in the same year.

Vulnerable groups of children are more likely to be excluded, with 78% of permanent exclusions issued to children who had special educational needs (SEN), or classified as in need or eligible for free school meals. Certain ethnic groups, including Bangladeshi and Indian pupils, have lower rates of exclusion than White British pupils, with the analysis

also finding some ethnic groups, such as Black Caribbean and Mixed White and Black Caribbean pupils, experiencing higher rates, after controlling for other factors.

It also found evidence that good behaviour cultures are vital in maintaining orderly environments that support all children, but teachers need consistent guidance and tools to deal effectively with poor and disruptive behaviour.



**Click on above image to access the full report**

## Alex Timpson ARC Attachment Award

This award recognizes and celebrates best practice in attachment and trauma aware schools and settings.

HVS's Headteacher was invited to nominate a school or setting from our region for each category:

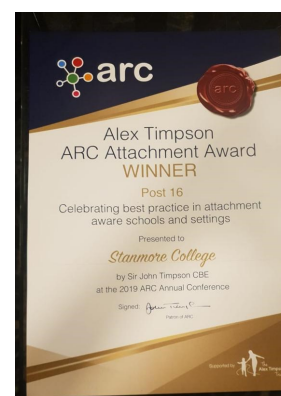
- Early Years
- Primary

- Secondary
- Special, PRU, AP
- Post 16

We are delighted to announce that Stanmore College was the winner in the Post 16 category.

Mellina Williamson-Taylor, the VHT, and Kathryn Robinson, Post 16 Advisory Teacher, accompanied Nicola Conibert,

Stanmore's Deputy Principal to the Awards Presentation in Birmingham.



**Click on above image to go to the website**



#### about the company

Kate Cairns Associates (KCA) was established in 2011 to bring together the work of Kate Cairns and a group of experienced practitioners and trainers across the UK. Since that time the organisation has grown, as we have been joined by new associates committed to the same values and driven by the same knowledge and research base.

In the 12 months from January 2019 we have delivered 420 training consultancy events, reaching over 17,000 participants. Managed from our head office in Gloucestershire, we have 10 satellite based throughout the UK. Our small, experienced team has a considerable track record in running effective training programmes, both face-to-face and online, and in responding to the changing needs and priorities of the workforce.

KCA is an IQ Centre for the delivery of vocational qualifications. Our course content is based on evidence-based theory and is written and produced to accreditation standards.

#### mission and values

Our mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by changing the practice of those who work with them. We do this by sharing transformative knowledge, encouraging their reflective practice, and empowering individuals and organisations to make a difference.

We understand that all human beings are both vulnerable and resilient. We work to promote resilience in the individuals and networks supporting the most vulnerable people in our society, so that they in turn can promote the resilience of those with whom they work.

We do all we can to run an ethical business that contributes positively to society and has minimal impact on the environment. We aim to build a fair and profitable business through:

**Click on image above to go to KCA's web-site.**

**“.. an ability to steer discussions...in a way that meant every participant received the training they needed.”**

## KCA Training Feedback

In January 2019, The Helix Education Centre was able to host training by KCA on Primary Trauma and Attachment Needs- staff from all of The Helix Education Centre's services attended including those from the Hospital School and home tuition service. The Virtual School also attended alongside some of Harrow's Primary Schools. This then prompted us to work closer with the Virtual School on 3 full days of training in the Autumn term 2019 on Trauma, Resilience and Attachment. The training taught us about how both children and adults with Primary and Secondary trauma present. It enabled us to discuss examples from our own practice and to understand the reasons for the effects of both traumas as well as strategies for regulation. The training was facilitated by Kate Cairns who provided an excellent quality of training with an understanding of the needs of the children that we work with and an ability to steer discussions through thought provoking questioning in a way that meant every participant received the training they needed. It was a great experience coming from a small setting to be able to work with our colleagues from the Virtual School as they also work with highly vulnerable children and to share good practice and discuss in a professional forum was of great benefit to us.

Moving forwards, we now aim to run this training for the rest of the service across the next two terms before working on more personalised plans for our students taking into account adverse childhood experiences and Primary trauma as well as providing forums and development for our own staff in terms of secondary trauma and the effects of this on the well-being of adults who work with students with primary trauma needs. This should enable us to provide a more effective handling of challenging behaviours often observed in our students. The ultimate aim, working in partnership with the Virtual School, is also to share this with the schools who then work with our re-integrated students or those who are struggle to effectively manage behaviour for individual children. By us all having greater understanding of the issues that affect our children, this will ensure we can better meet their needs.

Thank you to Mellina for offering this partnership and funding a large proportion of this work as without this, training of this high quality would have been difficult for us to access.

