



ELMWOOD SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2025 – NO. 208

www.elmwood.walsall.sch.uk



Year 11 London trip

On Monday 24th February, Year 11 pupils were given an amazing opportunity to take in the sights of the capital city, and divulge in the delights of the Tower of London- thanks to Mr Price who won the funding for the trip through the Access Fund for Schools scheme.



We travelled on the fast train directly from Stafford to London Euston which gave our thriving city dwellers the opportunity to experience fast and effective travel directly into the heart of London.

We then walked the distance from the station to the Tower of London taking in the sights and smells of the busy capital city. Our boys represented the school in the exemplary way we knew they would and were perfect gentleman for the whole day.



On arrival to the Tower we were treated to a workshop that provided an insight into life within this historical wonder learning about prisoners that have stayed there, their crimes and escape attempts....and how the place was actually the inspiration for London zoo!!

The day seemed to pass all too quickly but that was because everyone had such a wonderful time. We managed to grab a bite to eat for tea and catch the tube back to central London so we could embark our train ride home just in time for bed.

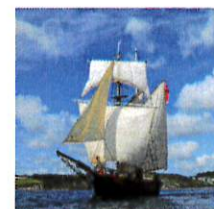
Thank you to all parents and carers who made the journey out to school to collect children during the evening. It meant we could enjoy our day to the maximum and provide an experience and memories that will last a lifetime. Thanks also to the wonderful staff that accompanied the trip and ensured everyone had the best of times. Same time next year Mr Price?..... we certainly hope so!

Report by Mrs Francis, Deputy Head

SUPPORT FROM THE MATRIX TRUST

The school community would just like to say a massive thank you to The Matrix Trust for their commitment shown to the pupils of Elmwood prior to joining them on 1st September 2025. Pupils are particularly pleased with the following:

- Commitment to change the lighting in school as this has been raised via school council about causing headaches and being annoying due to the sound (shared by staff also).
- Help with purchasing brand new PC's for every pupil in school by Easter 2025.
- Funding a trip to Italy for 3 Year 10 pupils where they will train to be a Gladiator, visit the Vatican City and a Football Stadium.
- Help with funding for 10 Year 8 pupils to sail from Bude to Lands End in a 100ft topsail schooner.
- Providing a 2 day IGCSE English Masterclass for our Year 11's as they prepare for their exams in May 2025.



Report by Mr Cross, Headteacher

STAFFING NEWS

We were pleased to welcome Simon Murcott, new PE teacher on Monday 17th March 2025. Simon was able to join us earlier than expected and is already settling into his new role well.

Also a big thank you to everyone who has helped to make the school run smoothly during the recent industrial action.

WALSALL SEND SERVICE NEWSLETTER

The spring edition of the above newsletter is available on the courses and information page of the school website.

There are lots of useful articles that parents and carers may find of interest including workshops, parent groups, youth opportunities and details of upcoming half term breaks.

OUT AND ABOUT NEWS

After a suggestion from Mr Middleton, Pupils have enjoyed the craft of repousse (French for relief). The activity has involved pupils drawing an image, sticking this to a metal piece and 'drawing' the image by hitting a hammer upon a 6" nail (acting as a chisel). The metal is held upon a sandbag to keep it secure. Some pupils have even shaped the flat metal sheet to enhance the artwork. We have turned the edges on a rock to create a small change bowl for pupils to take home. Pupils have practiced the virtues of creativity & patience. They've had fun giving this a 'bash'.



Following on from our pupils planting spring bulbs at Walsall Arboretum in the autumn term, Fiona from Walsall Arboretum has kindly forwarded photos from the gallery garden of pupils efforts. The tulips are just getting going and the daffodils are doing great. Well done to all who helped to enhance our local area.

Report by Mr Whittaker, Head of Outdoor Learning

YEAR 7 VISIT TO LEGOLAND DISCOVERY



Year 7 pupils embarked on a visit to Legoland Discovery in Birmingham on 10th March to strengthen their knowledge of STEM and the wider curriculum. We all started with a ride on the Knight's Quest where pupils had to shoot Lego characters and objects to gain the most points where Keegan in 7b got the highest score of 149,857. Following this, pupils all then took part in a workshop where they had to build a bobsled and launcher, experimenting with different weights to see how this affected the potential/kinetic energy and distance they travelled. After lunch pupils had the pleasure of watching a 4D film on Ninjago then free time around the venue exploring the soft play and building a range of Lego to experiment with. Thank you to all the staff that went, making the day such a success and to NA cars for getting us there and back. Report by Mr Hinsley, Trip Lead



