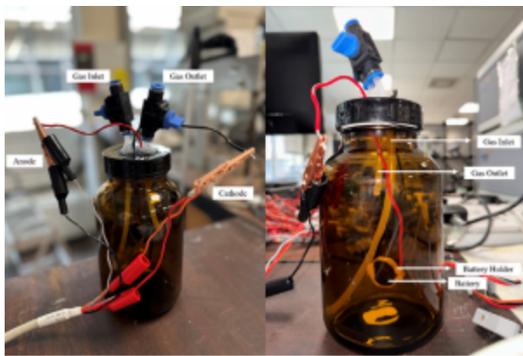


Surrey battery leads

20 May 2025



Scientists at the University of Surrey have made a breakthrough in eco-friendly batteries that not only store more energy but could also help tackle greenhouse gas emissions. Lithium-CO₂ 'breathing' batteries release power while capturing carbon dioxide, offering a greener alternative that may one day outperform today's lithium-ion batteries.

Until now, Lithium-CO₂ batteries have faced setbacks in efficiency - wearing out quickly, failing to recharge and relying on expensive rare materials such as platinum. However, researchers from Surrey have found a way to overcome these issues by using a low-cost catalyst called caesium phosphomolybdate (CPM). Using computer modelling and lab experiments, tests showed this simple change allowed the battery to store significantly more energy, charge with far less power and run for over 100 cycles.

The study, published in *Advanced Science*, marks a promising step toward real-world applications. If commercialised, these batteries could help cut emissions from vehicles and industrial sources - and scientists even imagine they could operate on Mars, where the atmosphere is 95% CO₂.

Dr Siddharth Gadkari, Lecturer in Chemical Process Engineering at the University of Surrey, and corresponding author of the study, said:

"There's a growing need for energy storage solutions that support our push toward renewable power while also tackling the growing threat of climate change. Our work on lithium-CO₂ batteries is a potential game-changer in making that vision a reality.

"One of the biggest challenges with these batteries is something called 'overpotential' - the extra energy needed to get the reaction going. You can think of it like cycling uphill before you can coast. What we've shown is that CPM flattens that hill, meaning the battery loses far less energy during each charge and discharge."

To understand why the CPM worked so well, teams from Surrey's School of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering and the Advanced Technology Institute used two approaches. First, they dismantled the battery after charging and discharging to study the chemical changes inside. These post-mortem tests found that lithium carbonate, the compound formed when the battery absorbs CO₂, could be reliably built up and removed - an essential feature for long-term use.

They then turned to computer modelling using density functional theory (DFT), which allows researchers to explore how the reactions unfold on the material surface. Results showed how the CPM's stable, porous structure offered the ideal surface for key chemical reactions.

Dr Daniel Commandeur, Future Fellow at the University of Surrey and corresponding author of the study, said:

"What's exciting about this discovery is that it combines strong performance with simplicity. We've shown that it's possible to build efficient lithium-CO₂ batteries using affordable, scalable materials - no rare metals required. Our findings also open the door to designing even better catalysts in the future."

The discovery opens new doors for developing even better low-cost, easy-to-make battery materials. With further research into how these catalysts interact with electrodes and electrolytes, lithium-CO₂ batteries could become a practical, scalable way to store clean energy, while helping reduce carbon in the atmosphere.

Yes to chocolate, tea, apples and grapes

20 May 2025



We might have another reason to enjoy our daily cup of tea or small piece of dark chocolate, as a new study from the

University of Surrey has found that naturally occurring compounds called flavan-3-ols - found in cocoa, tea, apples and grapes - may improve blood pressure and the health of our blood vessels.

The research, published in the European Journal of Preventive Cardiology, analysed data from 145 randomised controlled studies, and found that regular consumption of flavan-3-ols can lead to a reduction in blood pressure readings, particularly in people with elevated or high blood pressure. In some cases, the average blood pressure-lowering effects were comparable to those seen with some medications.

Flavan-3-ols were also found to improve the function of the endothelium - the inner lining of blood vessels - which is crucial for overall cardiovascular health. This improvement occurred independently of blood pressure changes, suggesting a broader positive impact on the circulatory system.

Professor Christian Heiss, lead-author of the study and Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine at the University of Surrey, said:

“The findings are encouraging for those looking for accessible ways to manage their blood pressure and support their heart health through enjoyable dietary changes. Incorporating small amounts of commonly consumed foods like tea, apples, dark chocolate, or cocoa powder into a daily balanced diet could provide beneficial amounts of flavan-3-ols.

