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Curtis Jobling
- a TCAT alumni
- is working as a
literacy champion
for young people
in the trust

Growing together across TCAT

As we move further into the summer term, I would like to take a moment to reflect on the strong start we have made across The Challenge Academy Trust and to thank all of our staff for the continued commitment, care and professionalism you show every day.

This edition highlights how we are continuing to support and invest in our people. Our TCAT Plus offer remains central to this, recognising that our staff are our greatest asset. Through recent TCAT briefings and drop-in sessions in every academy, we have worked to ensure all colleagues are aware of the support and benefits available. Our recent SLT seminar also provided a valuable opportunity for leaders to come together, collaborate and strengthen our shared approach across the Trust as well as see the priorities 'live' in action.

We are also proud to be celebrating significant milestones within our community. Both Sir Thomas Boteler's (STB) 500-year anniversary and South Wirral High School's 40-year anniversary have been marked in memorable ways. Highlights include the inspiring 40k for 40 years walk, alumni tours and a fantastic

commemorative video at STB, along with a celebratory church service that brought together past and present members of the Boteler community. These events are a powerful reminder of the history, pride and sense of belonging within our schools and next year will see us celebrating our own ten year milestone - watch this space for how we will mark it.

We are delighted to be working with Curtis Jobling, a TCAT alumni and acclaimed author and illustrator, who is supporting us as a literacy champion. His work with our young people is helping to inspire a love of reading, creativity and confidence, directly supporting one of our key Trust priorities. He has already been across all our primaries working with the children and as we move into the next academic year he will begin to work with all secondaries and the college also.

Finally, I would like to thank all staff for your hard work during the assessment and exam season so far and for the care you are taking to support children and young people during the current heatwave. Your efforts to keep pupils safe, comfortable and ready to learn are truly appreciated.

Vicky Briggs

Director of Education for The Challenge Academy Trust (TCAT)



TCAT Plus: Supporting our people across the Trust

Over the last half term, members of the TCAT central team have been visiting academies to meet colleagues and share more about the TCAT staff offer, now brought together under the banner of TCAT Plus.

These visits have included short presentations alongside informal drop-in sessions, giving staff the opportunity to learn more and ask questions in a relaxed setting.

Ben Logan, Head of HR for the Trust, said: "Our 1,500-strong workforce is our greatest asset. Our teachers and support staff play a vital role in enabling our young people to fulfil their potential."

He added that the TCAT staff offer represents a clear commitment to colleagues across the Trust - ensuring fair and manageable workloads, promoting health and wellbeing, supporting continuous professional development, providing clear pathways for career progression, and offering transparent, fair pay alongside a range of additional benefits. During the drop-in sessions, the central team had the chance to meet staff on a one-to-one basis, offering guidance and practical demonstrations on how to access some of the wider wellbeing services available. These include the School Wellbeing Employee Assistance Programme (delivered through SAS) and exclusive rewards through TCAT Plus and the Engage Spending App.

The School Wellbeing Wellbeing Portal provides a wide range of free, confidential support services for TCAT employees, including counselling, physiotherapy, nurse advice, GP access, menopause support and mindfulness resources. It has been particularly encouraging to hear the positive feedback from colleagues already making use of these services:

"After suffering with knee issues resulting in reduced mobility for over 8 months, being passed from GP to physio and not being heard when I asked for an MRI to understand what was happening, I turned to School Wellbeing's Employee Assistance Programme. I popped my details into the system, was called by a GP within an hour and within 30 minutes of that telephone conversation, I had an MRI referral letter to pass to my GP. This letter ensured that the physio passed me to a consultant and I received my MRI just a few weeks later. My recovery is now progressing as we have a full understanding of the damage in my knee. I do believe that I would still be battling the system if I hadn't had that extra push from School Wellbeing."

Please find a copy of the brochure detailing the offer here:

[TCAT PLUS BROCHURE 2026 \(1\).pdf](#)

Ben added: "We are continually reviewing and developing our offer, and we really value feedback from colleagues. If you have suggestions or ideas to help us improve, please do get in touch."

For feedback or suggestions, please contact hr@tcat.uk.com

Leaders gather for reflection

Leaders from across The Challenge Academy Trust recently came together at the centre for an evening focused on reflection, collaboration and future planning as they explored the trust's Annual Impact Report.

The event mirrored recent discussions held with trustees and provided an important opportunity for school and trust leaders to hear directly from the young people whose experiences continue to shape TCAT's direction.