We are excited to share that our recent educational trip to LEGO Discovery in Birmingham was a fantastic success! The pupils actively participated in a workshop, enjoyed various rides, and had an amazing overall experience. They demonstrated excellent teamwork in different groups and had a fun-filled day with lots of laughter and new friendships. During the workshop, pupils engaged in hands-on activities that brought subjects like science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) to life. They built their own LEGO models, learned about the principles of design and technology, and explored concepts such as forces, motion, and gravity. This interactive experience not only enhanced their learning but also encouraged creativity and problem-solving skills. The pupils were absolutely thrilled with the trip! They expressed a lot of excitement and joy throughout the day. Many of them mentioned how much they enjoyed the hands-on workshop and the opportunity to build their own LEGO models. The rides were a big hit as well, with lots of laughter and cheers. They also appreciated working in different groups, which helped them make new friends and strengthen existing friendships. Overall, the trip was filled with positive energy, and the pupils left with wonderful memories. Report by Stacey Urmson, Teaching Assistant



UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

This month our featured member of staff under the spotlight is Frankie Smith, Teaching Assistant.



How long have you worked at Elmwood? *Just over a year.*

What do you love about your job? *I love how every day is different. I love to see how pupils achieve things out of their comfort zone and show resilience in learning new things.*

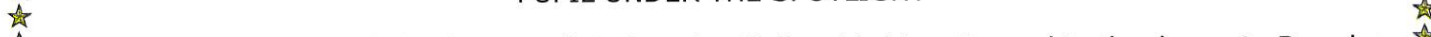
What films have you watched recently? *Snow White, Wicked, Encanto.*

Favourite Holiday? *Efteling theme park in Holland. It's a quirky park based on fairy tales with rides, shows and loads to do.*

Tell us something that people would be surprised to hear? *My main hobby used to be windsurfing. I used to go to the beach regularly to windsurf. These days I prefer just to do impossible jigsaws in my free time, either all the same colour, pattern or double sided.*



PUPIL UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT



Our pupil under the spotlight this month is Brandon Holland in Year 9 so a big thank you to Brandon for his responses.

What do you like most about coming to Elmwood School? *Out and about.*

Have you any thoughts about what you might like to do after leaving Elmwood? *Rodbaston College.*

In your spare time, what do you most like to do? *Free time.*

Have you done anything that we might be surprised to learn about? *Snakes.*

If you could go anywhere or do anything, what would you choose? *Lorry driving.*



GOVERNOR NEWS

Following the term of office coming to an end on 16th March 2025 for Sarah Thornton, parent governor. We are pleased to confirm that Sarah will be continuing to be an active part of the governing body as she has taken on the role of coopted governor with effect from 17th March.

A very big thank you to Sarah for her support and we look forward in continuing to work together.

FREE FOOD ON OFFER

Parents and carers are able to take advantage of a new scheme that is being run at Manor Farm where free food parcels are available.

Details are contained within the flyer that has been sent by MarvellousMe or by contacting on 07988810297 or via Facebook: The Transition Hub.

WALSALL EXPO



Pupils from Year 10 were lucky enough to visit the Walsall College Hub on 13th March to attend an exhibition of local companies and groups offering ideas for post 16 provision (and beyond). It was the perfect chance for the young people to see what is out there and give them careers options to ponder, together with aspirations to aim for. We were able to ask questions about local opportunities:



from apprenticeships; to what support is available to set up your own business ... and of course we were able to collect lots of goodies (as you can see).



As always, our young people were amazing ambassadors for our school, and it was a pleasure to take them. Report by Miss Pow, Teacher, photographs by Rubina Mumtaz, Teaching Assistant

YEAR 7 THINK TANK TRIP—11.3.25



We are excited to inform you about our recent educational visit to the Think Tank organised by Mr Price. Our pupils had an enriching experience exploring various exhibits and engaging in interactive learning activities. Additionally, they had the wonderful opportunity to visit the planetarium. At the planetarium, our pupils were immersed in a captivating show that explored the wonders of the universe. They journeyed through the night sky, learned about constellations, and travelled through the solar system. The 4K planetarium

system provided bright, sharp images and crystal-clear surround sound, making the experience truly unforgettable. This unique opportunity allowed our pupils to deepen their understanding of astronomy and sparked their curiosity about space. This visit was not only educational but also inspiring, sparking curiosity and a love for learning among our pupils. Report by Stacey Urmson, Teaching Assistant



