

THE
**BRIGHT
SPARKS**
BOOK

Celebrating 10 Years of the
Portsmouth Education Partnership

INTRODUCTION

This publication marks ten years of the Portsmouth Education Partnership and provides an opportunity to recognise something that those working in education across our city see every day: the deep commitment of the city's educators to improving the lives and opportunities of children and young people.

The Bright Sparks programme was created to celebrate that work. The projects gathered here reflect the creativity, care and professional dedication that exist across our education community. Drawn from early years settings, schools, academies and colleges, they showcase the many different ways educators across Portsmouth are strengthening learning, supporting wellbeing, and building brighter futures for the young people they serve.

What stands out most to me is the range of ideas and approaches represented in this collection. Some initiatives are large-scale programmes; others began as small ideas developed by committed staff teams who simply wanted to make something better for their pupils. Nevertheless, all share a common purpose: helping children and young people flourish.

The Portsmouth Education Partnership has always been built on collaboration. Real progress in education rarely comes from working in isolation; it grows when practitioners share ideas, learn from one another and adapt successful practice to their own contexts. The sixty submissions received across ten categories demonstrate that this spirit of openness and generosity is alive and well across the city.

I would invite you to view this book as therefore both a celebration and an invitation. Each project includes contact details so that colleagues can connect, learn more and explore how similar approaches might work in their own settings. In that way, the impact of these ideas can continue to grow.

As Chair of the Teach Portsmouth Board, I would like to thank everyone who contributed their work to this collection. Your willingness to share your learning strengthens education across the city.

I hope this publication serves both as a reflection on what has been achieved over the past decade and as inspiration for what we will continue to achieve together.

James Doherty
Chair, Teach Portsmouth Board



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ACHIEVEMENT AND PROGRESS

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**City of
Portsmouth
College**

Initiatives that have helped pupils make strong academic progress or achieve personal goals, especially in challenging circumstances.

Creating Pathways to Employment and Belonging for Local Learners

City of Portsmouth College

City of Portsmouth College's collaborative approach runs through everything it does – and none more so than with the partnership it shares with Work Better Innovations (WBI), and the new curriculum born from a need to help local asylum seekers.

In 2022, WBI identified there was a lack of opportunities for asylum seekers to upskill and find employment. Working with Anita David, director of community engagement, the college created a tailored employability and IT skills course. This is delivered throughout the community, and includes:

- tailoring CVs to the UK job market
- interview techniques
- job preparation
- social inclusion and UK culture

Over the last four years, this course has enabled the college to support students to find their brilliance with integration into the UK job market and open its doors to a culturally rich and enthusiastic new audience.



Bright spark

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Hooray Handwriting

Court Lane Infant Academy

Pupils at Court Lane Infant Academy have recently started 'Hooray Handwriting'. The purpose of this initiative is to improve letter formation and fluency in writing. Children in year one and two are beginning each day with a handwriting session. They take part in a warm up, learn how to form letters and then have the opportunity to practise. All letters have a formation phrase linked to their phonics scheme. These phrases are helping the children remember how to form their letters. Pupils have been working hard on ensuring that their letters are the correct shape and size.

Teachers have already seen an improvement and pupils report that they are enjoying the sessions. Year two children are particularly proud of learning how to join some of their letters. Progress made in 'Hooray Handwriting' sessions is being celebrated during an assembly each week. Pupils have been trying very hard to earn a certificate for excellent progress.



Bright spark

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TKAT ACE (A Champion For Every Child)

Miltoncross Academy

The TKAT ACE programme plays a vital role in driving student progress and attainment at Miltoncross Academy by providing targeted, structured support for pupils that are eligible for Pupil Premium funding. It nurtures both academic success and personal development through carefully planned interventions, mentoring and high-quality learning strategies.

Their wonderful team of five ACE tutors ensure that every student is known, supported and challenged to achieve their potential. The programme focuses on building strong learning habits, resilience and confidence, enabling students to take ownership of their progress and approach their studies with ambition and purpose.

By addressing individual needs and removing barriers to learning, ACE has helped a multitude of students make sustained academic gains while also developing key life skills such as independence, organisation and self-belief. As a result, the school's disadvantaged gaps are closing rapidly.



Bright spark

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Excellence in Careers Provision

Springfield School

Following the strategic appointment of a specialist lead for aspiration and enterprise, careers education has rapidly become a standout strength of the school, recognised for its ambitious vision and 'area of excellence' potential.

The school's programme integrates extensive employer encounters and subject-specific links, such as financial literacy in mathematics and interview techniques in English, to connect learning with the real world.

Students across all year groups speak with confidence and clarity about their post-16 and post-18 options, supported by a wide range of university visits and career-focused activities. Aspirations are high, with disadvantaged year nine students in the "Brilliant Club" increasing their intention to attend university from 50% to 100% last year. Students also recognise how their current learning strengthens key employability skills, particularly in areas such as public speaking and independence.

Destination outcomes are exceptional and remain above comparator groups, with almost all students progressing into education, employment, or training.



Bright spark

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ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT

Creative approaches that have improved pupil attendance, reduced absence, and boosted engagement in school life.

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CITY COUNCIL

**COMMUNITY
LEARNING
SERVICE**

Attendance Adventures

Cottage Grove Primary School and Nursery

In January 2025, the school launched Attendance Adventures, initially supported by Local Authority Priority Education Investment Areas funding, targeting key vulnerable children for whom attendance represented a significant barrier to learning.

This project deployed a staff member to work intensively with families, focusing on removing attendance barriers through proactive home visits, the creation of bespoke home reward charts and behaviour plans, and serving as a stable, single point of contact for parents.

Despite the cessation of funding, the school has continued the programme due to evidence of its impact, demonstrated by one pupil's attendance increasing from 54% to 100%. The project has strengthened the school's overall attendance ethos, ensuring consistent contact with parents after the third day of absence, regardless of the reason provided.

This focused, relationship-driven strategy has been externally recognised, with the school receiving commendation from the FFT and the Department for Education for its attendance performance compared to similar schools nationally.



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Attendance Bears

Meon Way Federation

The Attendance Bears initiative is a whole federation project designed to promote excellent attendance and punctuality through positive recognition. Each week, any pupil who achieves 100% attendance or 100% punctuality has the chance to take home one of the Attendance Bears, ensuring every child has an equal opportunity to be celebrated. Pupils who take a bear home record their weekend adventures in the bear's diary and often share photos with their class, which strengthens home-school relationships and creates a real sense of excitement and pride.

The initiative has become a much-loved part of school life, motivating pupils to attend regularly and arrive on time, while also helping to build a culture where good attendance is valued by the whole community.

Its success has been highlighted in three Ofsted inspections, including two under the new framework, where inspectors noted that pupils are proud to be rewarded by taking home the Attendance Bears.



Bright spark

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Fantasy League

Penbridge Infant and Nursery School and Penbridge Junior School

The senior leadership team (SLT) and pastoral team decided to begin a 'Fantasy Attendance League'. Each member of SLT and pastoral had named children who were persistent absentees. They checked in with them each day and generally encouraged them, being their attendance champion. The staff worked out their own way of engaging the children which included sticker charts and reward time.

The scheme has improved the children's feeling of belonging and impacted attendance for vulnerable children. It has also raised the profile of attendance across their school. Teachers were keen to be involved and now all teachers have named children. This has meant that they are able to support more and make a bigger difference. They eventually hope to involve all staff and continue to improve attendance.



Bright spark

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Parental Attendance Workshops

St Paul's Catholic Primary School

St Paul's Catholic Primary School successfully implemented a targeted intervention to improve attendance rates among families whose children's attendance fell below the critical 92% benchmark.

15 families were invited to participate in a six-week parental engagement programme titled 'Why Attendance Is Important?' The comprehensive sessions covered important topics, including the significance and impact of low attendance, establishing effective morning and night time routines, promoting positive behaviour support at home, healthy eating, and practicing mindful breathing techniques ('happy mind breathing').

To accommodate parent schedules, both morning and afternoon sessions were offered. Children were invited to join their parents at the close of each session for a linked activity, reinforcing the learning together.

