



**[END OF YEAR REPORT  
2019/20]**



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## Civitas Schools



Civitas Schools are supplementary schools in the very best sense of the word: our role as a project is to enhance the education of the children we meet, to augment their mainstream schooling.

The ethos of Civitas Schools is that all children deserve a first-class education; that any child can learn with the right support; and that no child who is behind at school needs to remain so.

We help some of the many children who fall behind at school each year, for whatever reasons. In our schools we set high expectations of what each child we teach might achieve, helping them develop the habit of learning, and endeavouring to remove barriers which inhibit their intellectual development. A failure to deal with children working at below expected academic levels for their ages disadvantages them from the start. They may struggle with their exams, and an impoverished education limits their access to a wider cultural experience and life choices.

Teaching in small classes, grouped by ability rather than age, we focus on the essential basics every child needs to have grasped in order to develop further in their education: reading fluently, spelling accurately, understanding basic but essential mathematical functions, introducing them to grammar and mental arithmetic, and the pleasure of reading.

Civitas Schools was established in 2005, an initiative of the think-tank Civitas who wanted to offer a practical solution to some of the issues in British education. In that time, we've demonstrated that with dedicated teachers and good pedagogical methods, any child can learn and - given support and encouragement, even for just an hour or two a week - most will excel.

Our teachers all have a depth and love of subject knowledge that enables them to see each hurdle which has to be overcome by a child for them to really grasp the concepts before them. Each new stage of knowledge is firmly embedded before moving onto the next stage of teaching.



We would like to thank The Stationers' Foundation for their continued and generous support of the Civitas Schools project in 2019/20, and in particular Ian Grant for his enthusiastic support of the aims of the two Stationers' funded schools. His support is not merely a formal one for us via his role as a Foundation board member – although that is extremely important and central to your support - but is expressed in his clear interest in the young pupils and the challenges they face in their schooling and his commitment to the importance of learning and education.

In London we currently have over 500 children on our waiting lists and want to ensure as many of them as possible can benefit from the teaching support we provide. Without the continued support of donors such as The Stationers' Foundation we will not be able to help these children in the future. We hope to continue working with The Stationers' Foundation this coming academic year.

Justine Brian  
Director  
10 August 2020



## The Civitas Schools team



We are a small team at Civitas Schools, with just two full time staff, in addition to a part time education advisor role and our annual contracted teaching cohort of between 27-30 teachers.

**Justine Brian** is project **Director** and is responsible for the direction of the project, all stakeholder relationships, recruitment and management of the teaching cohort, budgeting to ensure a 'no-frills' best value provision of service, payroll, and ensuring we provide a high standard of teaching for the children we are able to support each year.

**Sadiyah Mir** is the project's **Assistant Director** and manages the day to administration of functions of our schools. Sadiyah deals with communications with parents, school venues and suppliers is tasked with the continued development of our systems and processes to ensure we provide the best support and service we can for our schools and teachers, and of course those who benefit from what we do – parents and children.



## 2019/20 review of the The Stationers' Foundation Saturday Schools



This year marked the third where teaching at the two Stationers Foundation Saturday Schools refocussed on 'all support' classes, taking in the children with the greatest educational needs from the King's Cross, Euston and St Pancras area, and from other local Civitas Schools where a Stationers' school would be most appropriate for them.

The schools continued to be held at two local community centres: The Living Centre - attached to the new Francis Crick Institute and created as part of the wider King's Cross & St Pancras development to ensure resources for the local community were made available alongside the new business and corporate HQs being developed in the area; and the Somers Town Community Association - a long-standing centre at the heart of the Somers Town estate. The Somers Town Stationers' School classes ran from 10:15-13:15 and the King's Cross Stationers' School from 15:30-18:30 on Saturdays. There were 21 children at each school at the start of the autumn term (which is a reduction from our standard school size of 25 to account for the children's very acute learning needs and to ensure a greater ratio of teachers to pupils).

Eight teachers were employed in 2019/20: Amna Siddiqui led the team as the Responsible Person (in charge of child safety, venue access and security, health and safety and the smooth running of the school) at the Somers Town Stationers' school, alongside In Meng Lam, Amy Ramirez and Fazheelah Mir. At King's Cross Stationers' Sarah Boyes led colleagues Jenna Corderoy, Waleed Mir and Zora Kadir. Amna, Sarah, Jenna and Waleed are four of our longest serving and most experienced teachers, each with us for at least seven years (and Sarah for eleven). They are extremely knowledgeable about Civitas Schools' teaching and well placed to deal with the level of teaching required at the two schools. The Stationers' schools have an extra teacher each which, combined with slightly smaller school numbers, allows a much higher teacher to pupil ratio.