Students involved in the Turin project, representatives from Student Parliament and Sports Plus, and members of Youth Parliament shared their experiences and perspectives with attendees, offering valuable insight into the impact of opportunities available across the trust.

Their enthusiasm, confidence and ambition were a powerful reminder of the importance of the work taking place across TCAT schools and wider projects.

The evening also highlighted several exciting developments currently underway across

the trust. Leaders received updates on the ongoing transformation of Tyn Y Felin, TCAT's residential centre on Anglesey, alongside progress being made through the trust's solar power project and wider sustainability work.

Colleagues also explored the continued development of key trust-wide initiatives including TCAT Reads, the trust's teaching and learning strategy, TCAT Talks and the wider people strategy. Together, these initiatives demonstrate the breadth of work taking place across the organisation to strengthen opportunities, outcomes and experiences for students and staff alike.

The event created valuable space for leaders to share ideas, reflect on impact and strengthen collective understanding of the projects helping shape the future of the trust.

The evening concluded with a selection of food provided by TCAT's catering partners, giving attendees the chance to continue conversations in an informal setting and round off a purposeful and inspiring event.

South Wirral High celebrates 40 years at heart of community

South Wirral High School recently marked a major milestone as the school celebrated its 40th anniversary, recognising four decades of service, achievement and community spirit.

To commemorate the occasion, the school launched its special "From Then to Tomorrow" campaign - a programme of activities designed to honour the school's history while looking ahead to the future.

A number of community-led initiatives formed part of the celebrations, bringing together current students, staff, governors, alumni and local residents. One of the standout projects was the renovation of the school's Legacy Bridge, alongside the creation of a commemorative time capsule that captures memories and messages from across the school community for future generations.

As part of the anniversary celebrations, staff, students and former pupils were also invited to leave a lasting mark on the school by purchasing engraved bricks for the Legacy Bridge project, helping to preserve the school's story for years to come. The school additionally hosted a series of commemorative exhibitions featuring photographs, memorabilia and historical displays, giving visitors the opportunity to reflect on the rich history of South Wirral High School and the many people who have contributed to its success over the past 40 years.

In a further show of community commitment, staff and governors completed an impressive 40km sponsored walk in honour of the anniversary. The challenge raised thousands of pounds for Teenage Cancer Trust, supporting young people and families affected by cancer.

The anniversary celebrations highlighted not only the proud history of South Wirral High School, but also its continued dedication to community, opportunity and future generations of learners.



Sir Thomas Boteler marks 500th anniversary

Sir Thomas Boteler Church of England High School marked a significant milestone on Thursday 23rd April, with a commemorative service at St Elphin's Church to recognise the 500th anniversary of the school's founding.

The Boteler 500 Commemoration Service brought together current students, staff, alumni and members of the wider community to reflect on the school's history and its continuing role in education. The service acknowledged Sir Thomas Boteler's heritage while recognising the ongoing contribution of past and present members of the school community.

Speaking after the event, Headteacher Mrs Scott-Herron said: "It was a truly unforgettable occasion and one that reflected the very best of our school, our history and our community."

The service featured performances by students from Alderman Bolton Community Primary School and St Elphin's CE Primary School, highlighting links between local schools and the shared educational community. Contributions from current Boteler students and alumni included readings and musical and dance performances. The service was

led by Boteler's School Chaplain Mike Wildsmith.

Readings were delivered by staff and former students, including members of the Old Boys Union, representing the school's alumni from its former grammar school era. A series of readings titled Boteler Voices saw students present extracts from memories and reflections of past students and staff, illustrating experiences of the school across different generations.

Mrs Scott-Herron added: "Our students were absolutely amazing. They represented the very best of Boteler in every sense."

The school's Publicity Manager, Alice Roberts commented: "The service was more than a commemoration - it was a reaffirmation of everything Boteler stands for."

The school has also released a documentary video to commemorate the anniversary, produced by Publicity Manager Alice Roberts. The documentary tells the story of the school's history from 1526, right up to this moment in time.

The final lines are "From it's Tudor origins to the current classrooms of the present day, the school stands as a lasting institution — adapting with the times, serving its students and

shaping the town it has called home for generations."

The video can be seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vpFEN0P0ukQ> or on the designated school webpage, which also includes an overview of the 500 year history of the school and links to historical documents: <https://www.boteler.org.uk/boteler500/>



Author's mission to inspire next generation of readers



Curtis Jobling – the acclaimed author illustrator and creator behind some of children's television's best-loved characters – is now helping spark a new culture of reading, creativity and confidence across The Challenge Academy Trust.