The project saw significant results with 66.7% of participating families (10 out of 15) having substantially and sustainably improved their children's attendance, a positive trend that has continued into the current academic year.



Bright spark

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COMMUNITY AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

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Projects that build strong relationships with families and the wider community to support learning and development beyond the classroom.

Families First

Ark Dickens Primary Academy

At Ark Dickens Primary Academy, they see themselves as a community that extends far beyond their school gates and the hours of the school day. Their pastoral team know their families well and work with them to offer meaningful support whenever it is needed.

During the Christmas period, they provided food boxes and hampers to families who required a little extra help. They also reached out to charities such as Wave FM, Salvation Army and Rapid Relief, enabling them to distribute all that was needed to families who may not have had the financial capacity to provide them.

These acts of care reflect their belief that every child deserves to feel valued, supported, and included. Their commitment goes beyond academic learning; they want their children to thrive emotionally, socially, and within the wider community. By standing alongside their families, they aim to build a nurturing environment where everyone feels supported.



Bright spark

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Community Christmas Meal

Beacon View Primary Academy

Led by the community hub lead, who works across the United Learning Paulsgrove schools, the event continues to unite education and the wider community in a joyful and inclusive gathering.

A remarkable 300 Christmas meals were served completely free of charge. Children enjoyed visits to Father Christmas and the Forest School, while every guest received a free raffle ticket with prizes including festive hampers and a £100 Tesco voucher. Adults could access free blood pressure checks from the NHS, and Paulsgrove ARC joined them to gather community views and aspirations.

The event has strengthened relationships between businesses, schools and residents. Everyone is warmly welcomed, with school minibuses supporting residents from a nearby care home to attend and enjoy the festivities together.



Bright spark

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Rise and Read Wednesday

Copnor Primary School

Every Wednesday morning, classrooms come alive with the gentle buzz of Rise and Read, a special moment in the week where children, families, and teachers come together to celebrate the joy of stories. It has quickly become a highlight for their pupils, offering a calm, purposeful start to the day while strengthening confidence and fluency in reading. The shared smiles, cosy reading corners, and growing enthusiasm show just how powerful this routine has become for their young readers.

Alongside this, their new outdoor Reading Shed (The Beech Hut) has transformed reading across Copnor Primary School. By creating inviting, book-filled spaces outdoors, they've sparked curiosity, independence, and a genuine love of reading in all year groups. Children now see reading not just as a lesson, but as an adventure waiting for them at any moment.

Together, these initiatives are helping build a lifelong passion for reading throughout their school community.



Bright spark

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Classroom in the Heart of Industry (CHI)

Mary Rose Academy

Mary Rose Academy is proud and excited by the impact of its work-related learning curriculum, which is challenging national trends. Through the Classroom in the Heart of Industry (CHI), 38% of students access meaningful placements with industry partners including The New Place Hotel, the Mary Rose Museum and Portsmouth International Port. These experiences immerse students in real workplaces, developing resilience, teamwork, communication, problem-solving and personal responsibility.

Outcomes are powerful: 92% of students say they enjoy going to work and 100% report learning new skills, mirrored by 100% of parents recognising clear skills development and hope for their child's future. Given the complexity of need, these results are transformative for students and families. CHI is breaking down stigma, strengthening employer confidence in the SEND workforce and proving that high aspirations, supported pathways and strong partnerships can change futures.



Bright spark

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Parent Hub

Meon Way Federation

The Parent Hub initiative provides a welcoming, accessible space for families to drop in, seek support, and raise concerns informally, strengthening relationships between home and school. The Hub offers parents a friendly point of contact each morning, enabling quick conversations, early intervention, and timely signposting to additional support where needed.

Since its introduction, the Hub has significantly increased parental engagement, with families feeling more confident approaching the school and more connected to the wider community. Importantly, the ability to discuss worries promptly and face-to-face has led to a noticeable reduction in formal parental complaints, as concerns are resolved early before they escalate. The initiative has become a valued part of school life, fostering trust, improving communication, and ensuring that parents feel listened to, supported, and actively involved in their child's education.



Bright spark

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Time Together: Reimagining Parental Engagement

Southsea Infant School

Launched in September 2025, Time Together is a fresh approach to parental engagement at Southsea Infant School. Their focus on sharing how they do things onboard their Southsea ship ensures everyone is Sailing into Success. Each half term, they invite parents into the classroom to participate in a whole-school learning focus. So far, families have explored phonics, drawing club, curious quests, reading, and writing together. To better support their community, they refined timings to offer refreshments from 8.45am before sessions begin at 9am.

The impact has been significant: approximately two-thirds of their parents have attended at least one session this school year. With overwhelmingly positive feedback from parents, teachers, and children alike, Time Together has successfully strengthened their school community through shared discovery and active participation.



Bright spark

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Community Friday and Wednesday's Big Discussion

Stamshaw Infant School

Nurturing strong partnerships with families is a central strength of Stamshaw Infant School and has a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing, engagement, and learning. Families are valued as trusted partners and are supported through regular, welcoming opportunities to work alongside school, helping to strengthen learning both in school and at home.

Their 'Community Friday' initiative is at the heart of this approach, providing a relaxed and collaborative space for families to engage with their children's learning, build trust, and deepen relationships with both staff and the school community. Each Friday they invite a range of external professionals including the mental health support team, police, attendance services, and the school nurse, offering advice, reassurance, and practical support to their families.

Weekly initiatives such as 'Wednesday's Big Discussion' offer parents insight into classroom learning and encourage meaningful conversations at home, fostering a strong sense of belonging and inclusion across the whole school community.

WEDNESDAY'S BIG DISCUSSION! ??



Bright spark

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CURRICULUM AND SUBJECT ENHANCEMENT

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Schemes that bring subjects to life, deepen learning, and offer exciting opportunities beyond the standard curriculum.

Science Enrichment

Admiral Lord Nelson School

The Science Enrichment programme at Admiral Lord Nelson School has expanded opportunities for students to experience science in meaningful, hands-on ways. Developed over the past three years, the scheme offers a range of activities designed to spark curiosity and strengthen engagement beyond the classroom.

By establishing a thriving science club, the school has doubled regular participation in extracurricular science activities and created a welcoming space where students' curiosity and confidence have grown. Additionally, 'bringing science to life' through experiences is embedded into large scale curriculum days that have given every year group the chance to engage with science in hands on, memorable ways, resulting in noticeably higher enthusiasm and improved attitudes toward the subject.

Most recently, year eight experienced an animal enrichment day that provided many students with their first close encounter with live animals, broadening their horizons and deepening their understanding of the natural world. Through these initiatives, it has significantly enriched the curriculum and ensured that more students than ever feel inspired and excited by science.



Bright spark

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Integrated Curriculum

Bramble Infant School and Nursery

At Bramble Infant School and Nursery, an Integrated Curriculum has been developed to provide deeper, more meaningful learning for children while strengthening staff expertise. Their approach includes play-based learning through Project Discovery Time in key stage one, where children use prior knowledge by thinking like scientists, artists or historians, depending on the focus. Alongside subject learning, personal and social development is nurtured, communication is enhanced, wellbeing is supported, and core values are consistently reinforced.

Long-term planning enabled the school to introduce this approach gradually over several years. Clear frameworks help staff identify essential knowledge and assess progress effectively. As a result, strong outcomes are seen across foundation subjects, alongside improvements in behaviour, communication, wellbeing and attitudes to learning. Children, staff and parents recognise the wide-ranging benefits, and Ofsted highlighted the curriculum's meticulous design and its positive impact.



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Forest School

Court Lane Junior Academy

At Court Lane Junior Academy, year five pupils have been taking part in successful Forest School lessons. In their regular outdoor sessions, pupils develop their knowledge of the science curriculum by exploring living things and their habitats, observing plants, animals and microorganisms. The lessons take place in the Forest School teaching area. This area has recently been made more comfortable in the winter months by the addition of a large canopy which was purchased with money from a recent Tesco school grant.

The year five pupils enjoy their half-termly session and, in this time, they take part in activities such as den building and bug hunting. The benefits of this additional time outside have proved to be successful in supporting the emotional needs of pupils at Court Lane. The lessons are full of creativity and loved by all.



