

CEO Newsletter

October 2023



Dear Parents and Carers,

Well, we are already at the end of the first term, and what a busy term it has been!

I am so proud to be leading such a hard working and dedicated team of professionals, all working towards the same goal, of providing the very best education and care for your children.

As we begin our first full academic year as our newly merged Trust, The Golden Thread Alliance, we are making great strides forward in a number of aspects of our operations across the whole organisation.

From the beginning of the year, all nine schools are now served by our in-house catering team, led by our Catering Manager Chris Carroll. As the year progresses, I know Chris wants to work with all parents, carers and children, to ensure the menu fits the needs and preferences of every community – whilst, of course, still maintaining full adherence to the national food standards. Please look out for announcements about our food forums coming up.

I am sure all parents and carers are aware – but if you are not, just to be really clear: EVERY child in Year R, Year 1 and Year 2 is entitled to a free school lunch every day. This could be a main meal, a vegetarian option, a jacket potato or pasta. All our offers include a fresh side salad, as well as fresh fruit, daily, freshly baked bread and yoghurt – as well as a daily pudding! I know many children are quite selective about what they eat, but school lunches really are a great way to ensure your child has had a nutritional lunch – and for those younger years, it's free too!

At the beginning of this term, children from 8 of our 9 schools (every school apart from Riverview Infant School) flew to Barcelona, for our first Trust overseas residential, since Covid. I joined the trip, mainly to hold the passports if I'm honest, but it gave me a unique opportunity to get to know some of our wonderful children, as well as the staff team that were there to look after their groups. I'd like to thank the staff for giving up their time to attend, and a special thanks to Michele Sowden-Mehta, the Trust's Senior School Improvement Lead, who took charge in Barcelona, and to our Deputy CEO, Nicole Caulfield, for the preparation and planning, to ensure everyone who took part in the trip, arrived safely.

The trip was great fun and a resounding success, and I am confident that every child that took part had a great time. From walking the streets of Barcelona (there was a lot of walking), to paddling in the warm sea, to watching a flamenco dance and eating tapas, we crammed so much into our time, that I am sure every child and adult returned to the UK, exhausted, but happy!

Immediately after half term, we will be launching our next overseas residential – for our current Year 4 and Year 5 children, which will be taking place in September 2024 (when those children are Y5 and Y6) to ROME. If your child would enjoy travelling abroad, to explore the sights and sounds of Rome, probably eating pizza too, then look out for the information that will be coming out shortly.

This term, I have also been privileged to speak at a number of events, highlighting the work we do



within The Golden Thread, and also learning from others too. On Saturday 7th October, I travelled to London, to deliver a keynote speech to a packed room of guests, all there for the launch of a new book, called "My Family, Your Family," written by Laura Henry Allain, MBE. Laura is the creator of a CBBC show called Jo Jo and Gran Gran, and recently visited our schools to learn about the work we do for different families. The communities that serve our schools are changing, and as a result, the children and families that attend our schools are changing too. This is a wonderful thing, as our children get to learn about all sorts of different families. Whether I'm talking about our families who have recently arrived from Ukraine, or families that have moved out of London, our families who have recently adopted a child, or families where nan and grandad have taken overall parenting of their grandchildren – all families are welcome in our schools, and will be celebrated.

Finally, it has been an absolute pleasure this term to be able to speak with a number of parents across our schools. Usually, if I'm honest, I usually get involve with speaking with families, when something has gone wrong, or a family has an issue they'd like to raise with me. I'm so pleased when I'm contacted as well, by parents who just want to tell me about something great that has happened in their child's school. Whatever the reason, I am here to advocate for parents and children, and I always look forward to being able to speak with parents directly.

During Term 2, there will be opportunities for all parents and carers to come together, in person, during our Parent Forum Meetings. For Dartford parents, these will be held at TEMPLE HILL PRIMARY ACADEMY at 2:00pm and 6:30pm on WEDNESDAY

8th NOVEMBER and for Gravesham parents, these will be held at RIVERVIEW JUNIOR SCHOOL at 2:00pm and 6:30pm on TUESDAY 14th NOVEMBER. Any parent or carer is welcome to attend – just please book your slot via the booking code on the fliers that will be coming out to you soon. We need you to book a space, so we know how many chairs to put out, and how much cake to bake – coffee and cake will be provided! At the meetings, you will have the chance to hear from me about what we have been up to so far this year, plans for the future, the challenges we face – and then there will also be the chance for you to ask any questions you may have. I would love to do one of these meetings in each school, but practically I'm afraid that just isn't possible, so I hope you are able to come along to the two venues chosen this time. When we hold our next forum meetings in the new year, I'll make sure alternative schools are chosen to host, just to make things fair. It would be great to see you all there!

