

Senior Leadership Team

Tony Doran BEd. (Hons) and NPQH - Headteacher



Tony is an experienced Senior Leader within education with a drive and passion in tackling disadvantage and underachievement. The last decade has been mostly spent within inner city and urban secondary schools in challenging situations, developing pastoral systems to support and engage all students in learning. Between 2003 and 2009 Tony developed, implemented and evolved his Attitudes to Learning System, which received national recognition in 2007. This later led to a secondment into the Prime Ministers Delivery Unit as a consultant behaviour expert, during their 2008/9 National Behaviour Review. The 2009/10 academic year was spent as a Behaviour and Attendance Adviser for the South East of England within The National Strategies which included significant work with the Narrowing the Gap Team. This offered Tony a unique opportunity to see local, area and national issues and effective practice. These experiences over the last ten years have solidified a real optimism that through an effective multi agency, strategically co-ordinated approach we can break down barriers that our most vulnerable children face. Together it is our duty to facilitate better outcomes for children in care.

Malcolm Thomas BEd. and Equity member - Deputy Head - Achievement and Standards (Post16, North and West Kent)



Malcolm qualified as a teacher in 1975 at the same time as pursuing a career in the performing arts. He taught drama and dance in Kingston upon Thames and formed Matchbox Theatre, an experimental company specialising in street projects and pop up venues. His passion for working with disengaged children began at this time with those caught up in the Raising of the School Leaving Age (ROSLA Kids).

A move to Kent in 1980 and a lack of suitable teaching posts precipitated the launch of Matchbox Productions specialising in large scale international product launches and marketing campaigns. Malcolm also discovered the joys of voice over work and training company managers in the art of public speaking. The bleak recession of the late 80's brought Malcolm back into teaching and he ran a project for persistent truants in Bermondsey for The Shaftsbury Society, based on a converted barge moored close to Tower Bridge. He moved from there to become Head of KS4 in a residential EBD school closer to home in Kent and from there as Head of Secondary Phase in a special school designated for children with social communication disorders, where he introduced GCSE Art & Drama to great success. Following a failed Ofsted Inspection he became Deputy Head in a team that led the school out of Special Measures within 6 months. He then moved to become an SEN Officer for KCC and returned briefly on secondment as Acting Head to help oversee the amalgamation with another local special school.

In 1990 Gallery Theatre was born, specialising in supper theatre and performances of classical works at private events and posh weddings. "Supper with the Dead Famous" was a huge success and Malcolm has dined at supper evenings in the guise of Samuel Pepys, William Shakespeare, Tennessee Williams and William Hogarth on numerous occasions.

At the start of the Millennium Malcolm became a LAC Education Advisor and later Deputy Head of ILSS, the precursor to Virtual School Kent. It should be noted that this is the longest Malcolm has ever stayed in one job! His passion for supporting equal opportunity for vulnerable learners remains as strong as ever. He has post graduate qualifications in SEN and EAL. He maintains his precious Equity Card with occasional performances but may be seen out most weekends performing as the caller and mandolin player in a Barn Dance band.

Marian Smith BEd. (Hons) and NPQH - Deputy Head - Achievement and Standards (South Kent)



Marian joined VSK in March 2012, coming from a primary school background where she was a teacher for nearly 20 years before deciding to move away from the 'chalk face' and do something different but still keep the connection with education. She is responsible for monitoring and supporting the educational progress and attainment of the children in care in schools in Folkestone and Dover localities and more recently has taken on overall management of the South Kent area.

Ann Parnell BSc. (Hons) and PGCE - Deputy Head - Achievement and Standards (East Kent)



Ann began her working life after university in public relations with one of the largest retailers in the UK before embarking on a career in teaching. Before relocating to Kent some 24 years ago, Ann taught in inner city Berkshire primary schools. Since then she has taught in East Kent both as a class and specialist SEN teacher. This later teaching experience was invaluable giving her the opportunity to support children and schools from nursery through to GCSE, from urban to rural, and from two classes to four form entry primaries to very large secondary's. In 2002 Ann joined the Children in Care Education Adviser team which later joined with other CIC services to become Virtual School Kent.

Gemma O'Grady – Participation Co-ordinator



Gemma originally worked as an accountant but decided to change her career path to something more people centred when she started a family of her own. Initially working in the voluntary sector as a Project Officer advising local community groups and charities on their constitutions, set up and growth, she began to support some of these organisations directly, and went on to be the Community Development Officer for a district council in Kent. Projects included Neighbourhood Renewal Projects, Regeneration Programmes, running advice centres and setting up a network of 26 community groups in a deprived area and developing an umbrella organisation to deliver social action projects and build social capital.

She was then invited to participate in the Working Families Everywhere (WFE) national pilot and was eventually seconded to KCC to manage the Troubled Families (TF) Programme in south Kent, which developed from WFE. The opportunity to become Participation Co-ordinator arose late 2015 and Gemma was keen to take her knowledge and experience forwards in working with children and young people under SCS, building on her involvement through the TF Programme.

Gemma's own involvement with SCS in her youth has been the 'driver' in supporting others, whether as communities, families or individuals, to reach their potential and to lead fulfilled and successful lives.