Bright spark

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Reading Ambassadors

Craneswater Junior School

Following the implementation of Destination Reader, Craneswater Junior School introduced a Reading Ambassadors project, informed by training from Hackney local authority, to further develop reading for pleasure through a child-led approach. Reading Ambassadors were selected through a formal application process and received training from Hackney Trust, alongside the lead teacher.

Reading Ambassadors manage the library, recommend texts, read with pupils across the school, and promote reading for pleasure through the school newsletter. Pupil voice surveys highlighted that recommendations from other children are the strongest influence on reading choices; as a result, ambassadors now share peer recommendations through bookmarks displayed throughout the library.

The surveys also showed that 100% of pupils enjoy discussing what they have read and that all pupils feel they are 'ok' or better at reading. Work has also begun with Portsmouth School Library Service to further develop the project, including future plans for reading zones across the school.



Bright spark

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Fernhurst University

Fernhurst Junior School

Designed by their deputy head teacher, Fernhurst University works on the idea that their staff have a wealth of interests and talents that are not showcased in the national curriculum. Each member of staff designs a six-week course in anything from knitting to hula hooping.

Staff submit their ideas and they are put into a presentation. They try to ensure that each child gets one of their top choices, then on a Friday afternoon the whole school attends their chosen course. This encourages cross-year-group friendships. Children benefit enormously from working with other teachers and peers.

Courses have included sewing, Zumba, Dungeons and Dragons, Top Trumps, singing, gardening, circus skills, comic design, drawing, pom-pom making, quilling, Harry Potter, wand making, dodgeball, and Lego, to name but a few. It has become a staple part of Fernhurst's extra curriculum.



Bright spark

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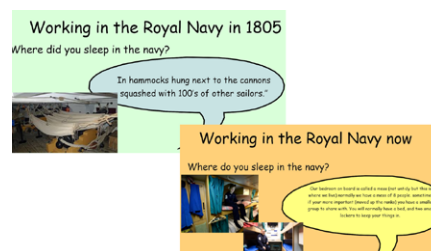
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Redesigning the Key Stage One History Curriculum

Meon Way Federation

Meon Way Federation has carefully redesigned their key stage one history curriculum, to create a bespoke learning journey rooted in the rich heritage of Portsmouth. By focusing on the city's unique past, children develop a strong sense of place and begin to understand how local history shapes the world around them. Southsea Castle features as a key study, giving pupils the chance to explore one of Portsmouth's most iconic landmarks and learn about its role in defence. Through the curriculum, children discover how the castle has changed over time and why it remains significant today.

The curriculum also introduces the vital role of the Royal Navy, helping pupils understand Portsmouth's long-standing maritime importance. Children learn about sailors, ships, and the city's naval traditions, building early historical enquiry skills through meaningful, relatable contexts. By grounding learning in their own community, the curriculum inspires curiosity and a deeper connection to the place they call home.



Bright spark

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Destination Reader

Milton Park Primary School

Destination Reader has transformed Milton Park Primary School's key stage two reading provision. Through their expert reading lead, the school has embedded an approach with passion and precision. Reading lessons are now vibrant and purposeful, with pupils diving deep into stories, uncovering meaning, and developing a genuine love of books. Daily partner talk, clear learning behaviours, and rich texts have turned hesitant readers into confident explorers.

Since adopting Destination Reader, engagement has risen and attainment has climbed, with children eager to debate plot twists, recommend titles, and challenge themselves as readers. Teachers, too, have flourished, empowered by a shared language and framework that elevates practice. Destination Reader has made reading not just a task, but a joyful, collaborative adventure for their learners.



Bright spark

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Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL)

Milton Park Primary School

OPAL has transformed play times at Milton Park Primary School, creating a richer, happier, and more imaginative experience for every child. By embracing open-ended play with donated materials, they've helped pupils rediscover the joy of creativity, building dens, inventing games, and collaborating in ways that feel refreshingly reminiscent of old-school childhood.

Since introducing OPAL, they've seen a significant reduction in behaviour incidents and a noticeable improvement in children's wellbeing and social skills. Play is now purposeful, inclusive, and screen-free, giving pupils the freedom to explore, problem-solve, and take ownership of their play environment.

OPAL has reshaped their school culture, reminding us that play is powerful, and that simple resources can spark extraordinary imagination. The impact on children's happiness and behaviour has been remarkable.



Bright spark

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Drawing Club

Penbridge Infant School and Nursery

Penbridge Infant School and Nursery started Drawing Club, designed by Greg Bottrill. It is an immersive approach to writing that fosters creativity development for their youngest children, by blending storytelling, art and mark-making. Its primary benefits include the ability for children to widen their vocabulary and boost their mathematical understanding. Children work together with their class teacher to think of creative ideas about what could happen to characters or a setting.

The children are always excited by Drawing Club being 'open' where they can select their own writing implements and different shaped paper to begin their writing journey. The children's enthusiasm towards writing has increased. This has been so successful in reception year, they have now taken it into year one where the teachers have regained their passion for writing.



Bright spark

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Innovative Teaching Methods Drive German GCSE Success Springfield School

Springfield School is celebrating a resurgence in language learning, proving that increased student enjoyment directly delivers better grades. Following a complete overhaul of teaching strategies, the German department reports that a surge in engagement has led to a notable improvement in GCSE results.

The department introduced three bold initiatives to achieve this.

First, vibrant classroom displays now provide the scaffolding needed to boost student confidence and competence in spontaneous speech. Second, classrooms were rearranged with perimeter seating to maximise floor space. This allows for interactive, kinesthetic flashcard games – a competitive approach that has skyrocketed engagement, particularly among boys.

Finally, the department has moved away from textbooks in favour of individual mini-whiteboards. This ensures no student can “opt out,” allowing teachers to instantly assess understanding. By making German active, visible, and fun, staff have successfully turned classroom energy into academic excellence.



Bright spark

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Bespoke Curriculum Linked to Catholic Social Teaching

St Paul's Catholic Primary School

For several years, St Paul's Catholic Primary School has successfully developed a comprehensive curriculum rooted in the Seven Principles of Catholic Social Teaching (CST), guided by their mission: 'Do everything with love.'

These principles, fundamental to their faith, provide a framework for all learners to live as compassionate and humble individuals. They simplify one CST principle each half term for accessibility; for example, 'Call to Family, Community, and Participation' is interpreted as 'We Are One.'

This principle is then deliberately explored across all subjects via their 'curriculum jigsaws,' with explicit links forged to faith in action and parent participation. They ensure these connections are meaningful and avoid tedious, forced alignment.

This approach has empowered children and families to articulate the profound, positive impact of CST on their lives. This understanding translates directly into action, evidenced by student-led initiatives such as organising food parcels, managing the year six pantry, and actively serving their community through church cleaning and school litter picks.



Bright spark

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Languages in Portsmouth

Wimborne Primary School

Wimborne Primary School has developed a structured approach to modern foreign languages. The school holds both the British Council International School Foundation and Intermediate Awards, reflecting a sustained commitment to international learning. To provide wider language experiences, the school runs extracurricular clubs delivered by fluent speakers of German, Spanish and French, giving pupils access to authentic pronunciation and cultural knowledge.

A year six letter-exchange programme supports meaningful application of French writing skills. Teachers report increased confidence among pupils who value receiving and responding to real letters.

In 2025, the school also coordinated a “Languages in Portsmouth” initiative to celebrate linguistic diversity. Activities included sharing home-language books, using multilingual greetings and engaging with songs and booklets.

Pupils also attended the University of Portsmouth Festival of Culture, exploring food and using their home languages in a wider context, strengthening inclusion and cultural awareness.



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EARLY YEARS EXCELLENCE

Innovative work in early years settings that lays strong foundations for learning and development in the youngest children.

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King's Group
Academies

Early Talk Pathway

Ark Dickens Primary Academy

Ark Dickens Primary Academy delivers a comprehensive ELSEC (Early Language Support for Every Child) provision to strengthen early identification and support for pupils with speech, language and communication needs. Through the ELSEC programme, children access targeted interventions informed by tools such as the WELLCOMM screening assessment and the Early Talk Boost programme, designed to accelerate progress in language and communication.