When Curtis Jobling walks into a school hall, pupils may initially recognise him as the creator behind Bob the Builder, Raa Raa the Noisy Lion or Netflix fantasy series Wolf King.

But his real purpose inside TCAT schools goes much deeper than sharing stories from a remarkable creative career.

As the trust's reading champion, Curtis is leading a growing initiative designed to inspire reading for pleasure, strengthen creative writing and build confidence in young people across both primary and secondary settings.



"The hope of the relationship is that I provide inspiration to students as a champion of literacy," he explains.

"It's not just promoting reading for pleasure and general literacy, but also creative writing, and the ability to be able to write, which I think can be missing in some children's toolkits."

Over recent weeks, Curtis has visited TCAT primary schools, delivering energetic and interactive talks that combine storytelling, illustration, animation and live readings from his books. His aim is simple: to help children discover a genuine love of reading

"You can't just expect children to write if they don't read," he says. "It's like asking someone to run before they've even learned how to walk."



That philosophy sits at the heart of the partnership. Curtis believes reading opens doors not only academically, but personally and creatively too.

Curtis describes pupils 'clamouring for books' after sessions and staying behind to ask questions.

The work is also evolving beyond assemblies and author talks. Plans are now being developed for a trust-wide creative writing and illustration competition, culminating in a celebration event where pupils perform and share their own work publicly.



"Oracy and communication are a huge part of a child's development," Curtis says enthusiastically. "If we're hosting a competition, let's get the kids to read their work out on stage and build their confidence."

For Curtis, the work carries personal significance. A former pupil of Penketh High School, he knows first-hand the power schools can have in shaping creative futures.

"I think a library in any school is the beating heart of a school,"

he reflects. "It's a peaceful space where children can step out of the rat race and just gather themselves. The best librarians provide a pastoral service that can't be dismissed."

He also believes local success stories matter. "When it's a local voice telling the kids that they can do this for a living, that has a profoundly bigger impact," he says. "That message of 'If Curtis do this for a living, then perhaps so can I' cannot be underestimated."

As TCAT continues to strengthen its focus on literacy, creativity and oracy, Curtis's work is helping pupils see reading not simply as a school task, but as something transformative – a gateway to imagination, opportunity and self-belief. And, perhaps most importantly, he wants children to hold on to the things they love.

"Keep your hobby," he says. "Take it as far as you can. At the very least, you'll have a worthwhile pastime for the rest of your life. At the most, you can make a living doing the thing that you love."

You can follow or find out more about Curtis Jobling at the following:

www.curtisjobling.com

<https://x.com/curtisjobling>

<https://www.instagram.com/curtis.jobling/>

<https://www.facebook.com/wereworld-books/>



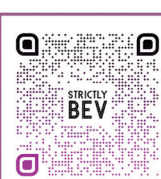
Hi, I'm Bev - stepping right out of my comfort zone, all to support a very important cause.

This isn't just about learning to dance. It's about supporting an incredible charity that provides compassionate care and dignity to people and families facing life-limiting illness.

As a Headteacher, I believe in showing young people the importance of resilience - of trying something new, even when it's scary - and of giving back to others. This challenge is exactly that.

I would love for you to be part of this journey with me. With every donation, no matter the size, we can all make a difference to the lives of so many.

THANK YOU.



SCAN THE QR CODE TO VISIT MY FUNDRAISING PAGE. REGULAR UPDATES WILL BE POSTED AS I KEEP ON DANCING!

Teaching and Learning Hub

TCAT's Teaching and Learning Hub is a cross-phase group bringing together representatives from primary, secondary and post 16.

Members meet six times a year to share best practice, collaborate on the development of new strategies, and exchange practical tools that support colleagues in enhancing teaching and learning.

TCAT leaders attended Steplab training day

Leaders from across The Challenge Academy Trust took part in an exciting professional development event delivered by leading coaching and professional development specialists Steplab.

The intensive training day brought together senior leaders, headteachers and colleagues from across the trust to strengthen approaches to coaching, teaching and professional development.

Steplab's programmes were designed to help schools develop evidence-informed practice, unite leaders around a shared vision for improving teaching and learning, and build cultures where staff development could thrive.