I hope you all have a wonderful half term break, and I look forward to welcoming you back to school for Term 2, beginning on Monday 6th November.

Garry Ratcliffe
CEO, The Golden Thread Alliance

Term
One

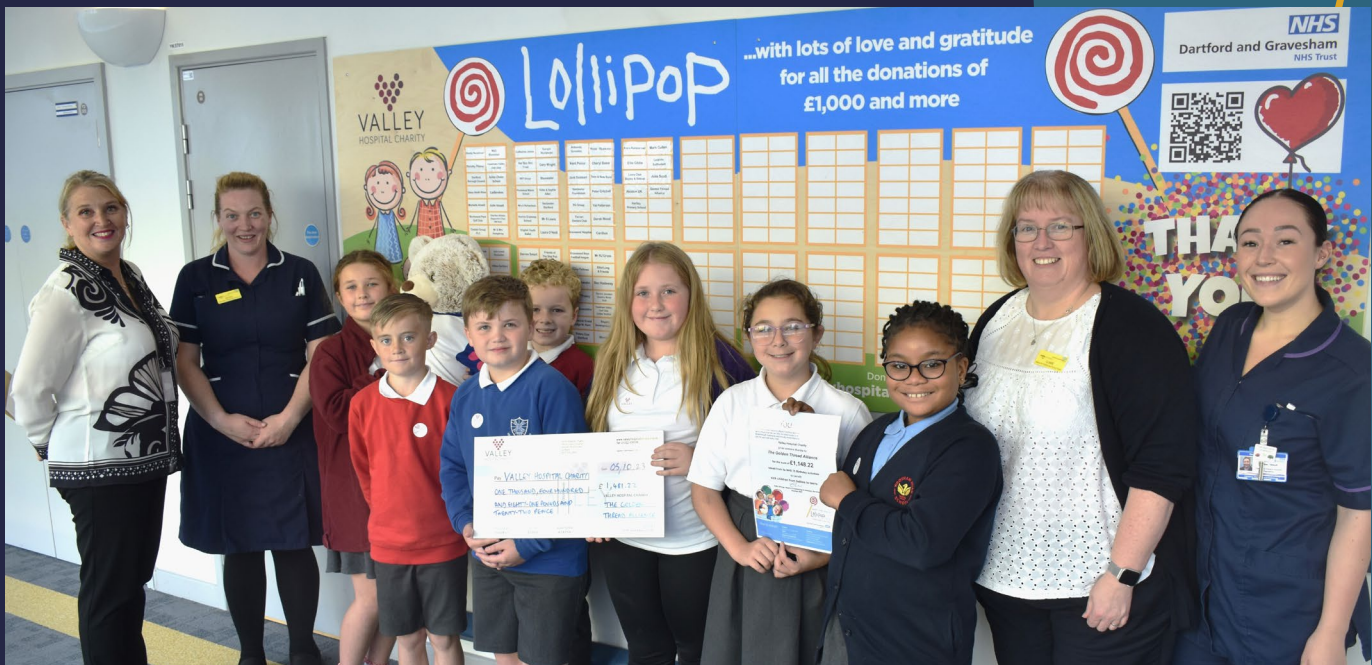
NHS Visit

In July children from across The Golden Thread Alliance took part in a variety of fundraising activities in support of the NHS 75th birthday celebrations.

Activities ranged from penalty shoot outs to fancy dress and the incredible sum of £1148 was raised.

On the 5th October the NHS charity fundraising team presented representatives from the schools across the Trust with a certificate and letter of thanks for their efforts.

Even more impressive The Golden Thread Alliance has been added onto the Lollipop wall outside the children's ward at Darent Valley hospital, which celebrates anyone who has raised more than £1000.



Great News and Congratulations!

I want to send a very special WELL DONE to Edie from West Hill Primary Academy, who recently took part in the Great Ormond Street "Race for the kids" around Hyde Park to raise funds for a new cancer unit, specifically caring for children and young people. Running 5K whilst also raising much needed funds for GOSH is an amazing achievement! A big GOLDEN WELL DONE to Edie for her achievement.

If you know of a Golden Thread child that has achieved something spectacular, please let me know by emailing garry.ratcliffe@golden-thread.org and we'll celebrate their own achievements in the next newsletter.






The Golden Thread Alliance

The Golden Thread Alliance
 West Hill Primary Academy
 Dartford Road
 Dartford
 Kent
 DA1 3DZ

hello@golden-thread.org
 01322 296140



Respect



Equality



Courage



Integrity



Ambition



Kindness



Responsibility