This operates alongside their in-house speech interventions delivered by a trained speech and language teaching assistant, ensuring daily opportunities for high quality language enrichment. In addition, a qualified speech and language therapist visits weekly, providing specialist guidance, modelling strategies, and supporting tailored intervention planning.

The combined approach increases confidence and supports earlier, more accurate identification of need. Through this multi-layered provision, they aim to narrow gaps, reduce the need for specialist referral, and improve long-term outcomes for all children.



Picture: Adobe Stock, posed by models

Bright spark

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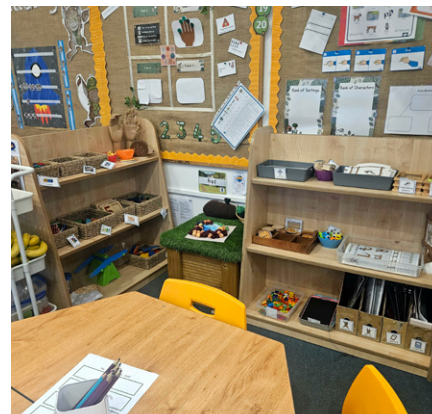
The Roadmap to Excellence: Creating Purposeful Pathways in Reception

King's Academy College Park

At King's Academy College Park, a skills progression framework has been developed across all areas of continuous provision.

This initiative addressed inconsistent expectations by ensuring that learning opportunities build effectively on prior skills. By mapping milestones throughout reception, they have fostered purposeful play, high-quality adult interactions, and intentional learning environments. Colleagues were central to designing and embedding this framework, which is now integral to their daily planning and assessment.

Consequently, children demonstrate greater engagement and independence. The impact is evident in their outcomes: the proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development rose from 69% in 2023/24 to 73% in 2024/25. This cohesive approach ensures that play is progressive and linked to each child's next steps, providing a robust foundation for their future learning.



Bright spark

 Josie Cooperthwaite

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Small Steps, Big Impact: Transforming Early Maths

King's Academy College Park

Now in its third year, the Mastering Number programme is a cornerstone of King's Academy College Park's mathematics curriculum. Pupils engage enthusiastically with short, focused sessions that use familiar Numberblocks characters to bring abstract concepts to life. This approach transforms the mathematics area into an inviting space where children can independently explore and refine their skills.

To enhance the programme further, they have introduced strategic retrieval tasks. These are deliberately scheduled away from initial teaching to assess long-term retention and ensure a secure depth of understanding. This systematic process enables staff to provide timely scaffolding or intervention where necessary.

As a result, reception pupils transition to key stage one as confident, keen mathematicians. Teaching staff have praised their impressive readiness for the next stage of their education, noting that children leave the foundation stage with both a robust numerical base and a genuine passion for the subject.



Bright spark

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WriteStrong: Building Confident Writers from the Start

King's Academy Northern Parade

Introduced across reception at King's Academy Northern Parade, 'WriteStrong' is a bespoke framework that prioritises physical readiness, oral language, and confidence over premature expectation. It shifts early writing from isolated tasks to a play-rooted, purposeful experience.

They utilise explicit adult modelling, correct letter formation, and dictated sentences, intentionally weaving mark-making into both continuous and enhanced provision. This transition was supported by intensive professional development and the adoption of a shared pedagogical language to ensure consistent daily practice.

Pupils have demonstrated marked improvements in fine motor control, letter formation, and sentence structure, providing strong evidence of skill development. Children are also showing a significant increase in writing with purpose, along with a newfound willingness to engage independently during play, highlighting greater learner independence. In addition, colleagues are delivering teaching with increased clarity and confidence, resulting in stronger and more consistent writing outcomes across the cohort.



Bright spark

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Intentional Curriculum Design

King's Academy Northern Parade

Moving away from a static, recycled curriculum, King's Academy Northern Parade prioritised and implemented a strategic redesign of the early years foundation stage (EYFS) framework. They implemented a child-centred, adult-led model tailored specifically to cohort starting points and learning barriers. Key actions included establishing fixed, continuous provision to reduce cognitive demand, alongside responsive enhanced provision aligned with high-quality texts. This transition was driven by environmental redesign, shared planning, and intensive staff coaching. In terms of pupil progress, there has been a demonstrable increase in independence and sustained engagement, leading to stronger progress across all prime areas. With regard to teaching quality, colleagues report higher confidence in intentional teaching, and observations show more meaningful, in-the-moment responses to learning. Finally, the new structure has improved consistency by ensuring an inclusive, high-expectation environment that remains adaptable to the evolving needs of every child.

The impact of this work has been clear. Children are more engaged, confident and motivated, particularly those who historically would not have met age-related expectations. They are seeing stronger oral language, increased independence, and improved outcomes because the curriculum is no longer something delivered to children, but something shaped around them.



Bright spark

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HEALTH, WELLBEING AND BELONGING

Sponsored by

caterlink
feeding the imagination

Initiatives that support pupils' physical and mental health, promote emotional wellbeing, and help everyone feel part of the school community.

RACE Club

Admiral Lord Nelson School

RACE Club is a short-term intervention project which encourages students at Admiral Lord Nelson School to learn how to regulate their emotions. The club gets pupils to focus on aspiration and to collaborate with each other through team building activities. It is a programme of outdoor-based activities, deliberately using and improving their outside spaces so that students have an increased sense of belonging.

Each session starts and ends with a community circle allowing the intervention to underpin and be underpinned by their relational and restorative work. Senior staff attend a final celebration session where students talk positively about what they have gained from the project and, often, those students go on to co-lead groups in the future, giving them a sense of achievement, purpose and belonging.



Bright spark

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Edible Kitchen Garden

Beacon View Primary Academy

Over the past two years, Karen Smith has led inspiring gardening sessions for groups of children, working alongside the project gardener. Their partnership has transformed their outdoor learning and created a thriving culture of environmental responsibility. This year, Beacon View Primary Academy proudly achieved the Level 3 RHS School Gardening Award, recognising the impressive school-wide commitment and impact of the project.

The raised planters, made from bathtubs reclaimed from local household waste, highlight their dedication to sustainability by preventing unnecessary landfill. These tubs now overflow with pollinator friendly flowers, sensory herbs, and an exciting variety of fruits and vegetables. The produce grown by the young gardeners is regularly used in design technology projects, from nourishing soups to colourful salads, including a particularly enormous pumpkin this year!

Beyond the gardening itself, pupils have gained confidence, friendships, practical skills, and a deeper enthusiasm for school, leading to improved wellbeing and attendance.



Bright spark

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Lunchtime Club

Highbury Primary School

Highbury Primary School's Lunch Club provides a calm, supportive space for children who are invited for a range of pastoral reasons. Children enjoy the quietness of the club and the opportunity to eat their lunch alongside friends in a relaxed environment. They value the presence of trusted adults, knowing they can talk to them if they need support or reassurance. The atmosphere is welcoming, helping children to feel safe, settled and that they truly belong.

Children are invited to attend by the pastoral team, with a strong focus on supporting their social and emotional wellbeing. A key part is the sticker game, where children choose someone to give a sticker to and share a positive reason for their choice. This may be to recognise an achievement, a kind action or a positive personal quality. After eating and taking part, children go outside feeling valued and supported.



Bright spark

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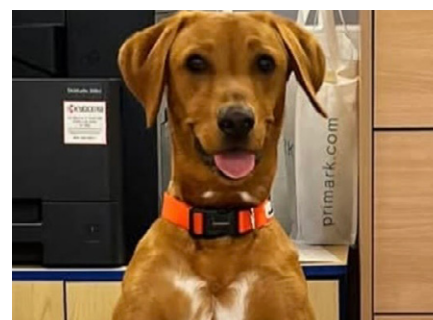
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Kevin the School Dog

Penbridge Junior School

Penbridge Junior School introduced their dog Kevin about a year ago with the aim of supporting children (and staff) with their mental health and emotional wellbeing. Kevin supports pupils when emotions become too much. The school worked with 'The Dog Mentor' who trained them and gave lots of ideas about how Kevin could support their school community.