### The '3Rs'

This year saw a development of our teaching practice at the Stationers' schools, developed by the two lead teachers after two years of our standard higher, lower and support group setup.

Rather than grouping the children into three sets, the lower pupil numbers and additional fourth teacher at each school allowed us to develop – in effect – reading, writing and arithmetic lessons (each led by one teacher) and a support group for those who would benefit from as close to one-on-one teaching as we can provide within Civitas Schools (and having no more than 3 pupils). The support pupils are taught by one teacher for the whole duration of the school, and the other pupils – in three smaller groups - rotate between the '3Rs' over the course of the three hour school day with us.

This allows us to teach even smaller numbers of pupils than one of our standard school groups (our groups already being much smaller than the average primary school class), and really focus on the core concepts they are clearly struggling with - and the reason why they are at Civitas Schools, and a Stationers' school in particular – such as basic reading skills, the four functions and valuable time spent on helping them to develop their handwriting. After this years experience at the two Stationers' schools our teachers have advised they feel they are giving a much more personal level of support than we usually can and that in turn allows us to really help pupils overcome the hurdles they face in these core subjects.

We want to thank The Stationers' Foundation for working in partnership with us on setting a new direction for its schools three years ago, and in turn allowing us the time and space to develop, refine and improve our practice in them.



### An unusual year

As we reported earlier this year, the public health emergency of COVID-19 meant we had to very quickly move our teaching online when schools were instructed to close (and indeed when all our community venues closed). We lost the last three weeks of the spring term because of the school closures, but used that time, and the two week Easter break, to work with our teachers and pupils' parents to ensure we could begin teaching again in the summer term, online.

Shorn of some of the barriers we know local authority schools have faced in moving their curriculum online, and the systems and processes they would need to put in place to do so, we were able to respond and innovate quickly to the new challenges we faced.

A quick online survey of parents allowed us to be clear which families had the IT in place to continue lessons with us online, and clarified additional challenges we may need to mitigate - including no broadband provision or a lack of IT equipment at home, as well as some families who were unable to commit time and space to just one child in often full and busy households.

The schools team trialled and secured the online technology we needed to be able to offer live lessons remotely, and we tasked our teachers with the challenge of considering how they would teach their lessons, to their specific children, online and indeed what adaptations they would need to make to their teaching practice to do so. We put all our teaching resources online so teachers could pick up where they left off and we supplemented our existing child safeguarding guidelines with new advice, to protect pupils and teachers, using best practice guidance published by government and the NSPCC.

The Stationers' schools teachers really worked above and beyond to ensure they were ready over the Easter break to begin teaching in the summer term, often getting to grips with new technology





and putting time and effort into thinking about the best way to teaching their pupils in a new way. Credit must also go to the school's parents who, working closely with Sadiyah Mir, learnt new technology and got to grips with new processes for the school – such as logging into live Zoom lessons, setting their children up at computers, checking emails for homework and relaying lesson information from teachers. This was a collective effort from everyone to allow Civitas Schools to continue to teach the Stationers' pupils. The first Stationers' online classes took place on 25 April, and we held a full summer term of lessons as per our published term dates.

Across all of our schools we were able to take an average of 65% of the spring cohort online with us. For the Stationers' schools we took 28 of a total of 36 spring pupils online (six pupils having dropped out by the summer term, a standard attrition rate), or 77%, and we sustained that number throughout the summer term with no further attrition. Some parents were logistically unable to have their children taught online (and we simply weren't in a position to rectify that for them financially) and one of two parents just weren't interested in online lessons – but overall we were pleased with the take up for what was a completely new form of teaching for us, and a whole new way of working for pupils and parents. Online attendance after the first week or two of teething issues rose across the board to 87% of pupils each week, up from an initial starting figure of 68%. We reduced teaching time for each class from 70 minutes to 50 minutes as we weren't certain pupils could sustain their attention online for three hours overall, but this lost 'classroom' time was replaced with extra homework and pupils preparing in advance for each week for us to really maximise the live teaching time each week. However, as advised earlier in the year, and to the pupils credit, they were all engaged and attentive from the start, and best of all from the projects point of view, they continued to learn.

Anecdotally, from conversations with parents, primary provision from the children's main schools was very limited, with a vast majority having little or no contact from with schools or teachers for



the duration of the summer terms, beyond some email correspondence with parents receiving worksheets for home schooling. None of our Stationers' pupils received any online lessons from their existing schools as far as we know, and so in that light we are extremely proud that we were, with the continued support of The Stationers' Foundation, able to provide weekly, live, online lessons for those children. We wish it could have been many more – for the Stationers' pupils who sadly couldn't join us online, as well as the many hundreds of children we know we could have helped if resources allowed.

