

# YOUR EDUCATION NEWS

## Academy sets up special teams of volunteers to help support pupils

SPECIALIST teams have been put together to support children, parents and teachers during the school closures because of coronavirus.

Maltings Academy, in Witham, has created groups of volunteers to look after the wellbeing of its community, to support students in their studies and to boost morale via social media.

The teams are being led by senior teachers with special interests in these areas:

Wellbeing team – the wellbeing team is supporting the wellbeing of students, parents and staff through positivity, communication and actions to make a difference to people's lives.

Carrie Hicks, wellbeing co-ordinator, said: "Our children's mental health is a massive priority. We have already got children dealing with mental health issues before going into a completely new way of life.

"We did not want to give students work to do over Easter. They needed a break and so do their parents and teachers.

"So, we put together a two-week timetable of suggested fun activities they could do with their families



The Maltings Academy support team are creating a platform of positivity and inspiration for students, parents and staff

each day, including putting on a dance show, creating a quiz or staging a mini-Olympics. It's just giving them something else to think about

and helping them to build their resilience and get through this period of time."

Social media team – the social media team is creating a platform of positivity and inspiration for students, parents and staff through regular communication to co-ordinate clear messages across the curriculum.

Daren White, new technologies lead, said: "We have set up a number of new social media accounts and given them to people within the academy, so the stream of communication is constant. Social media is a way of celebrating what is going on within the academy, without seeing each other face to face.

"We are sharing excellent exam-

ples of work to show others what our students are capable of. Through our new Keep in Touch newsletters, we are sharing news, useful links and top tips for online learning to our families at home. It is all helping to keep that communication going."

Academic support team – a dedicated team of teachers have been put together to be on hand to provide subject specific support for students and parents as quickly as possible.

A timetable has been shared with students showing which subject specialists will be online at what times to give them direct access to their teachers to discuss their work.

Peter Tompkin, lead practitioner, said: "Our message is that although our doors may be closed, our team of teachers are still here to support whoever and whenever it is needed. There will always be someone available to help our students when they need us."

James Forbes, head of academy, said: "During these times of social-distancing and not being able to work how we do traditionally, the academy has been proactive in putting together teams of staff who have a passion in these areas.

"Our staff are crying out for opportunities to do more and play their part to impact positively on our young people's lives during such a difficult time."

Email your news to:  
[communitynews@gazettenews.co.uk](mailto:communitynews@gazettenews.co.uk)  
[communitynews@essexchronicle.co.uk](mailto:communitynews@essexchronicle.co.uk)

## Priti's reading challenge will still be going ahead

SCHOOLCHILDREN in Witham will still be able to take part in an annual reading challenge despite schools being closed due to coronavirus restrictions.

Priti Patel, Home Secretary and MP for Witham, has confirmed that this year's Get Witham Reading will go ahead on Friday, July 3.

Priti has hosted Get Witham Reading at local schools every year since it was first launched in 2012.

However, this year she is inviting children and young people across the constituency to participate in the event from home.

Priti has written to all head teachers and parents at local schools to announce the changes to Get Witham Reading and share activities to allow pupils to participate in this year's event.

Children and young people at home, and at school, if their parents



are critical workers, can participate in the challenge by reading as many books as possible by Friday, July 3, and submitting a list of the books read and a short summary of which was their favourite and why to Priti's office.

Alternatively, they can participate by writing a book review or poem and submitting this to Priti's office by the same date.

All entries must be sent via email to [WithamMP@parliament.uk](mailto:WithamMP@parliament.uk) and must include the child's full name,



Priti Patel MP

age and school. All children who take part in Get Witham Reading 2020 will receive a certificate of participation and the winner of the most books read and best short summary will receive a prize.

Priti said: "I am delighted that my

annual Get Witham Reading event will be returning this summer for its ninth consecutive year.

"Since 2012, local schools have done tremendous work to encourage reading and raise literacy standards in Witham through Get Witham Reading and even though schools are now closed to the majority of pupils due to Covid-19, I am keen to use this year's event to build on this progress, continue to promote the significant benefits of reading and inspire more children and young people to enjoy reading.

"I hope that many children and young people of all ages across my constituency will participate in Get Witham Reading from home this year and I am looking forward to hearing about their activities and receiving their book reviews and poems."