

## **Stronger Together: The Power of Partnership in a Small School Community**

One of the joys of being a small, family-focused school is the sense of belonging that runs through everything we do. Children are known as individuals, families feel connected, and staff work closely together to create a nurturing environment where every pupil can thrive. Yet we are also fortunate to be part of something much bigger — the Thame Partnership — which brings together one secondary school and thirteen primary schools in a collaborative network that strengthens and enriches our work in countless ways.

At its heart, the partnership is built on the belief that schools achieve more when they learn from one another. Headteachers meet every two months to plan, discuss and strategise, ensuring that our schools move forward with shared purpose and ambition. From September 2025, I was delighted to take on the role of chairing this dedicated group, supporting our collective drive to stay innovative, think creatively and maximise opportunities for all children across the partnership.

For staff, the benefits are wide-ranging. Termly meetings for subject coordinators allow teachers to share ideas, compare approaches and strengthen their leadership. Regular moderation in English and Maths ensures consistency and high expectations across all schools, giving families confidence that every child is supported to achieve their best. We also benefit from shared resources — particularly in IT — which help us work more efficiently and creatively.

For pupils, the partnership opens the door to experiences that extend far beyond their own school. Cross-school sports competitions, the Festival of Music, the Poetry Slam, the Dance Festival and our inspiring Science Day all give children the chance to shine, collaborate and feel part of something bigger. These events enrich the curriculum, build confidence and create memories that last long after primary school.

What makes the Thame Partnership so special is that it offers the best of both worlds: the strength and support of close collaboration, much like being part of an academy, while allowing each school to maintain its own unique identity, vision and values. It is a community rooted in mutual respect — one that lifts us all.

Our partnership-wide INSET day in January is a perfect example. While pupils enjoyed an extra day at home, staff from across all fourteen schools came together for high-quality training, including keynote talks from Adrian Bethune (Teachappy) and also the OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) team, alongside workshops on AI in the classroom, African drumming, de-escalation strategies, resilience, attendance and oracy in maths. Colleagues returned to school energised and inspired, ready to bring fresh ideas back to our children.

Being part of the Thame Partnership strengthens every aspect of school life — for staff, for families and, most importantly, for our pupils. It allows our small, family-focused school to remain true to its nurturing roots while still offering the breadth, ambition and opportunities of a much larger community. It is a partnership that helps our children feel they belong not only to their own school, but to a wider network that celebrates them, supports them and encourages them to thrive. It is a community we are proud to belong to.