“While not a replacement for prescribed medications or medical advice, including more flavan-3-ol-rich foods in a daily routine could be a valuable addition to a healthy lifestyle, especially for those with higher blood pressure. These are findings that, although promising, require ongoing investigation.”

Surrey Uni knows the display way to San Jose

20 May 2025



A radical new approach to display screen technology could halve production costs, reduce harmful waste, and deliver brighter, more energy-efficient screens for our smartphones, smartwatches, and even certain medical devices, say researchers at the University of Surrey.

Most display screens use complex circuits made up of tiny switches called thin-film transistors (TFTs), which control when each pixel turns on or off and how bright it should be. However, building these circuits requires a lot of time, energy, water and harsh chemicals, making the manufacturing process expensive and resource-heavy.

At this year's Display Week 2025 Technical Symposium in San Jose, California (11-16 May), Dr Radu Sporea and Dr Eva Bestelink will unveil their latest research, based on a new type of electronic component called a multimodal transistor (MMT). Originally designed as a hardware AI computing element, the MMT also has the ability to simplify display circuits while improving performance and sustainability.

Dr Radu Sporea, Associate Professor in Semiconductor Devices at the University of Surrey, said:

“Our invention challenges decades of industry practice by embracing properties usually seen as flaws. In most displays, engineers try to eliminate the energy barriers that form where metals meet semiconductors because they restrict current flow. But instead of working around them, we've made those barriers central to how our transistors operate.

“Using these effects deliberately, we've shown that the electronic circuits at the heart of display screens can be made with fewer components and processing steps - reducing waste, cutting costs and improving performance. And because it works with existing materials and tools, it's a smarter, more sustainable upgrade for the screens we use every day. For the user, the reduced power requirements in operation will also mean significantly improved battery life.”

The MMT's unique operation enables extremely compact, high-performance circuits that are particularly well suited to devices where size, energy use and image quality are critical - such as smartphones, tablets, smartwatches, automotive displays, and future wearable devices.

The technology is already showing promise in simulations, with real-world applications in AMOLED and microLED displays - two of the most advanced and rapidly growing areas of screen technology. It can also be integrated into current production lines with minimal disruption.

Dr Eva Bestelink, Senior Research Fellow at the University of Surrey's Advanced Technology Institute, said:

“I've been working on this technology since my undergraduate days at Surrey, where I had the idea to develop a transistor based on neural behaviour, so seeing it evolve into something with real-world potential is incredibly rewarding. We've shown that it's possible to rethink how displays are built without starting from scratch.

“The MMT lets us design circuits that perform better while also being cleaner and cheaper to make. That's a win for

manufacturers, a win for users and a win for the environment. Beyond displays, it could also have major applications in areas like microfluidics, imaging arrays and hardware AI. We're still actively researching the AI potential, but the implication for revolutionising manufacturing is clear – especially if we're to achieve Net Zero."

Dr Bestelink and Dr Sporea will present their research on 15 and 16 May at this year's Display Week 2025 Technical Symposium in San Jose, California. Their invention – the multimodal transistor (MMT), now granted a US patent – builds on more than two decades of pioneering research in thin-film electronics at the University of Surrey.

Image: By Redd Angelo in Technology CC0 license

Surrey SEND parents owed money

20 May 2025



Parents of children with special educational needs who were left with little choice but to use private educational psychologists may be due money back from Surrey County Council.

So far 27 families have been reimbursed for having to go private between the 2023 summer term and May 2024 due to a lack of qualified professionals able to create educational care plans.

This has resulted in £26,475 being returned to families – although it has not been a straightforward process for some parents.

The figures emerged following a recently published complaint against Surrey County Council.

The local government and social care ombudsman upheld that the authority refused to reimburse a mother who used a private educational psychologist in support of her son's education health and care (EHC) needs assessment.

The ombudsman also upheld the council delayed making payments for her son's tutor and that its communications were poor.

The ombudsman upheld further complaints about delays at Surrey County Council in completing needs assessments due to the national shortage of educational psychologists – but that it has since been satisfied with the steps being taken to resolve the issue.

Between the 2023 summer term and May 2024 Surrey County Council said it temporarily agreed to reimburse private reports due to its backlog.

The ombudsman said: "If we were to investigate this complaint it is likely that we would find fault.

"This is because the council accepted that a report from an educational psychologist was required and used the one obtained by Miss X.

"Therefore, it should have reimbursed her for the full costs. Also, when responding to Miss X's complaint, the council accepted there were delays making payments to (the child's) tutors.