Feedback from staff, pupils and parents has been overwhelmingly positive with everyone being keen to spend time with him; he has dedicated reading time, goes to morning attendance group and is part of staff community circles. He is beginning to be integrated into their curriculum to also support learning. The school will continue to develop their wellbeing strategy with Kevin front and centre.



Bright spark

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Time to Shine

Stamshaw Infant School

Stamshaw Infant School understand the importance of ensuring every child feels welcome, treasured, and fully part of their school community. The school's approach is built on strong, caring relationships, ensuring children and their families feel authentically listened to, understood, and valued. Children flourish with personalised learning and the school's inclusive approach. This is supported by interventions such as emotional literacy support sessions, their dedicated speech and language expert, and practical sessions with a therapeutic artist, helping children develop confidence, resilience, and creative expression.

The school provides support for parents and carers, with a focus on mental health and wellbeing, offering guidance, reassurance, and practical advice to help families feel confident in supporting their child's learning.

Initiatives such as 'Time to Shine' allow every child to celebrate their achievements, feel proud, and experience a genuine sense of belonging. This inclusive, supportive approach has contributed to the school's strong reputation and is a key reason it is oversubscribed.



Bright spark

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Relational Circles

St Paul's Catholic Primary School

St Paul's Catholic Primary School has successfully embarked on a relational journey as a core principle, following initial training from expert Mark Finnis and observational visits to a local secondary school. This journey centres around the use of Community Check-in/Check-out Circles, implemented every Monday and Friday morning in vertical, cross-school groupings that rotate half-termly.

All staff lead these structured circles, which begin with a Zones of Regulation feelings check-in, transition into engaging fun questions, and conclude with a popcorn question linked to British values, the St Paul's Principles (school rules), climate change, or relevant thematic days. The primary aim of these circles is to consistently maintain and build strong connections across the entire school community.

This practice has been extended to staff meetings, which now begin with a whole-staff community circle. Furthermore, they actively invite parents half-termly to join and experience these circles with their children, significantly enhancing positive relationships between home and school. This is just one example of their relational journey. Other examples include: solution circles, staff supervision, restorative, relational practise CPD for senior leaders, welcoming families on the school gates, assertive mentoring, St Paul's principles, relational leaders and much more.



Bright spark

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The Wymering Way - Mental Health and Wellbeing Curriculum

The Wymering School

At The Wymering School, wellbeing sits at the heart of everything they do. The school has cultivated a culture where mental health is prioritised. Central to the 'Wymering Way' is their seven-year mental health and wellbeing curriculum, aligned with Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) Association objectives. This progressive spiral curriculum develops each year, enabling students to leave year 11 with an understanding of basic neuroscience, mental health, practical coping strategies and an understanding of when or where to seek support. They use a tiered approach to identify need and the appropriate level of intervention. They have developed targeted programmes for anxiety, low mood, self-esteem and grief. These can work as one to one's or small groups, with their therapy dog.

In recognition of this sustained commitment for wellbeing, they are proud to have recently achieved the Wellbeing Award for Schools with Optimus Education.



Bright spark

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Wellbeing Pets

Westover Primary School

Westover Primary School's guinea pigs play a valuable role in supporting pupils' mental wellbeing. Their calm and gentle nature helps children regulate their emotions, particularly those experiencing separation anxiety, by offering a comforting and predictable presence. Spending time with the guinea pigs encourages their pupils to slow down, refocus, and engage in mindful, nurturing interactions, which is reducing stress and improving concentration in the classroom.

They have also appointed dedicated animal welfare officers who take responsibility for the guinea pigs' daily care. This not only ensures the animals' welfare but also provides pupils with a meaningful opportunity to learn about empathy, routine, and the importance of caring for living creatures. Through these roles, children develop confidence, teamwork skills, and a deeper understanding of responsibility.

Overall, the guinea pigs contribute significantly to creating a calmer, more supportive school environment for all learners.



Bright spark

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Wellbeing Pods

Westover Primary School

Westover Primary School has recently revamped their wellbeing pods which have become an invaluable sanctuary. Thanks to the generous support of local companies, the space has been transformed with a new carpet and beautifully decorated walls, creating an oasis of tranquillity for pupils and staff alike. This calm, welcoming environment provides a safe space where children can talk openly about any worries and receive emotional support when needed.

The pod also plays a key role in helping pupils regulate their emotions, offering a quiet, comforting area away from the busyness of school life.

In addition, it is used regularly for individual sessions and small group work, including the highly successful Hamish and Milo programme, which supports children in developing emotional literacy and resilience. The transformation of the pod has strengthened their pastoral provision and continues to be a much-valued resource across the school community.



Bright spark

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INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

Initiatives that celebrate diversity, promote equality, and ensure every pupil feels valued and supported, whatever their background or needs.

Sponsored by



Dickens Pathway

Ark Dickens Primary Academy

At Ark Dickens Primary Academy, they place emphasis on the need for strong relationships. Without these strong relationships and the skills in order to self-regulate, children will not be able to learn successfully. With this in mind, they implemented the 'Compass' to support all children.

Compass West provides a bespoke curriculum for children who are not ready to be in class and consists of interventions that develop coping strategies or skills in self-regulation, trauma and play. With this and a clear transition plan, it prepares children to re-integrate into class successfully and ultimately equip them with the skills to be life-long learners.

Their Compass East room is a designated space for regulation, using the 'Zones of Regulation' approach and is open to all. It teaches children to manage their emotions in the moment through co- and self-regulation, resulting in happy children.



Bright spark

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Building Community Solutions to Foster Inclusion and Connection for SEND Families

Cliffdale Primary Academy

During summer 2025, Cliffdale Primary Academy responded to families who have children with complex SEND who faced isolation, anxiety, and limited access to safe holiday activities. Many could not join mainstream provision due to communication, sensory, behavioural, or physical needs. Two family support workers collaborated closely with parents, listening to their experiences and co-designing inclusive holiday support. Using relational approaches such as home visits, parent helper groups, and solution circles, families helped shape activities.

By harnessing community resources and forming strong local partnerships, safe, engaging spaces were created offering Forest School, stay-and-play sessions, and Jiggy Wrigglers, where children could participate at their own pace. Parents were able to relax, feel understood, and build supportive connections. This low-cost, community-led approach showed how listening, collaboration, and partnerships can transform experiences and foster inclusion.



Bright spark

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Alternative Learning Provision - The Hive

Devonshire Infant School

In September 2025, Devonshire Infant School proudly opened their alternative learning provision, The Hive. Previously used as a lunch hall for just one hour each day, the space has been transformed into a nurturing and engaging environment that offers structured, small group learning for children with EHCPs and other additional needs. The Hive has already had a significant impact on some of their most vulnerable pupils, enabling them to access their learning with increased confidence, security, and consistency.

The school's holistic approach integrates academic teaching with self-regulation and social skills development, all grounded in strong, trusting relationships. Each child receives daily personalised phonics, maths, and English sessions tailored to their individual needs. In the afternoons, pupils return to their mainstream classes accompanied by staff from The Hive, who support them in applying these skills within the wider school environment which has had an extremely positive impact on children's learning across the school.



Bright spark

 The Hive

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Mini Stars and Star Class

Manor Infant and Nursery School

Due to the increasing number of children with additional and complex needs across the school, two dedicated provision spaces were established to ensure support is better suited to individual needs. Mini Stars (reception year) and Star Class (key stage one) offer personalised learning tailored to each child. Children access targeted learning within these spaces.

In Mini Stars, this may include phonics sessions or specific interventions such as bucket therapy. In Star Class, children attend for a morning, an afternoon, or a full day, depending on their level of need. Alongside targeted adult support, a strong focus is placed on developing independence skills.

The impact has been significant. All children have made accelerated progress towards their targets, with several already increasing time in their mainstream classes as the gaps in learning have narrowed. Due to this success, a second group of children is now beginning to access Star Class.



Bright spark

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The Bridge

Mary Rose Academy

The Bridge Home and Community Learning Provision at Mary Rose Academy is an innovative and bespoke provision created in response to a growing number of pupils with profound and complex needs, being unable to access education on either of Mary Rose's campuses for a multitude of reasons.

With no alternative provision in Portsmouth able to meet these pupils' needs, The Bridge is the only option. Without it, many would be left without education, some for as long as 2-4 years before The Bridge was established.