The training focused on key areas including instructional coaching, effective lesson observations, impactful feedback conversations and embedding high-quality professional development across schools and trusts.

The event formed part of TCAT's continued commitment to investing in staff development and ensuring colleagues had access to the latest research and best practice in education.

Steplab delivered training to school and trust leaders across the country, with events designed to be highly practical and collaborative.

Introducing the CPD Corner

Colleagues across TCAT are being encouraged to engage with a new half-termly professional development publication designed to share practical, evidence-informed teaching strategies that can be implemented immediately in the classroom.

Created collaboratively by the Trust's Teaching and Learning Hub, The CPD Corner has been developed by Matthew Hennessey, TCAT Primary Teaching and Learning lead. The bulletin aims to provide accessible, high-impact professional development for teachers and teaching assistants across both primary and secondary settings. The first edition focused on chunking information within lessons and frequently checking for understanding. The second edition focuses on 'The iTeach Strategy' – a framework for using iPads to enhance classroom teaching while ensuring pedagogy remains at the heart of practice. The publication explores evidence-informed approaches including explicit instruction, structured practice, modelling, feedback and responsive teaching strategies.

Matthew explained that the purpose of the bulletin is to make professional development practical, manageable and immediately useful for busy staff "We wanted to create something that colleagues could pick up and use straight away – just simple strategies grounded in strong teaching practice."

He added: "Professional development is most effective when it feels relevant to everyday classroom experiences. The bulletin is designed to share approaches that genuinely help improve learning and support great teaching across the Trust."

The publication highlights how technology can amplify excellent teaching rather than replace it, reinforcing the importance of teacher explanation, modelling and responsive feedback.

Key features from the second edition include guidance on live modelling with iPads, using portable visualisers, annotating pupil work for whole-class feedback and implementing structured "I Do, We Do, You Do" practice approaches.

One of the central messages throughout the bulletin is that effective teaching must always come before technology. The edition outlines five whole-school best practice principles, including "Pedagogy First, Technology Second" and "Fewer Apps, Used Deeply", encouraging staff to focus on quality instruction and purposeful classroom routines.

Matthew hopes the bulletin will help strengthen collaboration and professional dialogue across schools within the Trust. "There is so much excellent practice happening across TCAT schools.

The CPD Corner is an opportunity to share ideas, promote reflection and support colleagues in refining their teaching in small but meaningful ways."

The CPD Corner will be published every half-term, with each edition focusing on a single high-impact strategy that staff can apply immediately within their own classrooms.

Colleagues can expect future editions to continue offering concise, evidence-informed guidance alongside practical classroom examples and strategies designed to support teaching and learning across all phases.

<https://www.tcat.uk.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/The-CPD-Corner-Summer-2-2026.pdf>



Discover the opportunities at Ty'n-y-Felin

Schools across The Challenge Academy Trust are being encouraged to explore the exciting educational opportunities available at Ty'n-y-Felin Outdoor Education Centre – a unique setting where learning extends far beyond the classroom.

Offering curriculum-linked residential experiences throughout the year, Ty'n-y-Felin provides pupils with the chance to develop confidence, resilience, teamwork and subject-specific skills through immersive outdoor learning. With programmes designed to support a range of curriculum areas including History, English, Maths and Science, the centre gives schools the opportunity to bring learning to life in a memorable

and engaging environment.

History visits allow pupils to explore themes such as Welsh resistance to Norman rule, the Norman invasions of Anglesey and the use of landscapes as historical evidence. Students are encouraged to think critically about how geography influenced conflict and how historical interpretation can be shaped by the environment around them.

English programmes focus on creative and non-fiction writing, reading comprehension and storytelling inspired by outdoor exploration. Pupils can produce recounts, persuasive writing, instructional texts and survival narratives while engaging with meaningful real-world experiences.

Maths activities challenge students to apply their learning in practical contexts through measurement, scale, coordinates, bearings and problem-solving activities. Orienteering tasks and route-planning exercises help develop mathematical reasoning while encouraging collaboration and resilience.

The centre's Science opportunities also provide schools with flexible ways to support fieldwork, investigation and environmental learning in a hands-on outdoor setting.

Alongside educational benefits, Ty'n-y-Felin offers residential facilities and catering options, helping schools create fully immersive experiences for pupils. The centre continues to grow as a valuable destination for schools looking to enrich their curriculum while supporting

pupils' personal development and wellbeing.