"Whilst the council did apologise, this is likely to have caused Miss X distress in the form of uncertainty that wasn't remedied.

"I therefore asked the council to write to Miss X within one month to apologise and to make a payment to her for the full cost of the educational psychologist assessment she obtained and to offer a payment of £100 to remedy the distress its delayed payments to tutors caused her.

"To its credit, the council agreed."

Councillor Clare Curran, cabinet member for children, families and lifelong learning, said she was not able to comment on any individual children specifically, but the council accepted the findings from the ombudsman report and apologised to the family affected for any distress caused.

A spokesperson for the council added: "Where we used the private EP report as the sole advice during that time at the parent/carer's request we would cover the cost.

"However, if we did not use it as the sole advice then we would not reimburse."

They added that authority was now operating at over 90 per cent "timeliness" and able to meet demand.

Image: New Surrey County Council HQ, Woodhatch Place on Cockshot Hill, Reigate. Credit Surrey County Council

Surrey in race to capture carbon

20 May 2025



A unique carbon capture technology developed by researchers at the University of Surrey could offer a more cost-effective way to remove carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the air and turn it into clean, synthetic fuel.

A study published in Applied Energy demonstrated that the Dual-Function Material (DFM) process - which combines carbon capture and conversion - could match or outperform more established industry methods. Under optimal conditions, it was shown to remove carbon at a cost of US\$740 per tonne, with the potential to drop below \$400 as materials improve.

Dr Michael Short, Associate Professor of Process Systems Engineering at the University of Surrey and lead author of the study, said:

“For the first time, we’ve been able to demonstrate it can be financially competitive to use DFMs for direct air capture (DAC) - all the while creating clean fuel like methane in the process.

“Using green hydrogen from renewable electricity and carbon from the atmosphere, our system can help to replace fossil feedstocks in sectors like steel manufacturing. If a steel mill uses this fuel, it could effectively have zero net emissions - offering a sustainable path to decarbonise industries that are otherwise hard to electrify.”

Using superstructure optimisation - an advanced modelling technique - the team tested a wide range of configurations to identify the most cost-effective design for capturing 10,000 tonnes of CO₂ per year - a scale comparable to other commercial systems.

With further improvements in material performance and catalyst cost, researchers suggest it could hold promise for large-scale deployment and can be integrated with existing industry infrastructure.

Dr Melis Duyar, Associate Professor in Chemical and Process Engineering at the University of Surrey, said:

“Recycling carbon in this way is a powerful idea, with potential to create many new value chains and enable energy independence by embedding renewable energy into the production of conventional fuels and chemicals.”

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns that limiting global warming to 1.5°C will require not only cutting emissions but also removing billions of tonnes of CO₂ from the atmosphere this century.

In the lead up to Net Zero target deadlines, the technology offers a promising and economically viable route to help achieve that goal - while helping us to reduce overreliance on fossil fuels.

Surrey Uni Study: long Covid patients proving their illness is real challenges

20 May 2025



People living with Long Covid often feel dismissed, disbelieved and unsupported by their healthcare providers, according to a new study from the University of Surrey.

The study, which was published in the Journal of Health Psychology, looked at how patients with Long Covid experience their illness. The study found that many patients feel they have to prove their illness is physical to be taken seriously and, as a result, often reject psychological support, fearing it implies their symptoms are “all in the mind”.

Professor Jane Ogden, co-author of the study from the University of Surrey, said:

“We found that the problem isn’t people with Long Covid refusing help – it’s about the deep need for people to be believed. When a patient feels dismissed, offering psychological support instead of medical care can be misconstrued as insulting.”

According to the Office for National Statistics, there are 1.9 million people who live with Long Covid in the UK. Long Covid symptoms include fatigue, difficulty concentrating, muscle aches and shortness of breath, which persist for many weeks, sometimes months, after the initial Covid-19 infection.

Surrey’s study involved in-depth interviews with 14 people in the UK between the ages of 27 to 63 who had experienced Long Covid symptoms for more than four weeks. The group included 12 women and 2 men.

Saara Petker, clinical psychologist, co-author of the study and former PhD student at the University of Surrey, said:

“We found that our participants are living a life of constant uncertainty, struggling to find treatment. People told us that they didn’t feel listened to, some said they’d lost trust in doctors, their social circles and even their own bodies because of the whole experience.

“Medical advice is crucial – but psychological support must be offered with care. If it’s seen as replacing medical help, it can feel dismissive.”