Mary Rose is proud that The Bridge can offer these pupils an opportunity to learn, in a way that is meaningful and accessible to them. The provision is personalised, focusing on communication, regulation, and independence, preparing the pupils for the next step in their life, be that returning to school, moving to residential or on to adult services.



Bright spark

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The Meadow: Enhanced Learning Provision

Meon Junior School

In September, Meon Junior School opened their enhanced learning provision, The Meadow. This is a dedicated space for children with cognition and learning needs, where targeted teaching and a bespoke curriculum come together in a nurturing environment. Its creation reflects the school's belief that every child can be their best self. The Meadow supports children in the moment while strengthening their long-term educational journey. Here, pupils secure foundational skills, build confidence, and experience successes that are meaningful to them.

The school's aim is to narrow attainment gaps that might otherwise widen over time, ensuring children move forward with greater independence, stronger skills, and a clearer understanding of how they learn. This preparation empowers them to engage more fully in school life and as they transition into future settings. Most importantly, their children already say how much they enjoy learning in The Meadow, a place where they feel happy, supported, and ready to learn.



Bright spark

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Rethinking Achievement Through Adapted Retrieval Practice

Redwood Park Academy

At Redwood Park Academy, they are proud to be leading innovative research that redefines how children with complex learning difficulties experience success. Their team is exploring how retrieval practice, a widely recognised cognitive science strategy, can be meaningfully adapted to support their learners' personalised curricula and diverse communication needs.

Working collaboratively, teachers and teaching assistants have developed bespoke, low stress retrieval approaches that prioritise confidence, enjoyment and independence. From gamified tasks to creative, sensory rich activities, students are engaging in ways that reflect their strengths.

Early findings are already promising, with increased participation and measurable gains in key skills such as phonics and memory recall. This work not only strengthens teaching and learning within Redwood Park but also contributes to a wider understanding of how specialist settings can shape national conversations about inclusion.



Bright spark

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Celebrating Linguistic Diversity

St Jude's Church of England Primary School

St Jude's Church of England Primary School is fortunate to be a community rich in cultures. Initiatives throughout the school year celebrate the linguistic diversity of their children. The school has participated in the 'week of celebrating languages in Portsmouth', during which taster sessions in a variety of languages were organised. This week was well received by the school community and gave children from heritage language backgrounds a well-deserved chance to shine.

In addition, children from years five and six have showcased their Spanish to modern foreign language teachers at a local conference and participated in a poster competition celebrating multi-lingualism.

The school have also worked on strengthening cross-curricular links between Spanish and music, with children performing songs in Spanish at their Christmas service and at the year six leavers' show.

At St Jude's, they aim for a culture of excitement and enthusiasm around languages, promoting the subject as an invaluable tool for learners as global citizens.



Bright spark

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Nurture and Grow

Wimborne Primary School

Wimborne Primary School enjoy small group sessions in sewing, construction, outdoor learning and cooking, giving children with SEND and/or pupil premium space to build confidence with motor skills, communication, turn taking and early literacy.

Each club is led by their higher-level teaching assistant, who offers calm reassurance from the moment children arrive at the gate. A quick check in or a positive comment can set them up for a much better day. Pastoral observations were gathered throughout the first term. One clear sign of impact is simple: improved attendance.

One pupil who is involved in the Nurture and Grow group was excluded in their last placement and was unable to spend a whole lesson in class. They can now sit in lessons, participate and enjoy their learning.



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OUT OF THE BOX

A space for bold, unconventional ideas that don't fit the other categories but have made a real impact in a setting.

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Stage Not Age Provision for EHCP Children

Ark Ayrton Primary Academy

Ark Ayrton Primary Academy has challenged the traditional notion that their most significant SEND pupils should always be taught by a teaching assistant. Instead, they have implemented a simple yet transformative stage, not age approach, ensuring that children with EHCPs are taught by qualified teachers at the right stage of their development.

The school's strong foundations in relational practice enable pupils to move confidently across the academy for their learning, knowing they will be welcomed, understood, and taught by expert teachers who meet them exactly where they are.

This shift has had remarkable impact. The progress EHCP children are making is exceptional, with clear gains academically, socially, and emotionally. Parents consistently report that their children are happier, more motivated, and increasingly eager to come to school. Many share that anxieties have reduced significantly and that their children now feel a real sense of achievement and belonging in their learning journey.



Bright spark

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SEND Students Flashmob Event to Celebrate Rail's 200th Anniversary

City of Portsmouth College

City of Portsmouth College has developed an effective model for engaging students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in large community events through flashmob-style performances. Designed for Portsmouth's Railway 200 celebrations in 2025, the initiative integrated more than 100 SEND students into a major public programme by combining creative arts, structured preparation and collaborative working.

The college secured funding from Great Western Railway's Customer and Community Improvement Fund, enabling investment in coaching, costumes, props and rehearsal space. The project also brought together learners from multiple schools and colleges, demonstrating how cross-institution partnerships can broaden participation and share resources.

The model delivers strong outcomes. Students benefit from improved confidence, physical activity, balance, strength and mood, while also developing teamwork, communication and resilience.



Bright spark

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Giving Children a Voice

St Paul's Catholic Primary School

For the past two years, St Paul's Catholic Primary School has successfully hosted an exciting 'democracy day,' themed first as 'Tuesday Choose Day' and then as 'Your Voice, Your Choice' in Action in 2025.

Both events began with an introductory assembly focusing on British values and setting the stage for participation. Staff members energetically campaigned for their activities, similar to a flash mob, encouraging student choice. Pupils then selected four preferred activities from a choice of up to 20 staff-led options, which included engaging choices like making friendship bracelets, rocket launching, and finger printing.

Local MP Amanda Martin joined in and spoke to the students about the importance of democracy and using their voices for positive community impact. The day concluded with pupils voting for their favourite event, reinforcing the democratic process we had celebrated.



Bright spark

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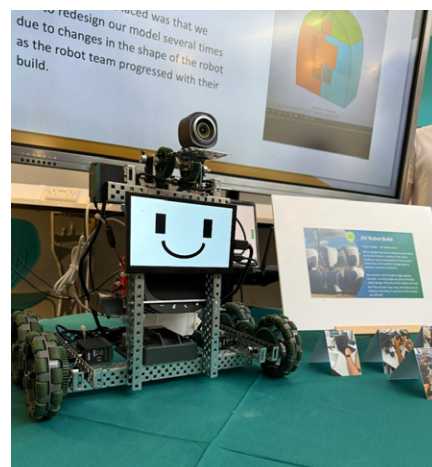
Preparing Students for the World of Work

UTC Portsmouth

At UTC Portsmouth, preparing students for the world of work is embedded across the curriculum, training programme, and enrichment offer. From year 10, students engage with employers through industry-led projects, work experience, and live briefs that reflect real workplace expectations.

The structured training programme develops the professional behaviours employers value most: curiosity, creative problem solving, resilience, responsibility, teamwork, and communication. These skills are reinforced daily through coaching, reflection, and clear expectations. Alongside this, a broad enrichment programme gives students opportunities to apply these same learning habits in more varied fields, showcasing to employers the transferability of these essential skills.

Combined with strong careers guidance and progression support, this approach ensures students leave UTC Portsmouth not only with qualifications, but with the experience, mindset, and employability skills needed to succeed in apprenticeships, employment, or higher education.



Bright spark

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STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP

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UNIVERSITY OF
PORTSMOUTH

Schemes that invest in staff training, leadership development, and career progression to strengthen teaching and school leadership.

Personal Development Plans

Ark Ayrton Primary Academy

Ark Ayrton Primary Academy has developed their own bespoke staff development rubrics to ensure every team member excels in their role and delivers high-quality teaching for their children. These rubrics provide a clear, supportive framework for professional growth, rooted in high expectations and a shared commitment to excellence.

The introduction of personalised development plans, shaped by research from the Education Endowment Foundation, the situational leadership model, and the social discipline window has transformed the way they approach continued professional development (CPD). Each plan is tailored to the individual, ensuring professional learning is purposeful, relevant, and responsive to strengths and areas for development. This approach has significantly strengthened teaching practice across the academy.

