

29 March 2022

Dear Parents and Carers

Appointment of New Principal – Assheton Woodall

As some of you may have seen, we advertised for a new Principal for The Portsmouth Academy (TPA) in January 2022, and it reflects the school's high standing that the advertisement attracted a strong field of applicants from leading schools across the area and beyond.

After a rigorous recruitment process we are thrilled to announce the appointment of Assheton Woodall, who will join the team from 1st September 2022.

Choosing the right candidate to lead the Academy was not an easy task. We were however, incredibly impressed with the vision and passion Mr Woodall showed for the school. Mr Woodall started his teaching career at TPA and now boasts more than 20 years of teaching experience, having previously been a Head of Maths at Admiral Lord Nelson School. He is currently the Senior Deputy at Bridgemary School in Gosport, where he has worked since 2017 and played a leading role in embedding a culture of aspiration and achievement, which are core values for TPA.

With a strong and proven track record in school leadership, Mr Woodall has done remarkable work in raising and maintaining standards academically, vocationally and culturally. He is a strong advocate of the school's place within the wider community and I know that he will be an inspirational role model to all of us.

The interview panels (governors, staff and students) were deeply impressed by his leadership qualities and skills and were unanimous in their confidence that he will build an excellent community, where everyone strives to be their best selves.

The Trust CEO Stuart Gardner said: "We are extremely proud to announce Mr Woodall as the Principal of The Portsmouth Academy. His interest in metacognition aligns with our thinking school approach and he will help TPA to thrive as an Advanced Thinking School."

Reflecting on his journey and aspirations for his Headship, Mr Woodall had this message for you as parents: "This school has always held a place close to my heart, as it is the school where I first started my teaching career back in 2000. Since then I have taken up various positions across a number of schools in Portsmouth, Chichester and most recently Gosport, and I am now delighted to be making my return to the school, as Principal. My aspiration for The Portsmouth Academy is to be the best school in Portsmouth and Hampshire. From what I have seen on my visits to-date, this is a thriving campus and is well on its way to fulfilling my vision.

"To witness first-hand; the buzz and energy of the new generation of TPA students; learning in their classrooms and observing how the building has developed to both encompass and embrace 21st century learning has been a real pleasure. I am greatly looking forward to helping this area of the school grow even further.

I look forward to meeting you all in the near future and developing a positive close working relationship to ensure your child leaves our school as the best version of themselves.”

As Principal, he will focus on driving further school improvement, ensuring that TPA continues to provide your child with the best possible education, and championing both academic excellence and broader personal development to help TPA reach new heights. He is a self-confessed ‘tech geek’ with a strong background in maths and IT and will play a leading role in our Microsoft showcase school status.

I will now be working closely with Mr Woodall to help him to get to know the school and prepare to take the leading role from September. We will make an introduction to the students of TPA as soon as we can, who of course are very much looking forward to getting to know their new Principal.

In addition, Mr Woodall will work closely with colleagues across our Trust and Mrs Grey – to ensure that your children can continue to benefit from their expertise and knowledge of TPA. I am very pleased that Mrs Grey will continue to support the school, as she moves to become part of the TSAT central school improvement team.

As this new, and exciting, era dawns on TPA I will, in my role as Director of Education, Portsmouth, with executive oversight of TSAT academies in Portsmouth, support the team during Mr Woodall’s phased induction and beyond.

I very much look forward to witnessing the great work that I know Mr Woodall will achieve leading TPA, and with the addition of an exceptional leadership team already in place, our community will flourish.

Kind regards,



Natalie Sheppard
Director of Education
Portsmouth TSAT Schools