

## **Us, in a nutshell...**

Swavesey Village College first opened its doors in 1958 under the principles of Henry Morris' vision for Cambridgeshire schools to be accessible to all those living in the villages and small towns, which he labelled as 'Village Colleges'.

As the original member of the Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust (CMAT) family, the College has always been historically supportive of – and rooted within – its village community. This ethos particularly appealed to Jacki Parris, now Vice-Principal at Swavesey, who moved to the College in 1987. “There was a big focus on raising standards when I joined, it was a school with ambition, and from my own perspective I was appointed as head of department – which meant a promotion – so it all fitted together,” she said. “I really wanted to work in a community college and over the years we've gone from strength to strength, continuing to achieve strong results and developing a reputation for excellence.”

CMAT was formed in 2011 to enable Swavesey to help spread good education practice – and Jacki said that following the arrival of Principal Martin Bacon the focus of the College evolved. “Because of the political situation at that time we were quite inward looking, there was no collaboration with other schools, and we didn't really share information,” she recalled. “Then things changed, we began collaborating and helping other schools to improve. That was down to Martin. His legacy lives on under our current Principal Andy Daly. We have our own highly successful Teaching School and collaborate regularly with other multi-academy trusts and teaching school alliances.”

Jacki added that she felt “privileged” to chair a joint teaching school strategy group made up from the eight teaching schools in Cambridgeshire to share best practice and raise improvement across the county in collaboration with the Local Authority and the Regional Schools Commissioner. However, the College continues to keep the local community at its heart and there is no better example than Swavesey Music School. The school aims to provide students of all ages and abilities with the opportunity to learn and use the language of music. It hopes to increase the range of musical opportunities and styles available in the near future and to ensure that, with the musical groups available at the College, every child in the community has the opportunity to sing or play in a group.

The College also works diligently with its local primary cluster to ensure that primary children feel part of the Swavesey community before their secondary education starts – with Swavesey staff providing languages and sports lessons in partnership with colleagues from the primary

schools. Year 6 pupils are supported in their transition to Year 7 by starting their new timetable before the summer holidays, meeting their teachers and beginning to find their way about the College, so ultimately the start in September becomes less daunting.

Meanwhile, businesses in the local community are regularly welcomed into the College. The College runs careers breakfasts for students in all years in which representatives of businesses can come and chat freely with students, inspiring them and helping them to build connections for the future. Additionally, businesses involved in the redevelopment of the A14 are currently using the College for their meetings and in return will be running sessions with students to inform them about the work they do.

In the past 59 years many things may have changed about Swavesey Village College but what remains are those values of Henry Morris – values which are mirrored by CMAT. “The Trust has a clear vision and purpose which, put simply, is about being there for every single student and helping them to fulfil their potential – and the Trust’s set of values are over-arching across all CMAT schools,” Jacki said. “Because our schools are located so close to each other geographically we can genuinely establish support mechanisms that work and benefit every one of our schools. We will continue to be outward-looking and, above all, help schools and teachers to improve. Having worked at Swavesey for 30 years I am so proud to have been part of where we are today and look forward to us making an even greater positive impact in the communities we serve in the future. The opportunity to work with partners to place education at the heart of the new town at Northstowe is an amazing opportunity to create something really special.”