The impact is evident not only in improved lesson quality and professional confidence but also in their strong key stage two outcomes, which reflect the collective effectiveness of a staff team continually supported to be the very best they can be.



Bright spark

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Coaching and Developing Excellence in Early Years

Stamshaw Infant School

Stamshaw Infant School has developed innovative practices within their early years setting, supported by strong and effective leadership, has led to very positive outcomes for children. Leaders provide a clear and ambitious vision and play a key role in coaching and mentoring staff and student teachers, encouraging reflective practice and ongoing professional growth.

Well established systems and high expectations support consistency across the setting, helping children to thrive in a nurturing environment that values emotional security and the development of positive character traits.

A range of approaches, including enriched indoor and outdoor environments and purposeful adult interactions, support children's engagement, independence, and confidence. Practitioners are encouraged to adapt learning to children's interests and individual needs, promoting inclusive practice and high aspirations for all. Leaders also share expertise through partnerships and wider early years networks. External specialists have highlighted the strength of phonics teaching as exemplary practice to be shared beyond the academy trust.



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TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Sponsored by
Portsmouth: The
Digital City Project

Projects that use digital tools or new technologies to enhance teaching, learning, or school operations.

City of Portsmouth College Students Develop a Web-based Platform for Local Learners

City of Portsmouth College

City of Portsmouth College computing students have been working with Shaping Portsmouth to develop a web-based, mobile-friendly website for the Portsmouth Ambassadors e-learning platform.

This is part of the students' coursework for their work experience module; the learners have been responding to client feedback on the application and thanks to the way the project has run, there's been the chance to explore data security and user authentication scenarios, giving students hands-on experience with GDPR compliance and secure design.

This project has been a great way to build in quality assurance testing and edge-case planning, while keeping the focus on project-based learning and real industry practice.



Bright spark

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Digital Technology to Support Learning

Craneswater Junior School

Craneswater Junior School and Cumberland Infant School have collaborated to transform their use of digital technology through the award-winning Portsmouth: The Digital City project. This partnership ensures that every child from year one to year six benefits from purposeful and safe digital learning. Both schools have embedded tools such as Clicker and Canva to strengthen outcomes in English and maths, reduce teacher workload and enhance inclusion for SEND learners.

Craneswater has also expanded the use of Chromebooks, enabling children to access a range of tools tailored to their individual needs.

The impact of this work is clear, with Clicker Champions and Chromebook Leaders helping pupils become independent and confident users of technology. Pupils who previously struggled with writing are now able to access much more of the curriculum and enjoy the independence that technology provides.

The schools have also developed a SEND digital toolkit to strengthen accessibility and support adaptive teaching across classrooms.



Bright spark

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Inclusion-First Technology

Springfield School

Springfield School has adopted an inclusion-first approach to digital technology, ensuring tools are used to remove barriers for learners rather than create them.

Rather than implementing a one-to-one device model, the school prioritised providing the right technology to the learners who need it most, embedding assistive tools such as DocsPlus and Clicker to strengthen writing, communication and classroom access for students with SEND.

This targeted approach has been recognised nationally, with the school's practice featured in Crick Software case studies as an example of effective and inclusive digital strategy.

The impact of this work is evident across the school community. Learners with SEND, including those with visual impairments, are now able to participate in lessons with greater confidence and independence. Staff benefit from reduced workload through adaptive digital tools and streamlined processes. Springfield has also shared its expertise with other schools and the local authority, contributing to wider practice and supporting academic research on inclusive technology.



Bright spark

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Portsmouth: The Digital City Project

The Wymering School

Digital learning is a key feature of The Wymering School's curriculum model. Through the support of the Portsmouth: The Digital City project, they have been able to implement an embedded model of teaching which allows pupils to learn digital skills through a wider curriculum and to work towards a Digital Functions Skills qualification.

Through the expert guidance of the Portsmouth: The Digital City project they have been supported to create an action plan which supports the implementation of new technology, the upskilling of pupils, staff and families, and a graduated approach to building their digital curriculum.

Staff confidence has grown rapidly and pupils are highly engaged in learning. The impact of their work with the project was noted in their 2025 Challenge Partners report as a key strength of the school and its curriculum. They continue to enjoy working closely with the project team and developing further as a school.



Bright spark

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EXTERNAL PARTNERS

Some of the projects in this publication were delivered in conjunction with external partners or programmes. More information about these can be found in the table below.

Project	Programme and website
Creating Pathways to Employment and Belonging for Local Learners Setting: City of Portsmouth College Category: Achievement and progress	Work Better Innovations (WBI) - wbi.org.uk
TKAT ACE (A Champion For Every Child) Setting: Miltoncross Academy Category: Achievement and progress	TKAT ACE - tkat.org/tkat-ace-1
Reading Ambassadors Setting: Craneswater Junior School Category: Curriculum and subject enhancement	Destination Reader - hackneyservicesforschools.co.uk/DR
Destination Reader Setting: Milton Park Primary School Category: Curriculum and subject enhancement	Destination Reader - hackneyservicesforschools.co.uk/DR
Early Talk Pathway Setting: Ark Dickens Primary Academy Category: Early years excellence	WELLCOMM - gl-assessment.co.uk/products/wellcomm Early Talk Boost - speechandlanguage.org.uk/educators-and-professionals/programmes-for-nurseries-and-schools/talk-boost/early-talk-boost
Small Steps, Big Impact: Transforming Early Maths Setting: King's Academy College Park Category: Early years excellence	Mastering Number - ncetm.org.uk/maths-hubs-projects/mastering-number-at-reception-and-ks1
Building Community Solutions to Foster Inclusion and Connection for SEND Families Setting: Cliffdale Primary Academy Category: Inclusion and diversity	Forest School - portsmouthforestschoollc.co.uk Jiggy Wrigglers - jiggywrigglers.com
Digital Technology to Support Learning Setting: Craneswater Junior School Category: Technology and innovation	Clicker - cricksoft.com/evidence/portsmouth-the-digital-city-project Canva - portsmoutheeducationpartnership.co.uk/digital-city
Inclusion-First Technology Setting: Springfield School Category: Technology and innovation	DocsPlus - cricksoft.com/dp-success-story/springfield-school

MEET THE SPONSORS

Caterlink

Health, wellbeing and belonging

Caterlink is a leading provider of food services to schools across the UK. With a focus on healthy, sustainable, and nutritious meals, Caterlink works closely with educational establishments to support student wellbeing and learning.

"At Caterlink, we believe that providing nutritious meals is more than just about food – it's about nurturing students' potential and empowering communities for a brighter future."

Our values of inclusion, sustainability, and community impact, resonate strongly with the aims of the Bright Sparks Book.

By prioritising nutrition, innovation in food service, and collaboration with schools, we contribute to fostering an inclusive environment where every child can thrive.

We recommend focusing on collaboration and open communication with your teams. Staff engagement is key to success. Allocate resources effectively, invest in training and encourage innovation.



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Community Learning Service

Attendance and engagement

The Community Learning Service supports Portsmouth residents through flexible, personalised learning that helps people build confidence, improve wellbeing and move towards employment.

“Start by setting a clear vision that puts learner engagement and good attendance at the heart of what you do.”

Our values emphasise inclusion, engagement, and supportive practice, ensuring every learner feels able to attend, participate, and progress.

We design provision that removes barriers, builds confidence and promotes a culture where consistent attendance is celebrated as a key driver of success.

Through collaboration with community partners and a commitment to equitable access, we create learning environments that encourage sustained engagement.

By actively involving learners in every stage of their journey and giving them a clear, achievable pathway, we empower those furthest from education to re-engage with confidence.

This approach strengthens attendance, boosts participation, and supports sustained, long-term progress for every learner.



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Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL

COMMUNITY
LEARNING
SERVICE

Comserv Property Services

Community and family engagement

Comserv Property Services is a local business with extensive experience delivering responsive repairs, maintenance, and planned works to local authorities and housing associations. Through a diverse team of over 150 skilled operatives, we support more than 8,000 local authority properties with high-quality repairs, improvements, and property services.

“Sharing best practice and working collaboratively is key to how Comserv operates and through this we have become a more inclusive employer, and expanded our social value projects.”