Ty'n-y-Felin is not only available for school visits. Staff across the Trust can also hire the centre for personal use, offering an affordable opportunity for weekends away with friends and family in a stunning outdoor setting. The current staff offer includes a self-catered two-night stay from Friday afternoon to Sunday, with access to an on-site kitchenette equipped with everything needed for a comfortable stay. Guests are welcome to bring their own linen or hire bedding for £5 per person.

Staff rates are:

1–15 people: **£500**

16–30 people: **bespoke pricing available**

30+ people: **£1,200**

Availability remains from June to August, although bookings are filling quickly.

Double accreditation for Ty'n-y-Felin

The Challenge Academy Trust (TCAT) is pleased to share that its outdoor education centre, Ty'n-y-Felin, has achieved two nationally recognised accreditations – the Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Quality Badge and the Adventure Mark. These awards recognise high-quality provision, strong safety standards, and excellent outdoor learning experiences.

Set in a beautiful location near Rhoscolyn on Anglesey, Ty'n-y-Felin offers a wide range of activities designed to challenge and inspire young people. These include team-building games, problem-solving activities, orienteering, astronomy, archery, campfires, beach art and watersports.

The centre welcomes schools, colleges, and youth groups, making it an excellent venue for residential visits, reward trips, and curriculum-linked learning experiences. Owned by Lymm Grammar School Trust and now leased to The Challenge Academy Trust (TCAT), Ty'n-y-Felin has benefited from significant investment and development. Many TCAT students have already enjoyed visits to the centre, and it is the ambition of the trust for every child to have the opportunity to experience Ty'n-y-felin at some stage during their time at a TCAT school.

These accreditations reflect TCAT's commitment to providing safe, high-quality outdoor education that helps young people build confidence, resilience and independence. The LotC Quality Badge also gives reassurance to schools and parents, confirming that the centre meets nationally recognised standards for safety, learning and organisation.

Joe Obiro, Centre Manager at Ty'n-y-Felin, said: "We are incredibly proud to receive both the LotC Quality Badge and Adventure Mark. This recognition reflects the dedication of our team to providing safe, high-quality and inspiring experiences for every young person who visits. Outdoor learning plays a vital role in building confidence and creating lasting memories, and these accreditations show our commitment to the highest standards.

TCAT looks forward to welcoming more schools and groups to Ty'n-y-Felin and continuing to provide memorable outdoor learning opportunities. For further information, please visit [Tyn Y Felin Outdoor Education Centre](#) For bookings and enquiries contact l.shawcross@tcat.uk.com

STEM team takes top prize

Every year, teams from across TCAT compete against one another in this prestigious STEM Challenge. It is not for the faint-hearted; it demands a high level of resilience, commitment, and teamwork from all students involved.

This year's brief was to design a building for the village of Coniston in the Lake District, which has a population of 546. The building needed to benefit the local community while remaining unobtrusive and sustainable.

Students were challenged to use a wide variety of materials and innovative methods to ensure the design was as environmentally friendly as possible.

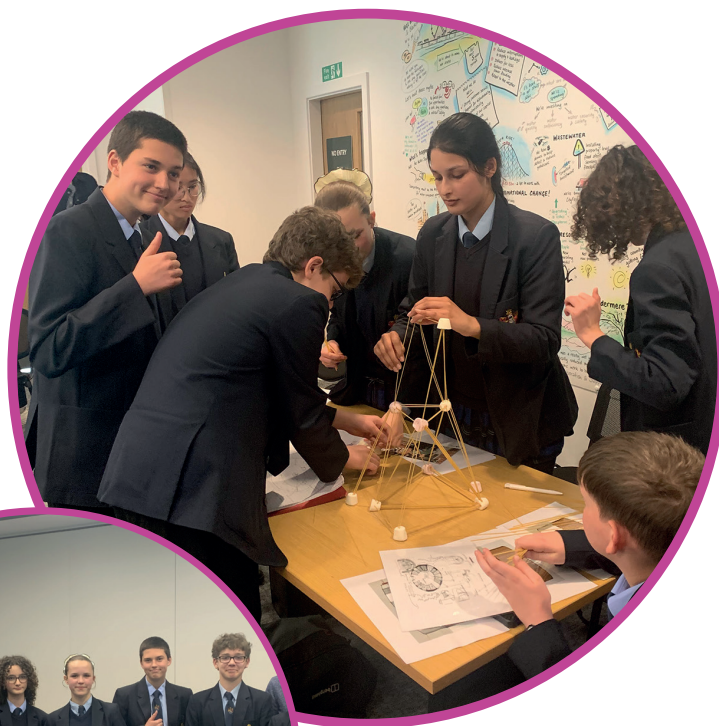
The students embarked on a 20-week journey of research, collaboration, and self-discovery. The team took on a range of professional roles, including Project Manager, Assistant Project Manager, Materials Engineers, Head of Innovation, Sustainability Officers, and Design Consultants.