Sea Life Centre Trip

On the 13th March 2025, six Year 8 pupils and one geography leader from Year 10 had the opportunity to visit the Sea Life Centre in Birmingham, and experience a whole day there as an exposure to deepen their geographical knowledge and understanding in regards to ecosystems, habitats and different environments. Pupils explored many different aquarium areas, such as the gentoo penguin encounter, sea otters, jellyfish, sea horses, sharks, rays, turtles and plenty of

varieties of fish! During lunch pupils portrayed excellent social communication skills playing UNO as a group. I hope all pupils enjoyed themselves and they were exemplary with the public too, a credit to Elmwood School. Also, I would like to thank Frankie Smith, teaching assistant, for her support on this trip and making it such a fantastic day! Report by Miss Rose, Humanities Teacher



ATTWELL FARM 13.3.25



Pupils in the Year 10/11 Rodbaston group had the opportunity to visit Attwell Farm Park near Redditch on Thursday 13th March. They enjoyed looking around an old fire engine and feeding

the farm animals as you can see from the photos. At the end of their visit all of the group had great fun on a jumping pillow. Laughter and smiles for all! Report by Mark Trahearn, Teaching Assistant



DANCE SHOW OPPORTUNITY

On Friday 21st March, pupils across the school were presented with an opportunity to attend a Dance Show at Walsall College and experience the different Performing Arts pathways as a part of their enrichment. During this visit, Elmwood pupils were seated front row and enjoyed watching the Post-16 students complete their exams through utilising performance. Our pupils were amazed and inspired by watching these set choreographic pieces created by the performers, alongside the phenomenal facial expressions used throughout the show, with pupils sharing comments such as "when I go home, I am going to create a dance routine" and others sharing how they would like to potentially study or even become an educator at Walsall College.

I would like to give a special shoutout to Joseph, Junior, Maisie, Cadence-Che, Lily-May, Elise and Hollie for their wonderful engagement and courteous comments of all performers. In addition to the presentation our pupils had within Walsall College, you all represented Elmwood School excellently. Also, huge thanks to Miss Pow and Frankie Smith for supporting on this trip, you were both amazing! Report by Leesha Holland-Mansell, Supply PE Teacher

FEEDBACK FOLLOWING PUPIL RESPONSE TO JOINING THE MATRIX TRUST

Following the pupil assembly on 7th March 2025 staff were tasked with supporting conversations with all pupils regarding how these 3 questions will impact on "The Elmwood Way". The questions posed were:

1. How will joining The Matrix Trust impact on me?
2. What are you worried about could change for you?
3. Is there anything you would like The Matrix Trust to consider for you?

Following the initial questions/statements made by pupils I had the pleasure of responding to these face to face ensuring that their voice was heard and responded to. Here are the final statements and responses collated across the pupil stakeholder engagement event:

How will joining The Matrix Trust impact on me? Pupil question/statement response.

Will the school name change? **No, Elmwood School will maintain its name. We have worked hard to achieve a positive reputation.**

Is the school day going to change? **No, the school day will continue as we know that this supports your needs more effectively.**

Will we have to eat lunches all together? **No, we will maintain our family lunch settings, which makes Christmas all the more special when we all get together.**

Will the class sizes be bigger? **No, class sizes at Elmwood are between 6-8 and this is aligned to other SEMH schools and the DfE and Local Authority. It also fits our curriculum offer and access to off-site learning.**

We will get better trips/experiences? **Yes, there will be enhancements to what we already do i.e. Italy experience being a Gladiator, learn to sail like a pirate on a 100ft topsail schooner.**

New equipment and better environment? **Yes, new LED lighting across the school site to reduce the noise and prevent eye strain and headaches. Also brand new PC's for all pupils meaning we can access better programmes for our learning.**

There will be more courses / qualifications? **Yes, on an individual basis we will have access to other schools to participate in subjects that Elmwood don't typically deliver.**

Staff will change? **All staff who are working at Elmwood now will still be here when we convert as an Academy. Staff's terms and conditions will be protected and their jobs.**

Our uniform will change to blazers, shirts and ties? **No, our uniform will remain as this is aligned to your sensory needs identified within your EHCP as well blazers and ties being a health and safety risk for our practical curriculum.**