Image: License details Creator: Jose Luis Navarro. Copyright: CC BY-SA 4.0

Surrey leads lateral thinking about vertical farming

20 May 2025



Can vertical farming be the key to improving and safeguarding the United Kingdom’s food system? This is the central question behind a new research project led by the University that has been awarded £1.4 million by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

The Vertical Farming to Improve UK Food System Resilience (VF-UKFSR) project will investigate how vertical farming can improve the country’s supply of nutritious leafy greens, essential for a healthy diet.

Vertical farming is a method of growing crops in stacked layers, often indoors, using controlled environments. Unlike traditional farming, it doesn’t rely on soil or natural sunlight. It uses soilless techniques and artificial lighting to create optimal conditions for plant growth. This allows crops to be grown year-round, regardless of weather conditions and makes more efficient use of space and resources.

Dr Zoe M Harris, project lead from the University of Surrey’s Centre for Environment and Sustainability, said:

“Our project is keen to explore how vertical farming can provide local, diverse, and culturally appropriate food, given its potential to grow a wide variety of crops. So far, there’s been little in-depth analysis of the risks to our country’s leafy greens supply nor a thorough examination of the benefits and trade-offs vertical farming could bring to the UK’s food system. Thanks to this grant from UKRI, we’re excited to change that and create a clear roadmap to unlock this potential on a larger scale.”

The research team will work closely with farmers, industry, government and the community to make sure that the outputs of the project focus on real-life and immediate benefits.

The core team is made up of whole-system, environmental and social scientists, UK Urban AgriTech (UKUAT) and five farm partners – Flex Farming, Innovation Agritech Group, Farm Urban, GrowPura, and LettUs Grow.

Dr Lada Timotijevic from the University of Surrey said:

“Our research is all about identifying and understanding the risks to our food system and seeing how vertical farming can help tackle these challenges. We want to create tools that make it easy to see the impact of expanding vertical farming on considerations including food supply, land use, and the environment, so we can make smart decisions for the future.

“We’re also focused on understanding the public’s perceptions of vertical farming and the social conditions needed for vertical farming to succeed, as well as on working closely with farmers, industry, and policymakers to build a roadmap that supports its growth across the UK.”

The project’s leadership team consists of:

- University of Surrey: Dr Zoe M Harris, Dr Lada Timotijevic, Dr Lirong Liu, Dr James Suckling, Dr Damiete Emmanuel-Yusuf

- University of Aberdeen: Professor Astley Hastings
- University of Sussex: Dr Alexandra Penn
- UKUAT: Mark Horler

Image: Vertical farm. Credit ifarm.fi Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International

Surrey schools not swamped by private VAT escapees

20 May 2025



Figures released by Surrey County Council suggest that state secondary schools admissions have not been overrun with private school pupils after VAT was added to fees by the Labour government.

While critics including Jeremy Hunt MP for Godalming and Ash had predicted up to 90,000 children could swarm the state sector if 20 per cent VAT was thrust on school fees, so far Surrey County Council said it has not impacted applications to join state secondary schools this year.

From January 2025, independent school fees have been slapped with 20 per cent VAT from the Labour government. The controversial policy, aimed at generating £1.5 billion to improve state education, drew up harsh criticisms from local residents. They accused the government of “punishing” hard-working families wanting to invest in their children’s education.

As state school admission results came out last week, it marks the first indicator whether priced-out private school children have spilled over into the state sector. But Clare Curran, county council’s cabinet leader for children, families and lifelong learning, said: “Surrey has not seen a significant rise in the number of applications for a Year 7 state school place for children currently in the independent sector compared to last year.

“For September 2025, 664 on time applications were received from Surrey residents with children in the independent sector, compared to 608 for September 2024, a rise of 56.”

Not a mass exodus of children to the state sector, the policy appears to have not squeezed private schools out of business just yet. Panic over secondary school place shortages has also not materialised in these new figures. Admissions data shows that for Year 7 places there is a mild buffer on the number of families getting their first preference in school places this year.

Cllr Curran said: “While the percentage of applicants offered their first preference school has decreased for September 2025 (80.6%) compared to 2024 (83.1%), the 2025 figure is not dissimilar to the 2023 figure of 81.3%.

“The percentage of applicants offered one of their six preferences for September 2025 was 95.3%, which is comparable with last year’s figure of 95.9%.”

However, it is still early days for the new policy and the ripple effects of the change could have wider implications. The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) said there might not be an immediate effect but the long-term effects could be more significant. The IFS estimated a 3-7 per cent reduction in private school attendance which could require additional £100-£300 million in state funding to manage the overflow within the state school sector.