Weekly meetings soon expanded into evening and weekend sessions, supported by regular group chat communication. Research was intensive, with students constantly refining both the design and construction aspects of the project. Close collaboration developed between the materials engineers and designers, ensuring that material choices complemented the architectural vision.

The team carefully considered how innovation could be successfully integrated into both the build and the long-term operation of the building, while also aiming to significantly reduce – and potentially eliminate – their carbon footprint. The final design included a versatile community space capable of hosting farmers' markets, craft events, children's workshops, and music festivals.

A range of innovative ideas were incorporated into the project, including:

- **Spray-on solar panels using quantum dot technology**
- **Rainwater harvesting systems**
- **3D-printed concrete walls**
- **Water treatment solutions such as an anaerobic baffled reactor**
- **A constructed wetland with reeds to naturally filter water**



After 20 weeks of hard work, Year 9 students Eleanor Berry, Adam Taylor, Magdalena Spinu, Milos Balzevic, Bella Chiu, Ethan Moi-Richards, and Sara Chauhan attended the finals at United Utilities Headquarters in Lingley Mere.

There, they had the opportunity to meet students from other TCAT schools, share ideas, and discuss their projects. The team then presented their design to a panel of three United Utilities Directors, followed by a question-and-answer session. Special thanks must go to Mr Evan Phillips from the United Utilities Graduate Programme, who visited the school every Tuesday lunchtime to offer guidance and support.

We are also extremely grateful to United Utilities for their investment of time and resources, which helped make this project such a success.

Thanks are also due to the organisers at United Utilities, the catering team who provided refreshments, and the graduates who supported schools each week.

Finally, we would like to thank Mr Chris Hillidge from TCAT, who organised the programme on behalf of TCAT.

At the awards ceremony, we were delighted to receive the prize for Most Sustainable Building – a testament to the students' commitment to environmental responsibility.

Even more excitingly, Sir Thomas Boteler Church of England High School was crowned overall winner for the second time in three years.

Congratulations to an outstanding, hardworking team on a truly remarkable achievement.

As Jill Moules prepares to retire, we reflect on the lasting impact she has made through her leadership of teacher training across TCAT. Joining the Trust in 2017, at a pivotal moment when TCAT became an accredited Initial Teacher Training Partner offering a School Direct programme, Jill played a central role in shaping a school-led approach to developing future educators. As TCAT Lead for Initial Teacher Training, she has worked closely with colleagues across the Trust to build a programme focused on developing strong, highly effective teachers. TCAT Train to Teach has since recruited and trained more than 120 primary and secondary teachers – all equipped with the skills and confidence to help pupils thrive and achieve their potential.

In brief, what was your professional background before TCAT?

I began my teaching career in 1983 at Maghull High School, teaching English. In 1989, I was appointed Head of the English Faculty. In 1998, I joined Bridgewater High School in a part-time role teaching English and Drama, which allowed me to balance my professional commitments with spending more time with my young children. After returning to full-time teaching, I was delighted to secure the position of Professional Mentor at Bridgewater High School. One aspect of this role I particularly enjoyed was supporting and monitoring the progress of trainee teachers. During this time, I worked closely with universities in Manchester and Liverpool to facilitate high-quality teaching placements.

Is there a moment or period of time early in your career that confirmed you had chosen the right path?

Shaping Future Teachers: Jill reflects on a career in education



I did not realise it at the time, but my teacher training proved to be a defining period in my life that confirmed I had chosen the right path and shaped my outlook throughout my career. I have just realised that most people reading this article would not have been born when I trained to teach! In 1982, School Direct Training was not an option, so I chose to train to teach English at Liverpool University.

My first teaching placement was at Quarry Bank Comprehensive School, where I remember being excited to discover that John Lennon had been a former pupil. That first experience of teaching English confirmed for me that I had chosen the right career. After completing my PGCE, I went on to teach English for forty-one years and found it deeply rewarding throughout. A particularly important influ-

ence during my training year was my mentor, John Aylin. While I cannot recall the specific advice he gave, I vividly remember how he made me feel – valued, supported and believed in. He clearly cared about my development and my future success as a teacher, and that encouragement sustained me throughout my first placement. From that experience, I learnt the lasting importance of building strong, positive relationships – something I have tried to carry forward throughout my career with both pupils and trainee teachers.