Comserv are active in our local community with a strong ethic towards social causes. Our social value strategy is to build lasting relationships with key organisations within the community that we serve.

Alongside our charity work, Comserv also provide lots of work experience, support to careers fairs, apprenticeships, and offer supported internship placements to individuals with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Our experience has taught us that senior leaders seeking to implement community initiatives need to build strong partnerships with community organisations, who understand the needs of local people, and base goals around their company's specific skillsets.

Embedding social impact into strategic priorities and considering how best to pool resources, expertise and influence is key, as well as learning from setbacks, and remaining adaptable.



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comserv
property services

City of Portsmouth College

Achievement and progress

At the City of Portsmouth College, we're shaping our city's future by unlocking the brilliance of its learners.

We believe every student should be able to achieve their aspirations, whatever their background or abilities. That's why we offer a uniquely broad range of choices across our four campuses, from the highest quality academic teaching to the latest vocational and technical training.

*"Brilliance comes from a bright spark.
We help students find their brilliance."*

City of Portsmouth College's values closely align with the aims of The Bright Sparks Book, through its shared commitment to empowering and inspiring positive change, inclusion and collaboration across Portsmouth's education community.

This special publication is an invaluable resource, showcasing the very best initiatives being delivered by our community, and will enable us to connect, inspire and work together to improve outcomes for every learner.

If you are inspired by an initiative, I would recommend connecting with the relevant organisation's link contact for a detailed insight into the project.

Collaboration at this early stage is key. Internally, clear communication of purpose and benefits will help to build staff engagement and momentum. Empowering staff to contribute ideas and take ownership of initiatives can enhance positive outcomes.



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Portsmouth: The Digital City Project

Technology and innovation

The Portsmouth: The Digital City project brings together all schools across the city to transform education through a shared vision for digital inclusion, innovation, and improved outcomes.

Established prior to the pandemic and strengthened during remote learning, the project now focuses on technology for children, adults, and the wider community.

“Digital innovation is most powerful when it is shared. By working together across our city (and beyond) we can ensure that every member of our community can access the right tools, at the right time, for the right purpose, for them.”

Our values centre on inclusion, innovation, and collective responsibility. We believe technology should enhance learning, reduce workload, and ensure every child and adult can access the tools they need. The project brings together schools, partners, and local communities to share best practice and build digital confidence at every level.

Through citywide networks, leadership development, and a commitment to equitable access, we create an environment where collaboration drives improvement and innovation benefits all learners.

Build strong partnerships with schools, MATs, local authorities, and industry to maximise resourcing and expertise. Create structured networks so teachers and leaders can learn from one another, and pilot initiatives before scaling.

Above all, model digital leadership by being visible, approachable, and willing to learn alongside your teams.

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HIVE Portsmouth

Out of the box

HIVE Portsmouth brings people and organisations together to tackle the city's biggest challenges, from poverty and hunger to health inequalities and loneliness.

We connect residents with the right help at the right time, support hundreds of local charities and community groups, and create practical solutions that change lives every day. We work to make sure people don't fall through the cracks.

"Progress begins with listening, learning, and acting with heart. By sharing good ideas freely, we help every child feel included, supported, and unlock brighter futures for every child, family, and community we serve."

The Bright Sparks Book is about sharing practical ideas so senior leaders can learn from each other and reuse what works.

At HIVE Portsmouth, that's the spirit behind our Uniform Share store. Families can request good quality preloved uniform for free, cutting costs and reducing waste by keeping clothes in use and out of landfill.

It also supports a sense of belonging, having what's needed helps children feel part of school life. We'll keep listening, improving, and sharing what we learn so others can adapt it in their setting.

If something isn't working the way you anticipated, share what you're trying, credit where you borrowed it and let good ideas travel.

Measure only what matters, keep asking questions and remember to celebrate small wins.



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King's Group Academies

Early years excellence

King's Group Academies operates across the southeast, Berkshire, and Hampshire, encompassing primary, secondary, special, and all-through academies.

Our vision, 'Opportunity and Success on a Global Stage,' fosters a community that broadens horizons and promotes global citizenship.

Guided by our values of honesty, faith, and courage, we collaborate locally and internationally to ensure every student thrives.

"At King's Group Academies, innovation thrives through collaboration. Bright Sparks empowers our staff to share best practices, ensuring our core values drive opportunity and success for every student."

Our values of Honesty, Faith, and Courage directly align with the Bright Sparks Book's mission.

We champion inclusion through our diverse educational settings, including specialised social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) provision, ensuring every student has the support to succeed.

To successfully implement the initiatives, leaders can empower colleagues to innovate. Prioritise collaboration by establishing cross-school networks to share best practices and evidence-based results regularly through fora or working groups.

Strategic resourcing is essential, so ensure that time and funding are explicitly allocated to support long-term sustainability.

Build engagement by communicating the 'why' behind the initiative, aligning it with your core values.



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King's Group
Academies

Solent Academies Trust

Inclusion and diversity

Solent Academies Trust is a highly relational community, dedicated to transforming lives through high-quality education, tailored to every child.

United by our mission, empowering excellence and equity for everyone, our trust champions respect, aspiration and empowerment, ensuring every pupil receives a personalised, meaningful learning experience.

“Inclusive excellence grows from strong relationships, shared purpose and high aspirations for every child. When we work together with courage and compassion, all young people can thrive.”

Our values, aspiration, equity and supportive relationships, align closely with the aims of the Bright Sparks Book. We believe innovation thrives through collaboration, shared learning and courageous leadership.

We take every opportunity to build partnerships across and beyond our trust, working with schools, families and communities to share best practice, explore new approaches and learn together.

Our commitment to empowering excellence for all ensures that inclusive practice, professional generosity and community impact remain central to our work.

Aim high for every young person, communicate a compelling vision and be clear about the values behind your strategic intentions, ensuring they align with your community's needs.

Invest in relationships by listening to staff, pupils and families so change is co-constructed and understood.

Start small, pilot thoughtfully and build a strong evidence base that demonstrates clear impact on both academic and non-academic outcomes.



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University of Chichester Academy Trust

Curriculum and subject enrichment

The University of Chichester Academy Trust is a growing multi-academy trust sponsored by the University of Chichester, dedicated to raising aspirations, improving outcomes and sharing excellent practice across its academies.

Based in Hampshire, Portsmouth and West Sussex, the trust currently encompasses 17 academies, including 16 primary settings, one secondary and a well-established SCITT, working collaboratively to deliver high-quality education and leadership development for all pupils.

“Real impact happens when research informs practice, leaders think globally, and schools work together, learning from each other to create lasting change.”

At the University of Chichester Academy Trust, the aims of the Bright Sparks Book closely reflect how we approach school improvement.

We are focused on helping schools achieve more and shape futures by using evidence-informed practice to improve outcomes for children and young people.

We encourage inclusive thinking, professional curiosity and constructive challenge across our schools, and we value learning from others.

Through purposeful partnerships and the sharing of best practice, we support leaders to collaborate, develop and deliver sustainable, positive change within their settings.

Start with a clear purpose and ensure initiatives are grounded in evidence and aligned to your school's context. Invest time in building staff understanding and ownership, sustainable change happens with people, not to them.



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University of Portsmouth

Staff development and leadership

The School of Education, Languages and Linguistics examines the world through the ways we learn and communicate.

Our teaching and research prepare the next generation of teachers and educational leaders, helping our students open doors into all kinds of professions in the UK and around the world.

“Although education in England is often constructed around competition, we should all aim to move towards collaboration. Because working together, rather than in isolation, is where the magic happens.”

The School of Education Languages and Linguistics, and indeed the University of Portsmouth as a whole, has innovation, collaboration, inclusion and the sharing of best practice at its core.

We are proud to have had, and to continue to have such an impact on the teaching profession within Portsmouth and beyond.

Collaborating with schools and colleges around the world to learn and develop our understanding of what constitutes best practice, how education functions and the impacts it has on a global as well as local scale.

Experimenting with any approach that is new to a setting can cause implementation issues. You won't always get it right first time - that's why it's so important to talk to each other, learn from each other's mistakes and support each other in the journey.



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