MPs and educators have raised the alarm that private schools serving students with special educational needs and disabilities should be left out of the VAT tax raid. Sometimes children with an EHCP cannot have their needs met in a regular state school so private school with 1-2-1 support is necessary for their education.

Surrey has around 140 private schools: including primary, secondary and special schools. Fees vary between schools, but the cost of independent education in Surrey is above the national average.

Image: Rosebery School Epsom - Google

Epsom Schools Lead the Way in Pioneering Mobile Phone Pilot

20 May 2025



Glyn School and **Rosebery School** in Epsom are at the forefront of a groundbreaking initiative aimed at tackling smartphone distractions in the classroom. The schools, both part of the GLF multi-academy trust, are participating in a pilot scheme that restricts social media and messaging apps during school hours.

The initiative, which also includes Meridian High School in Croydon and Merstham Park School in Surrey, will see all students in Years 7-9—around 2,300 pupils—install an app called Blackout. This app blocks access to non-essential apps such as social media, games, cameras, and web browsers while still allowing calls, SMS, maps, and calendars. The restriction will only apply during school hours and term time.

Glyn and Rosebery schools, both well-respected within the Epsom community, have been chosen to help test whether this technology can improve student wellbeing and classroom focus. The rise in smartphone usage has been linked to increased anxiety and reduced concentration, and educators are keen to explore solutions that promote healthier digital habits.

A parent at Rosebery School voiced strong support for the initiative, saying: *“Well done to Rosebery and GLF Schools for trialling the Blackout technology. Teachers are on the front line every day, dealing with the disruption caused by smartphones. If this helps students focus and reduces distractions, I’m all for it.”*

The pilot will continue after the February half-term, with students required to install the app if they bring a phone to school. Glyn and Rosebery’s existing phone policies will remain in place, with additional checks to ensure compliance.

Julian Drinkall, CEO of GLF Schools, emphasised the trust’s commitment to exploring new approaches to mobile phone use in education: *“We understand why some schools have introduced outright mobile phone bans, but we believe technology can be part of the solution rather than just a problem. Blackout offers a way to encourage positive digital habits while still allowing essential communication between students and parents.”*

Amy Anderson, Headteacher at Meridian High School, echoed this view: *“This pilot allows us to take a more refined approach to phone management. Instead of just confiscating devices, we can use technology to help students engage more fully in their learning environment.”*

The effectiveness of the trial will be assessed through student, parent, and staff feedback, with key metrics including improved concentration, reduced classroom disruptions, and enhanced student wellbeing. If successful, the initiative could be expanded to more schools in the GLF network and beyond.

Privacy concerns have been addressed, with Blackout confirming that the app does not access personal data such as messages, browser history, or location tracking. It simply blocks non-essential apps during school hours.

Glyn and Rosebery’s participation in this pilot reinforces their reputation as forward-thinking schools, willing to embrace innovative solutions to enhance student learning and wellbeing. As local pupils and parents adjust to the new system, the Epsom community will be watching closely to see if this pioneering approach proves to be the key to a more focused and productive school day.

Surrey University boldly go to the next galaxy

20 May 2025



A collaboration of more than 30 international institutions, including the University of Surrey, has observed vast differences in the dynamic ecosystem of smaller satellite galaxies orbiting our neighbour galaxy, Andromeda. Surveyed using images from over 1,000 Hubble Space Telescope orbits, the findings have given scientists new insights into the evolution of galactic systems.

The study, published in *The Astrophysical Journal*, found that Andromeda's satellite system is notably different from our own Milky Way, 2.5 million lightyears apart. While both galaxies are surrounded by a flotilla of smaller dwarf galaxies, Andromeda likely hosts three times as many - offering a rare glimpse into their unique history and formation.

Dr Michelle Collins, Associate Professor at the University of Surrey's School of Mathematics and Physics and co-author of the study, said:

"What we've discovered is that these tiny systems have evolved quite differently from those around the Milky Way. Whether this divergence stems from a massive merger - a slow, gradual collision in Andromeda a few billion years ago - or whether it reflects the natural diversity of the smallest galaxies remains a mystery we're working to unravel."

One of the study's key themes is how Andromeda's dwarf galaxies have formed and sustained stars in unexpected ways compared to those around the Milky Way. Researchers had long assumed low-mass galaxies would follow similar patterns, but the Andromeda system tells a different story. These satellite galaxies appear to have experienced a more complex evolutionary history, with some continuing to form stars far longer than anticipated.