Can you outline your role and if it has evolved over the years you have been doing it?

I feel extremely fortunate to have spent my career doing the two things I enjoy most: teaching and mentoring trainee teachers. Throughout

my career, I have supported teacher training on a part-time basis, which has enabled me to remain in the classroom for forty-one years – a role I have always loved. Over time, my role as an ITT Lead has evolved significantly. When TCAT Train to Teach gained recognition as a Lead Partner for the School Direct programme, we were able to take ownership of key areas including recruitment, selection, and the delivery of a comprehensive ITT curriculum.

Conferences are delivered through TCAT's Professional Development Centre by a team of highly effective classroom teachers and leaders. Throughout the year, trainees develop their skills and confidence while being mentored by experienced and dedicated teachers across our primary and secondary schools within the Trust.

What have been the highlights and most rewarding aspect of the role?

One of the highlights of leading a teacher training programme has been watching trainees develop over the course of the year. There is something very special about working with people at the start of their journey. They bring enthusiasm, fresh perspectives and a genuine desire to make a difference, and it is a privilege to help guide and shape that potential. I have also greatly valued the strong sense of collaboration that underpins the TCAT Train to Teach programme. Working with dedicated mentors and school leaders across our partnership schools creates a shared commitment to developing high-quality teachers, and that

'What has always stayed with me are the small moments: a word of encouragement that helps put a pupil back on track, a lesson that sparks curiosity, or simply being someone a young person can rely on'

Jill Moules

team ethos is a real strength. Perhaps most rewarding of all is seeing former trainees go on to work across the Trust, delivering high-quality teaching and making a meaningful difference to the experiences and outcomes of pupils in our community.

What part of teacher training has given you the greatest sense of purpose over the years?

The aspect of teacher training that has given me the greatest sense of purpose is the opportunity to make a lasting difference beyond my own classroom. Supporting new teachers as they develop their skills, confidence and professional identity is always incredibly meaningful. Knowing that the work we do helps to develop teachers who will positively impact the lives of pupils – both in our community and beyond – is what has always driven and inspired me

What do you think makes a truly great teacher, and can that always be taught?

A truly great teacher combines strong subject knowledge with the ability to create a positive classroom climate, where pupils engage with learning and believe in their own ability

to succeed. Many of the skills needed to become an effective teacher can be developed through high-quality training. On our programme, trainees study educational theory, work with experienced mentors, and learn how to plan engaging lessons and adapt their teaching to meet the needs of all learners. The training year provides a strong foundation, but becoming a truly great teacher is an ongoing journey. Exceptional teachers continually reflect on their practice, adapt their approach, and remain committed to making a positive impact on the lives of their pupils.

Over the years, how have you seen teacher training change?

Initial Teacher Training has experienced significant change over the years, shaped by government policy, educational research, and the evolving needs of schools. Positive developments include extended support for Early Career Teachers, a greater focus on meeting the needs of all pupils, and stronger quality assurance across training providers. While the pace of change has sometimes been challenging, the core purpose remains the same: to develop skilled, reflective teachers who are committed to helping pupils achieve both personal growth and academic success.

What achievement are you most proud of in your career?

The achievement I am most

proud of is working alongside colleagues to deliver a high-quality teacher training programme. It has been incredibly rewarding to see the impact this has had in developing confident, skilled teachers who go on to make a real difference in their classrooms. Seeing former trainees grow into strong practitioners – and often into leadership roles – is especially fulfilling and a real source of pride.

If you could point to one lasting impact you hope you've had on the profession, what would it be?

If I could point to one lasting impact, I hope it would be helping to train highly skilled teachers who continue to reflect on and refine their practice throughout their careers. In doing so, they can create the best possible conditions for every child to achieve their full potential

Have you ever seen someone who doubted themselves become an exceptional teacher? What made the difference?

Yes – and those are often the most memorable success stories. I remember visiting a trainee early in the training year who felt overwhelmed and unsure of their ability. Just a few weeks later, I returned to see them teaching with confidence, building strong relationships with their pupils and clearly enjoying the experience. That transformation was incredibly powerful to witness. It is a reminder of how much can be achieved with the right support.

