



# SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

## September 2026

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Phoenix School (Sheffield), and Forestwood (Bury) are DfE registered special schools, providing education for young people admitted to their co-located hospital services.

Our schools are regulated by OFSTED you can read their last inspection via the websites.

[Forestwood School](#)

[Phoenix School](#)

## Welcome back

Welcome to a new school year at Cygnets Schools!



It's fantastic to see all of our staff and students back in our **Cygnets Schools** after the six-week summer break. Following a very successful exam series and a lively end of term, we are incredibly proud to see many of our young people moving on to new provisions or returning to their community schools.

We're also thrilled to welcome **lots of new faces** this term. Our entire team is looking forward to helping you settle in and building a personalized curriculum that works specifically for you.

### What's coming up this term?

Our Head teachers and staff are always working to improve how we support your future.

This term, the focus is on reviewing our **Post-16 pathways** and curriculum options, alongside the exciting launch of a brand-new **Careers Programme** in both schools.

As always, our staff have planned a brilliant mix of classroom activities and extra-curricular projects—ensuring there is something that speaks to everyone's unique interests.

### A word about progress and well-being

We often talk about the importance of regular attendance, making progress, and working toward your goals in school, and so I want to share a vital reminder:

**Do not to compare your journey to everyone else's – you are unique.**

**Everyone starts from a different baseline.**

Your path does not have to look like the person sitting next to you.

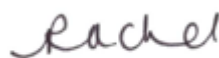
**Every step counts.** We are here to celebrate your individual progress, no matter how big or small it might seem to others.

**Your presence is a win.** Just making it into the classroom shows incredible resilience.

Stay curious, explore new ideas, and enjoy your learning this term.

You have already shown you have the grit to get here—now let's keep that momentum going together!

Best wishes



**Rachel Rix**  
**Head of Education**

## Staff Spotlight



We're absolutely delighted to announce that **Kirsty** will be stepping up as our **Operational SENCO** this academic year, expanding her support across both of our schools.

While Kirsty has spent the last four years working brilliantly behind the scenes within our education team's administrative sector, this new role brings her right to the forefront. She'll now oversee the day-to-day coordination of learning support, information sharing for students with additional needs, and the **Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)** process.

Kirsty is already experienced at identifying additional learning needs and suggesting practical classroom strategies to remove barriers to learning. Moving into this wider role allows her to expand on this impact, working face-to-face with our education staff and directly with our young people.

### An Experienced Safe Pair of Hands

Kirsty brings a wealth of frontline experience to the role. She is a **qualified History teacher** who has worked extensively across a range of mainstream schools in **South Yorkshire**. Her background includes valuable time spent working alongside school wellbeing and behaviour teams, as well as within local **"Early Help"** teams.

### Why This Matters for Our Community

Navigating additional learning needs and EHCPs can sometimes feel overwhelming for both families and students.

Having someone with Kirsty's unique blend of teaching experience, wellbeing expertise, and deep knowledge of our schools' systems means our young people are in incredibly safe hands. Her focus is entirely on ensuring every student has the tools, adjustments, and understanding they need to thrive.

Please join us in giving Kirsty a massive congratulations and a warm welcome as she steps into this vital role!

## What we've been up to...

The students at **Phoenix School** recently stepped outside the traditional classroom setup to take on a series of practical team-building challenges. These activities were designed to push their communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills to the next level, while giving them a chance to flex their creativity and build vital mental resilience. Each challenge pushed everyone to work together, share ideas, truly listen to one another, and—crucially—adapt their approach when things didn't go exactly to plan.

The day's activities included:

**The paper aeroplane challenge:** Teams designed, built, and flight-tested aeroplanes to see whose creation could travel the furthest.

**The spaghetti & marshmallow tower:** With just six pieces of uncooked spaghetti and four marshmallows, students had to engineer the tallest freestanding structure possible under pressure.

**Cards against gravity:** Working as a whole-group team, students used playing cards to construct a leaning tower. It was a high-stakes test of patience, critical thinking, and steady hands to maintain enough stability to keep the structure standing.

**The half-pipe ball challenge:** Easily one of the toughest teamwork tasks of the day. Students had to link sections of half-pipes together to transport a rolling ball across a distance without dropping it. It required immense concentration, seamless cooperation, and absolute trust in one another.

## Why this matters

Days like this are a great reminder that success isn't just about individual grades. It is about how we communicate, handle frustration, and support the people around us. Learning to pivot when a spaghetti tower collapses or a card tower leans too far builds the exact kind of emotional resilience needed to navigate life's bigger challenges.

For staff, seeing our young people collaborate so naturally highlights the incredible power of peer support and shared problem-solving in boosting their overall well-being.

Huge congratulations to all the Phoenix School students for showing great teamwork, grit, and community spirit!



## TRAUMA<sup>TM</sup> INFORMED UK SCHOOLS & COMMUNITIES

This academic year, one of the key priorities

within Forestwood School's School Development Plan is to achieve **Trauma Informed Accreditation** across both the school and hospital provision. Forestwood School is leading this important piece of work in partnership with Forestwood Hospital, reflecting our shared commitment to providing the highest quality care, education and support for the young people we serve.

The accreditation framework is based on a four step programme:

- **Protect: Establish safety** by creating a predictable, secure environment and calm interactions to reduce the child's fear.
- **Relate: Build connection** through genuine empathy and positive relationships so the child feels seen, heard, and valued.
- **Regulate: Calm the nervous system** using soothing relational or sensory techniques to lower high stress and anxiety levels
- **Reflect: Process the experience** by discussing thoughts and behaviours together, but only after the child is completely calm

These principles align closely with Cygnet's core values and support our

Vision of creating a safe, nurturing and therapeutic environment where every young person can thrive. Staff have already begun a comprehensive audit process to ensure that the practices required for accreditation are embedded within our daily work across classrooms, wards and wider service areas.

As part of the accreditation process, evidence must be gathered across **32 individual strands** within the four steps. This involves reviewing our current practice, identifying strengths and celebrating the many ways staff already support young people through a trauma informed approach.

We are delighted that **Louise Hardwick**, our Trauma Informed Lead, is nearing completion of the qualification requirements set by the Trauma Informed Schools Institute. Louise is currently preparing her final university presentation, which will take place on **16 October**.

Throughout her training, she has attended a number of university learning days alongside colleagues from community and educational services, developing a deeper understanding of how trauma informed practice can positively impact the experiences and outcomes of young people within our service. The programme combines academic study with practical strategies that can be applied both in the classroom and on the wards.

To further strengthen leadership capacity, I will also be undertaking the required dedicated senior leadership Trauma

Informed training. This will be shared with the whole leadership team and MDT to ensure it also remains up to date with current research, thinking and best practice, enabling effective staff support and continued development of a truly trauma informed culture across the service.

### **Why is Trauma Informed Accreditation important?**

Achieving Trauma Informed Accreditation will provide significant benefits for our young people, staff and wider service by:

- Creating environments where young people feel safe, understood and supported.
- Improving emotional wellbeing, resilience and engagement in learning.
- Strengthening positive relationships between young people and staff.
- Supporting staff to respond consistently and effectively to behaviours that may be linked to trauma.
- Promoting a culture of reflection, understanding and continuous improvement.
- Ensuring that education and therapeutic care work together to meet the individual needs of each young person.
- Demonstrating our commitment to delivering outstanding, evidence-based practice across the Forestwood CAMHS service.

We are excited to be continuing on this journey and look forward to sharing

updates throughout the year as we work towards achieving Trauma Informed Accreditation and further enhancing the support we provide to every young person in our care.



**Wendy Webster**  
**Head Teacher – Forestwood School**