Lead author of the study, Dr Alessandro Savino, from the University of California, Berkeley, said:

"Star formation really continued to much later times, which is not at all what you would expect for these dwarf galaxies. This doesn't appear in computer simulations. No one knows what to make of that so far."

To explore these differences more closely, researchers at the University of Surrey are working to understand the forces driving these unexpected evolutionary patterns. A follow-up study will investigate the mass profiles and dark matter distribution of Andromeda's satellite galaxies, integrating data from this paper with new observational measurements.

Dr Collins, who will lead the research, said:

"We've established that there are clear differences, but what I'm really interested in now is why these differences exist. What factors have shaped Andromeda's satellites in ways we don't see in the Milky Way?"

Combining the latest Hubble data with ongoing studies at Surrey, the team plans to gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms shaping galaxies across the universe. Additionally, Hubble is providing the first set of imaging that allows astronomers to measure the motions of Andromeda's dwarf galaxies - offering a rare opportunity to track their movements and reconstruct their past interactions.

To find out more, visit the Space Telescope Science Institute's news page.

Image credit: NASA, ESA, Alessandro Savino (UC Berkeley), Joseph DePasquale (STScI), Akira Fujii DSS2

Nescot Students Celebrate Success at Epsom Downs Ceremony

20 May 2025



Ewell based **Nescot College** students marked the culmination of their hard work earlier this month at the institution's annual Higher Education (HE) Awards ceremony, held at Epsom Downs Racecourse on 7 February. Around 90 graduands, accompanied by 250 guests, gathered to celebrate their achievements.

The event had a distinct Nescot touch, with students from various disciplines contributing to the proceedings. Travel and Tourism students welcomed attendees, while Music Production students provided DJ sets and live music throughout. Two Performing Arts students delivered solo performances during the formal ceremony, adding a special touch to the occasion.

Principal Praises Student Achievements

Addressing the graduates, Nescot Principal and CEO, **Julie Kapsalis**, described the event as "a wonderfully uplifting and poignant occasion," bringing together students of all ages.

"Higher education at Nescot attracts learners from diverse backgrounds, whether school leavers or those returning to

education later in life. Many of our students have taken an alternative route to university, using our courses to embark on a new career or reignite a passion for learning. What unites them all is their inspiring journeys of personal and professional transformation,” she said.

Degrees Awarded Across a Range of Subjects

Awards were conferred by Nescot’s university partners, including the University of Greenwich, Kingston University, London South Bank University, The Open University, and the University of West London. Courses spanned subjects such as teacher education, osteopathy, animal management, sports therapy, counselling, healthcare play specialism, business, creative media, public services, and sport and exercise science.

Inspiring Guest Speaker Shares Career Journey

Among the guests of honour was **Dee Mathieson**, Senior Vice President and Managing Director of Elekta, a global leader in medical technology. A former Nescot student, she shared her career journey in the science and medical sector, highlighting her contributions to cancer treatment. Encouraging graduates to seize opportunities, she advised: “Take a chance. If it isn’t the right opportunity, look for another.”

Also in attendance were Cllr **Steve Bridger**, (RA Stamford) Mayor of Epsom & Ewell, **Helen Maguire** MP for Epsom and Ewell, Julie Giles MBE, Chair of Phab, and representatives from the Rotary Clubs of Epsom and Ewell, along with business leaders and other guests.

Annual Awards Recognise Outstanding Students

A number of special awards were presented during the ceremony:

- **The Olatunde Idowu Memorial Prize**, awarded to Holly Stuart for outstanding business awareness.
- **The Richard Maryan Prize**, recognising excellence in osteopathy, awarded to Luke Tanner.
- **The Dr John Osborn Memorial Cup and Prize**, awarded to Michaela Joseph in honour of the late Dr Osborn, who played a key role in Nescot’s HE provision.
- **The Rotary Club of Epsom Raj Amodia Trophy and Prize**, awarded to Spencer Holmes.
- **The Rotary Club of Ewell Cup and Prize**, awarded to pre-degree HE student Jackie O’Connor.
- **The Principal’s Prize**, awarded to Sienna Campbell, selected by Principal Julie Kapsalis.

Honorary Fellowships Recognise Exceptional Contributions

Two Honorary Fellowships were awarded at this year’s ceremony, an accolade introduced in 2023 to mark Nescot’s 70th anniversary.

The first was presented to **Yvonne Spencer**, Director of Science Capability at the Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA). A former Nescot student, Spencer has been instrumental in developing the college’s Level 6 Degree Apprenticeship in Laboratory Science. Her work has strengthened the partnership between Nescot and APHA, providing career development opportunities for science professionals.

