



Headlines, Sept 2018

This is the first of what I am hoping will be a reasonably regular blog charting my role as the Executive Headteacher at Axe Valley Academy in Devon. My seemingly grand title reflects the fact that having previously been the Headteacher at Holyrood Academy in Chard and then the CEO of the Vector Learning Trust which currently oversees both schools, my current role still requires me to maintain a foot in both camps. I am clear in my mind though that the majority of my time is now spent here at Axe Valley and the blog is an attempt to share some of the good, the bad and even the ugly of the day to day running of a school.

The first few weeks of the term have gone by in something of a blur, indeed it is difficult at times to even remember the summer break but so far it has been all about the good. The staff have returned buoyed by much improved results in the summer and have been very positive in their approach and the students have been great up to now. There is plenty of time for the bad and the ugly to raise their heads but at the moment the school feels a great place to be and I am confident that lots of the things we have introduced in recent times are starting to have a real impact.

One of the highlights of the first couple of weeks was taking a group of students to re house one of the 'silent soldiers' in place to commemorate the hundred year anniversary of the end of the first World War, which had been damaged. We repaired 'Tommy' as he is now known and put him back in his rightful place during a very short ceremony. We also laid a wreath that had been made by our Year 7 students. It is always nice to receive a thank you card and Norman Moores the local resident who had initially brought Tommy's plight to our attention summed it up beautifully when he wrote about our students, 'they have restored our faith in the young citizens of Axminster bringing the community together today'. It was one of those moments that reminded me of why I do the job and why it is not only a huge responsibility to have this role within the community but also a real privilege.



We may only be a few weeks in but we are already turning our attentions to next Year. Our Open Day and Open Evening were well attended and we have had lots of positive feedback from the community about how the school was viewed by prospective Year 7 students and their parents. During the day the tours took our visitors in to classrooms to see us in action. As I always say at these events I can't hide 650 students, nor would I want to so this was a great chance to see how the

school feels. In the evening there were short presentations from myself and Lorraine Heath, CEO of the Uffculme Academies Trust with whom we will be working in close partnership going forward. Uffculme has been the highest performing state school in the region for a number of years now and I think that this partnership can only be positive for Axe Valley. It is great in my position to be overseeing a school that is clearly already moving in the right direction and this partnership will, I have no doubt, speed up that journey even more.

I would like to finish this first edition of 'Headlines' by thanking those responsible for such a positive start to the new school year. Firstly, I want to thank our staff members who have just been fantastic so far. It can be a challenging job for any adult working in a school setting but it can also be incredibly rewarding. The staff are getting their rewards at the moment because of their commitment, professionalism, passion and importantly their kindness. I am in no doubt that the atmosphere I am feeling as I go in to lessons is because of the quality of the relationships being established between the staff and the students. I would also like to thank parents for their support. We have tightened up and refreshed the uniform since September as well as introducing new systems to improve attitudes in the classroom and it has been great to have so many parents on board. Last but certainly not last I would like to thank our students. They are embracing the changes and throwing themselves in to their time at school, they deserve nothing but the best and we are striving to provide them with exactly that.

So the challenge will be for us all to maintain our excellent start to the year and I see no reason why we can't achieve this. I will continue to share my thoughts through this blog and although I cannot always promise either superb literary content or intelligent, perceptive humour I can guarantee honesty and what you read will be what I feel.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Brady', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'M' and a long, sweeping underline.