What are you worried could change for you? Pupil question/statement response

Nothing will stay the same, as Mr Cross has shared that it won't. **Correct, this was shared during the assembly and additional conversations with pupils.**

Will our work be harder, more academic? **No, the teachers at Elmwood will ensure that the work set will be aligned to your learning needs. However, we will always stretch and challenge you to be the best version of yourself and this is why we remain as one of the most successful SEMH within the Midlands.**

Is Out & About, SULP, Votes for Schools going to be taken off the curriculum? **No, as leaders we are extremely proud of our curriculum and how it stretches you academically as well as socially and emotionally. Our curriculum grows and develops with the changing cohorts i.e. introduction of Geography this year following pupil voice.**

Is the building going to change? **Yes, the environment/building will change for the better ensuring you are proud of how the school looks. The changes will be better for you and the future of Elmwood.**

Nothing, as my previous school was an Academy and it made the school better. **We are a Voluntary Academy Converter and have chosen to join The Matrix Academy as their ethos of Education without Exception aligns to "The Elmwood Way".**

The Matrix Trust only has mainstream schools currently. **This is correct, but their schools have a high percentage of SEND pupils accessing mainstream education. We as a school have a lot of expertise at all levels and this will support them in better meeting the needs within a mainstream provision. It also builds upon our working relationship of over 10 years in recruiting teachers and teaching assistants for Elmwood.**

Will the schools behaviour systems and points change? **No, the systems in the school to manage and track behaviour and celebrate your achievements will remain as these are suitable for our school.**

The strike days are impacting on my education and wellbeing. **I agree and this is something that leaders and those staff in attendance every day are working hard to mitigate. We are extremely proud that we have been able to maintain partial school opening which has significantly reduced loss of learning – especially for Year 11s as they prepare for their exams and BTEC coursework.**

Staff leaving, as we have built positive relationships with them all during our time at Elmwood. **All staff who are currently working at Elmwood will transfer over to The Matrix Trust on the same terms and conditions as they currently are. There are no job losses.**

Pupils already in The Matrix Trust will have priority for places at Elmwood. **No, there is a legal process in which the places at Elmwood are "owned" by Walsall LA and they request places from the Headteacher. It is the Headteachers decision as to whether we can meet the pupils needs and whether we have space for them within our groups. These decisions are based on the needs of the pupils and those already in attendance at Elmwood.**

Is there anything you would like The Matrix Trust to consider for you? Pupil question/statement response

To build upon the school's current successes. I agree, taking the decision to join The Matrix Trust is very much around enhancing what we already do and to future proof the school for the future of Walsall children and their families with SEMH needs.

More equipment to play with in calm space, pupil request and break time. We have recently added sensory boxes and resistance bands on your chairs, but we will continue these discussions through School Council.

Bike park/ramps to help us ride better. We have utilised handmade ramps previously within the Out & About curriculum and look at using the surrounding environment to support biking.

Fishing Pool so we can maximise time on this. We have established a variety of contacts within the local area to ensure access to this as part of enrichment. We wouldn't explore at this time a creation of our own fishing pool as there is a lot of experience/expertise required to maintain a healthy environment for the fish and other wildlife.

Access to a music teacher for those that want it. There does seem to be a growing need around musical interest from pupils. This is something that we could explore as a tuition basis as there are still so many pupils whose sensory needs would be triggered by this curriculum enhancement.

Upgrade the Drama and Art room (facilities and environment). I agree, it would be good for school council to look at the facilities across the Matrix Trust to spark ideas for Elmwood and what would work for our space and delivery. Again, this can be discussed through School Council and our current teachers of Art and Drama.

FEEDBACK FROM PARENTS AND CARERS RE JOINING THE MATRIX ACADEMY TRUST

Building upon the schools' exemplary relationship with parents/carers (ratified by us maintaining our Leading Parent Partnership Award on 18.7.23), Leaders have completed a comprehensive stakeholder engagement through personalised 1-1 phone calls or face to face meetings with ALL parents and carers if your child is in Years 7 - 10. This approach has provided the school the opportunity to address some mis-conceptions and also listen to any concerns/questions they may have on a personal level regarding the decision to join The Matrix Trust from 1st September 2025. The key themes that were initially discussed were:

1. Did parents/carers watch the welcome video from The Matrix Trust?
2. Do they have any previous knowledge / experience of Academisation and the impact it had on their child?
3. Is there anything that you would like to know about Elmwood joining The Matrix Trust?