The second fellowship was awarded to **Val Neame**, a former Nescot staff member, in recognition of her 47 years of service to the college. Described as a mentor and friend to many, Neame was praised for her dedication and the lasting impact she has had on both staff and students.

A Student’s Perspective

Delivering the student vote of thanks, Jackie O’Connor, who graduated with a Foundation Degree in Supporting Teaching and Learning, reflected on the encouragement she had received throughout her studies. Paying tribute to her tutor, Mark Warner, she said: “I believe that if you have someone who helps you rethink how you see yourself and how others see you, that is a truly special person.”

A Silver-Rated Institution

Nescot’s Higher Education provision has been recognised with a **Silver rating in the 2023 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)**, including Silver ratings in the new categories of Student Experience and Student Outcomes. The accolade highlights the college’s commitment to high-quality teaching and student support.

For more information about Nescot’s university-level courses, visit their website.

Photo: Julie Kapsalis, Principal and CEO with Nescot Class of 2024 graduates at the HE Graduation Ceremony held at Epsom Downs Racecourse

Surrey Uni Zebrafish Study Links Blood Pressure Drug to Potential ADHD Treatment

20 May 2025



A commonly prescribed blood pressure medication could offer a safer alternative for treating ADHD symptoms, according to a new study involving the University of Surrey. The findings suggest that amlodipine, a well-established drug for managing hypertension, may help reduce hyperactivity and impulsivity, key characteristics of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

From Fish to Humans: Genetic Links in ADHD Research

The study, published in *Neuropsychopharmacology*, tested five potential drugs in rats genetically bred to exhibit ADHD-like symptoms. Of these, only amlodipine significantly reduced hyperactivity. To validate the findings, researchers turned to zebrafish (*Danio rerio*), an important model organism in neurological studies, which shares approximately **70% of its genes** with humans. The zebrafish trials confirmed that amlodipine reduces hyperactivity and impulsivity, and for the first time, researchers confirmed that the drug crosses the blood-brain barrier, directly influencing brain function.

Further analysis of human genetic data reinforced the findings, showing that ADHD is linked to calcium channels in the brain—the same targets of amlodipine. A review of UK-wide patient records further strengthened the case, revealing that individuals taking amlodipine reported fewer mood swings and a lower tendency for risk-taking behaviour.

Dr Matthew Parker, co-author of the study from the University of Surrey, noted:

“Repurposing amlodipine, a well-established blood pressure medication, offers a promising and swift pathway to address ADHD symptoms. Our research indicates that, due to its existing approval and safety profile, amlodipine could be rapidly redeployed as a treatment option for ADHD, potentially providing relief to patients sooner than developing new medications.”

Why Zebrafish? The Genetic Overlap with Humans

Zebrafish have become an invaluable model in medical research due to their high genetic similarity with humans. In fact, they share a greater proportion of their genes with humans than many might expect. Some examples include:

- **Chimpanzees** (~98-99%) - our closest genetic relatives.
- **Mice** (~85%) - widely used in biomedical research.
- **Dogs** (~84%) - studied for genetic diseases and neurological conditions.
- **Zebrafish** (~70%) - a crucial model for studying brain function and drug effects.
- **Fruit flies** (~60%) - key for understanding genetics and neurobiology.

Because of this genetic overlap, zebrafish are often used in drug discovery, particularly for neurological disorders. Their transparent embryos and rapid development allow scientists to study the effects of medications in real-time.

A Safer Alternative to Existing ADHD Medications?

Current ADHD treatments, such as stimulant medications, are effective but often come with significant side effects, including appetite loss, high blood pressure, headaches, and sleep disturbances. Additionally, stimulant medications carry a risk of misuse. Amlodipine, already widely prescribed and well-tolerated, could offer a new alternative with a safer profile.

With approximately **25% of ADHD patients not responding well to existing treatments**, the need for new options is urgent. If further clinical trials confirm these findings, amlodipine could be repurposed as an ADHD treatment much faster than developing a brand-new drug, providing relief for patients sooner.

The study highlights the importance of genetic research in understanding brain disorders and demonstrates how unlikely connections—such as a heart medication treating a neurodevelopmental condition—can lead to breakthroughs in medical science.

Surrey Uni leads research to replace plastic with paper for liquids

20 May 2025



A multimillion-pound research project, called SustaPack, aims to overcome manufacturing challenges for the next generation of sustainable, paper-based packaging for liquids. Backed by a £1 million grant from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) as part of UKRI's co-investing programme, packaging technology company Pulpex Ltd has joined forces with the University of Surrey to refine its manufacturing processes to provide a viable solution to plastic pollution.