#### **InCAS assessments and reporting to funders**

Frustratingly, we are unable to offer The Stationers' Foundation InCAS test results for 2019/20 as we made the decision at the end of the previous school year to move testing to the summer term. We did so as, after review of the previous three years, we felt the autumn term was too difficult a period in which to run the tests at the schools as they settled into the new school year, with a new cohort of pupils, and our workload (both teacher and management) is perhaps, arguably, at its highest in that period. We also felt testing in the summer term, once pupils had been with us a full year, and in an effort to encourage parents to keep their children with us for end of year test results and reduce the attrition rate across all schools, would be a good change to our annual timetable. Sadly, the move online over the summer term meant it was impossible to stage InCAS testing as planned the autumn before. In that light, we have 'lost' the 2019/20 assessment results. We hope to be able to test our pupils in the summer of 2021.



## The new school year 2020/21: our focus



We have been advised by the two community centres we use that, subject to their own external COVID-risk assessment, they will be reopening in September (and this is reflected by all but one of our school venues). In that light, we plan to return to full classroom teaching from the autumn term 2020/21. We will of course have our own risk assessment in place, and new COVID specific health and safety processes will be managed by our teachers in situ and through the office team (including hand sanitation routines at the start and end of school, increased communications with parents to ensure no poorly child attends school and, new rules for the children regarding behaviour in class such as not sharing equipment or food, learning to sneeze into tissues, and of being aware of the virus risks without us making them unduly afraid). Our teaching methods, which already promote individual learning – which includes remaining at desks throughout lessons, not running around in the short breaks but having a snack calmly - means we feel we are in a better position than some educational setups to implement teaching in as safe an environment as possible.

Whilst online teaching has been both an interesting experiment and an absolutely necessary continued connection between pupil and teacher, it just can't replace classroom teaching for the long term, and so we are very keen to return to the classroom and be able to offer the individualised support our pupils need. We therefore return to The Living Centre and the Somers Town Community Association, and to classroom teaching, on 19 September. Should events transpire in the autumn to close schools again, we are in a much better position to 'flip the switch' to online teaching if we have to.

The closure of schools and broader 'lockdown' of day to day life fell right at the start of the period when we assess children for the new school year in the Civitas offices (over March and April). We were able to hold just two of the planned 8 'assessment Sundays'. The duration of lockdown means we will not be in a position to assess new children for the two Stationers' schools next year to replace those Year 6's who are leaving, and those who choose not to return to us in 2020/21. We



therefore can't currently advise you who the new pupils joining us will be, but can do at the start of the autumn term. This is a blow to the past two years of assessment work which has allowed us to be confident we are only taking on children with a demonstrable need for our support, as well as providing insight for our teachers about what level they are currently working at. It is particularly problematic for the two Stationers' schools as assessment testing meant we were able to ensure the most educationally needy children were placed in the schools.

However, we will be beginning short online 'interviews' of new pupils for the Stationers' schools shortly, alongside meeting their parents, to give us some introduction to the new cohort, and allow us to communicate expectations to parents and answer any questions they may have. During these meetings we will run two very basic tests – short written and mental maths tests – to have at least some indication of the child's level of learning and current needs. This is an experiment (like so much of the past term) and although not ideal offers us some small level of insight and the chance to meet child and parent before the new school year. We will also ensure in the opening weeks of the September term that we are flexible about swapping children in and out of the Stationers' schools to best reflect their needs. Additionally, we may choose – on advice and request from teachers – to keep Year 6 children on for an additional year of supplementary support if it is felt the past six months have severely impacted on a child's learning.

Given the disruption to pupils' education over the summer, we will spend the first term ensuring we are clear where regression in learning may have occurred, and ensure – as we always do – that key concepts in both English and maths are really embedded in pupils' understanding before pushing them further. This means in English we will ensure spelling and reading are prioritised, and in maths that children are confident in the four functions.

Amna Siddiqui and Sarah Boyes will remain in their current roles as lead teachers, and the only change to the two school teams is the replacement of Fazheelah Mir and Zora Kadir for Rowena



Gammon. This offers a high level of stability for the pupils in the coming year. Rowena is our longest serving teacher, with us almost from the start of the project, and a really exceptional support teacher - we feel she is best best placed amongst our teaching cohort to help the two groups of three pupils in the schools who struggle with attention and focus (and sitting still) as well as the basic concepts they need to know to try and progress their education. We were delighted to be able persuade Rowena to take on this demanding role at the two Stationers' schools next year.