Melissa Barrowcliffe  
Deputy Head Teacher  
The Helix Education Centre

## KCA Training Feedback

Pinner High School took part in the KCA Full Day Training on 'Attachment, Trauma and Resilience in Practice' in February 2019. The training was followed up a month later with a more focused session delivered to key pastoral staff on Emotion Coaching.. The aim of the training was for our staff to have a trauma-informed approach when dealing with the most vulnerable and at times challenging students in the school. The most amazing part of the training was that from the very beginning it was routed in the con-

text of our school and used case-studies based on our own students. We worked with all of our staff, including non-teaching support staff and administrative staff to ensure that they could understand the complex needs of these children in all the interactions we had with them. The facilitator was very informed and worked with us do develop action plans for these students and help the staff as a whole understand how small changes in our behaviours could begin to address the challenges that some of the students face.

The training had a really positive impact on the school and in the ways that teachers/staff interacted with some of our students and we saw a reduction for some of our most challenging students in the number of behaviour points and fixed term exclusions/ isolations they received since the course was delivered.

Jennie Smyth  
Deputy Headteacher - DSL  
Pinner High School

**“...The training was routed in the context of our school.”**

## DT Mental Health Training

On the 2nd and 9th of May 2019, Sara Dawson, Clinical Psychologist from Harrow Virtual School, provided training to DTs about mental health difficulties in children looked after.

The first session provided Information about common mental health difficulties and how they can present at school, and the second session discussed strategies for supporting young people to reach their full potential.

In addition, a framework was introduced to support DTs to consider the needs behind the behaviour in young people, and to consider how best to encourage prosocial behaviour, improve self-esteem, and deter inappropriate or challenging behaviour.

The DTs in attendance brought a wealth of knowledge, experience and enthusiasm to the sessions that really helped bring the group discussions and ac-

tivities to life. The feedback received was very positive, with delegates describing the training as informative, interesting, and useful.

Delegates also provided great suggestions for topics for future sessions, which are planned for early 2020.



**“Engaging with us and tailoring discussion points to the group.”**

## AC Education’s Online Training

AC Education offer online courses and face to face training to all those working with vulnerable children in the UK.

Their courses are:

- Written by experts such as YoungMinds, UCL, Institute of Education and the University of Derby
- Easy to access with quizzes to ensure understand-

ing, videos and interactive activities to reflect on learning

- Accredited for the most part by the CPD Service
- in collaboration with experts such as Adoption UK and The Fostering Network

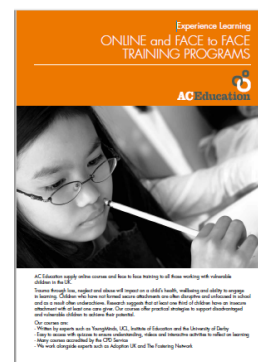
HVS have been offering these courses free to schools for a number of

years with take up and completion rates at an all time high.

Click on the picture to the left of this article to direct you to the courses available and then simply email:

[virtu-alschool@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:virtu-alschool@harrow.gov.uk)

There is still time to sign up for these.



**Click on above image for direct link to learning programs**

## Dates for Termly DT & DSL Seminars

The termly Safeguarding in Education Seminars for Designated Teachers and Designated Safeguarding Leads will continue to take place at:

The Lyonian Pavillion  
John Lyons School  
South Vale,  
HAI 3PN

On:  
**Tuesday 3rd March**  
**Tuesday 10th June**





Civic Centre  
Station Road  
Harrow

VS Office: 020 8736 6645  
virtualschool@harrow.gov.uk

**We will be on the  
Web very soon!**

**\*Acronyms used in  
this edition:**

**HVS:** Harrow Virtual  
School  
**VHT:** Virtual Headteacher  
**VS:** Virtual School  
**CLA:** Children Looked  
After  
**PLAC:** Previously Looked  
After Children  
**DT:** Designated Teacher  
**DSL:** Designated Safe-  
guarding Lead  
**CIN:** Children in Need  
**PRU:** Pupil Referral Unit  
**AP:** Alternative Provision

Achieving Excellence Together

Meet The Team

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**Pupil Premium Plus for Previously Looked After Children**

For previously looked after children (PLAC), Pupil Premium Plus funding is given directly to schools who have included them in the January Census.

Pages 21-23 in the statutory guidance on the roles and

responsibilities of the DT for CLA and PLAC outline how to manage and use this funding in detail.

HVS are also here to advise, guide and provide information to schools with children who have left care through adoption or SGOs.

 Department  
for Education

The designated  
teacher for looked-  
after and previously  
looked-after children  
Statutory guidance on their roles and  
responsibilities

February 2018

[Click on above image  
for DfE Document](#)

 Harrow COUNCIL  
LONDON