ALL parents/carers also had the opportunity to speak openly/honestly about the academisation.

Did parents / carers watch the welcome video from The Matrix Trust?

Parent or carer question / statement	Response
31% did watch the welcome video communicated by the Headteacher on 13.02.25.	Here are a selection of responses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seems positive. • Happy with it.
69% didn't watch the welcome video communicated by the Headteacher on 13.02.25.	Here are a selection of responses as to why they didn't watch the video: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I already know about The Matrix Trust. • I have positive experiences of Academies.

Do they have any previous knowledge/experience of academisation and the impact it had on their child?

Parent or carer question / statement	Response
71% have had previous experience of academisation regarding child's school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive experience at Primary School – it only added value to the school and my child's education. • No negative impact on the school or my child previously. • Sibling is in a Matrix Trust school and they have improved the school. • Previous Primary school conversion was poor, but this was aligned to the school not having stable Headteacher.
29% haven't had any experience of academisation regarding their child's school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience within federation of schools, but this didn't really impact on the school / education of my child. • Any change can impact on staff and children, but in time we did notice that this improved and in turn didn't negatively impact on child. • I know you will always put the children first and my child has come on so well since being at Elmwood. • I worry that leaders will leave the school to run other schools across the Trust. <p>Leaders Response: Leaders at Elmwood will remain in post providing stability for pupils and staff.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No ability to compare – but I trust the decision of leaders in the school to put children first. <p>Leaders Response: Thank you, we appreciate the support.</p>
Is there anything that you would like to know about Elmwood joining The Matrix Trust?	
Parent or carer question / statement	Response
Will class sizes get bigger	No, class sizes at Elmwood are between 6-8 and this is reinforced by the DfE, LA and Engage with our Future as well as the Headteacher. Physical classroom sizes also dictate how many children, adults and furniture we can have.
Will the school become corporate with their uniform?	No, the uniform will remain as it is as we know this is supportive of the sensory needs identified within your children's EHCP. Also blazers and ties are a Health and Safety concern within Elmwood if a Physical Intervention is required as well as our Learning Outside of The Classroom principles.
How long has The Matrix Trust been running?	Since 2014 and has been sensible with its growth of schools ensuring Education Without Exception (that is sustainable).
The changes that The Matrix Trust are providing already sounds amazing for my child.	I agree, we wouldn't have been able to provide these enriching experiences and significant improvements to the environment. This will continue to grow and develop following academisation in September 2025.
Will leadership still be the same as we need that consistency for the children.	Yes, leaders are committed to ensuring a smooth transition and are looking forward to making these experiences and enhancements to Elmwood possible. The Matrix Trust is equally excited to work with leaders, staff and pupils to ensure it happens.
How are you going to reduce the impact of strikes on course-work / examination preparation?	Leaders are ensuring a modified curriculum is written weekly to ensure loss learning is addressed in the short / medium term. We are utilising experience days (with a curriculum focus) to capture key aspects of the curriculum that have been more affected and with specific groups. The Matrix Trust are supporting Year 11s in delivering Masterclasses for them. The school has already reached out to awarding bodies regarding the current situation – if extensions are required for their coursework.
Additional comments / statements.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I don't believe the school will change significantly other than more opportunities / experiences for my child. <p>Leaders Response: I agree, this will open up many opportunities to develop academically as well as socially and emotionally.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You always put the children first and you would not do anything to negatively impact on them. I appreciate the conversation – it has reassured me. I am relieved you have contacted me as the information in the media was misleading. When will the strike stop as this is impacting on my child? Leaders Response: Leaders and Governors continue to work in collaboration with the LA and DfE to resolve this current situation and I hope you can appreciate that we are working tirelessly to reduce the impact on your child. I think this will be the making of Elmwood, my child has been transformed since being at Elmwood and I can't wait to see how these additional enhancements will help. I believe that Elmwood is already outstanding – so anything that can make it even better than that is brilliant for my child. Mr Cross wouldn't make a decision that does not ensure the best interest for our children. A carer has deleted the petition from their Facebook page as the information shared isn't factual and doesn't reflect the true picture. It looks like the curriculum could increase / improve for my child. Leaders Response: Yes, we want to provide a more formal pathway to access curriculum enhancements for our pupils (if appropriate). <p>Report by Mr Cross, Headteacher</p>	