What makes the difference is a combination of high-quality guidance, opportunities to practise and reflect, and – crucially – someone who believes in them. Over time, this support builds both confidence and resilience.

What qualities would

make someone well suited to working in teacher training today?

Working in teacher training today requires strong classroom expertise alongside a genuine commitment to developing others. The most effective teacher trainers are reflective, patient and able to provide clear, supportive feedback that helps trainees grow in confidence.

It is also important to be adaptable and open to new ideas, particularly as teacher training continues to evolve. Above all, a love of teaching and a willingness to share that enthusiasm with others are essential, because teacher training is about inspiring and shaping the next generation of educators.

What would you say to a young hopeful teacher about the difference they could make to a young person's life?

I would say that teaching is one of the few professions where you see, every day, the difference you can make. It is not just about academic progress – it is about building confidence, inspiring ambition, and helping young people believe in themselves. What has always stayed with me are the small moments: a word of encouragement that helps put a pupil back on track, a lesson that sparks curiosity, or simply being someone a young person can rely on.

Those moments can have a lasting impact far beyond the classroom. As a teacher, you have the opportunity to shape lives in ways you may not fully realise at the time, and that is what makes the profession so special and worthwhile. Teaching is about people, and if you can help a young person believe in themselves, you have given them something that lasts a lifetime.

Academy improvements set for Summer

This summer, schools across The Challenge Academy Trust (TCAT) will benefit from a wide-ranging programme of investment designed to improve facilities, enhance sustainability and create better environments for students and staff.

Paul Sinnott, Head of Facilities Management at TCAT, outlined a number of key projects taking place across the trust over the coming months. While this year's programme has been carefully prioritised, significant work is still being delivered across several academies.

One of the largest projects is the first phase of roof replacement works at Dallam community primary school, representing a major investment in maintaining and improving the school estate. Additional maintenance and improvement works are also being carried out across a number of sites, including drainage repairs and CCTV upgrades.

At Beamont Collegiate Academy, the trust is contributing towards an upgrade of the MUGA, while Bridgewater High School will benefit from the installation of a new external lift. The project will improve accessibility across the site and ensure more areas of the building can be accessed by wheelchair users and those with mobility needs.

Dallam Community Primary has already seen the completion of a major kitchen refurbishment. The upgraded kitchen facilities will support improved catering provision for students moving forward.

Meanwhile, sustainability remains a major focus for the trust.

Phase two of TCAT's solar energy programme is now progressing, with new or expanded solar panel systems planned for Bridgewater High School and Broomfield's Junior School.

At Appleton Thorn primary, the existing solar provision will almost double in size, helping the school move closer towards meeting its energy needs through renewable sources.

In addition, work continues behind the scenes on a major ground source heat pump project, demonstrating TCAT's ongoing commitment to long-term sustainability and environmental responsibility.

At Priestley College a new hockey pitch is being installed as Sport Priestley looks to building on its record success in recent years. Paul said: "These projects are about improving the day-to-day experience for students and staff while also investing in the future sustainability of our schools." The programme reflects TCAT's continued commitment to providing high-quality learning environments for every school within the trust.

Praise for staff response following serious incident

On Wednesday 17th June, at the end of the school day, a serious incident occurred outside Beamont Collegiate Academy involving a Year 7 pupil.

The student was crossing the road near the pedestrian crossing when, despite the pedestrian signal showing green and the road traffic lights on red, she was struck by an electric scooter.

Staff were on duty in their usual supervision positions and responded immediately. Colleagues quickly came to the student's aid and provided emergency first aid.

Emergency services attended promptly and student was taken to Alder Hey Children's Hospital by ambulance, where she received urgent medical care. While she sustained serious injuries and faces a significant period of recovery, we are pleased to share that she is now stable, comfortable and recovering well.

This was an extremely distressing incident for all involved, and we recognise the impact it has had on staff and students. The professionalism, courage and calm response shown by colleagues in such challenging circumstances is something the Trust is incredibly proud of.

A message from TCAT CEO:

"I would like to personally thank all staff at Beamont Collegiate Academy who responded so quickly and effectively. Their actions undoubtedly made a life-saving difference. The care, professionalism and commitment shown in such a difficult situation truly reflects the values of our Trust. We are immensely proud of our staff, and our thoughts remain with the student and her family as she continues her recovery."

We continue to keep the student and her family in our thoughts, and support is available for any staff or students affected by the incident.