

COMMUNITY SPIRIT GALORE

by David Wiles

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DEVELOPING stronger links between Swindon Academy and the wider neighbourhood is the focus of Helen Beardall – the school's first ever community officer.

Helen, who is based at the campus in Beech Avenue, Pinehurst, aims to arrange activities at the school for the benefit of the public.

And despite being in the post for only a few weeks, she is already planning big projects, including a summer programme for all year groups and weekend activities for fathers and their children.

She said: "I will be working with the community, supporting the community and our students and our families, to get the most out of the children's education and continuing education into their adulthood.

"It's a fantastic community. The community support here and in Penhill is brilliant. They are very welcoming.

"I haven't come up against any real negativity. I think they are quite proud of the school and they are

School appoints officer to liaise with neighbourhood

very willing to support it in whatever way they can."

Helen aims to develop the school's programme of adult classes, with literacy and numeracy sessions, and more fitness classes in the pipeline.

She is working with Swindon Town on an initiative for the next academic year called Saturday Dads, which will allow fathers to enjoy activities with their sons and daughters on Saturdays.

She is also setting up an online community noticeboard to allow local groups and not-for-profit organisations to advertise their activities and services.

She is hoping to extend the summer activity programme for children this summer and is also involved in the Swindon Academy fete at the Alton Close site on July 2, which is part of the Penhill Carnival.

Other planned events include a uniform swap shop at the end of the academic year.

Helen will continue to support the

school's weekly Breakfast Plus sessions at the Alton Close site on Wednesday mornings, and the coffee mornings at the Beech Avenue site on Tuesdays.

At these events, parents not only enjoy refreshments, but can also listen to a guest speaker on a variety of different subjects, such as basic first aid or quitting smoking.

Rose Codling, a vice principal at Swindon Academy, said: "The reason Helen is in post is that the school's engagement with the community and parents was growing very fast.

"And we realised we needed someone who was full-time, who was not a non-teacher, who could go out and go to these meetings, build these links and help to run these different events."

Anyone who wants more information or can help with any of the projects can call Helen on 01793 426998 or 07810 222125, or email Helen. Beardall@swindon-academy.org



COMMUNITY SPIRIT Helen Beardall, right, with members of the PTA and community gym, from left, Lynn Graham, Hayley Pike and Heather Ponton

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