Contributing matching support towards the project, Pulpex has already made significant strides in the development of its patented technology, which produces degradable bottles made from natural wood fibres. The packaging offers a sustainable alternative to traditional plastic materials and can be recycled in existing paper waste streams.

However, designing the next generation of production technology and materials requires novel and fundamental research to address current limitations, including new analytical techniques to improve product quality, optimising performance and reducing in-process imperfections.

Scott Winston, CEO at Pulpex, said:

"We're excited to strengthen our existing collaboration with the University of Surrey to enhance our technologies and processes. Our SustaPack partnership will help us advance safe, sustainable packaging solutions, enabling brand owners to meet Net-Zero targets. It gives consumers sustainable choices, delivers answers for brand owners, and enables supply chains and retailers to deliver their carbon footprint reduction goals - a priority for all."

A key feature of the packaging is its multi-layered barrier coating, which prevents contained liquid from leaking, as well as inward oxygen permeation, maintaining high-quality products for consumers. To create a step-change in the energy usage in methods used to apply these coatings, the researchers plan to develop innovative processes that consume less energy and water while increasing the shelf life of packaged goods.

Professor Joseph Keddie, from the University of Surrey's School of Mathematics and Physics, and Fellow of the Institute for Sustainability, said:

"Over the past couple of years, I have forged a close relationship with Pulpex as a Royal Society Industry Fellow, and I am enthusiastic about strengthening our ties through our SustaPack Partnership.

"Our aim here is to combine novel coating processes, mechanistic modelling, computer vision and artificial intelligence (AI) to establish a 'dry' spray coating process that deposits food-safe, degradable coatings. This technology, which isn't yet commercially available, will not only drive the next generation of packaging technology but will also contribute to a significant reduction in plastic pollution and lower carbon emissions from manufacturing."

A multi-disciplinary team of researchers will explore the feasibility of using thermal imaging to detect defects in wet coatings as they occur, enabling immediate corrections using AI. Multi-scale mechanistic models of the coating process will be employed to identify the sources of imperfections and non-uniformities and then eliminate them to ensure optimal packaging performance.

By applying innovative computer vision techniques powered by AI, the project aims to identify production defects in real-time, optimise materials and processes, and achieve 100% reliability in the manufactured products.

The outcomes of the project could set new standards for environmentally friendly packaging, helping brand owners reduce their environmental impact amidst ever-increasing environmental regulations - while offering consumers eco-friendly options to help fight against plastic pollution.

From left to right: Dr Hui Luo and Professor Robert Dorey (University of Surrey's School of Engineering); Professor Joseph Keddie (University of Surrey's School of Mathematics and Physics); Scott Winston, CEO at Pulpex; Barrie Harvey, COO at Pulpex; Dr Simon Hadfield (University of Surrey's Centre for Vision, Speech and Signal Processing); Professor Charley Wu (University of Surrey's School of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering).

Young Artists Brighten Up Tattenham Corner Station

20 May 2025



Passengers at Tattenham Corner station will soon be welcomed by a brand-new display of artwork, thanks to a creative collaboration between local students and The Arts Society Epsom.

Led by Carol Skelton, Arts Coordinator, Year 6 students from Epsom Downs Community School have explored block printing and etching on polystyrene sheets to create Greek vase designs inspired by renowned printmaker Patrick Caulfield's *Pottery 1969*.

The project has been supported by The Arts Society Epsom, with Angie Child, Head of Young Arts Volunteering, overseeing the initiative. It follows the launch of a permanent art display at Epsom Station in October 2024, created by students from Nescot College of Technology.

Part of the national **Art@TheStation** initiative, the project is backed by The Arts Society's head office in London and funded by Southern Railway. The goal is to showcase local primary school artwork, bringing creativity into public spaces and enriching the experience of travelers passing through the station.

Next time you're at Tattenham Corner station, take a moment to admire the talent and creativity of these young artists!

Parents lose trust in Surrey state "school family" admission priority

20 May 2025



A Surrey suburb is up in arms as an 'outstanding' secondary school could change its admissions, making it more tricky for local children to get a place.

Consultation for the new admissions for September 2025 at Hinchley Wood School, in Esher, ends on Wednesday 22 January. If approved, the academy school would prioritise students who attend the schools within its own trust- Hinchley Wood Primary School and Thames Ditton Junior School- leaving Long Ditton St Mary's Junior School and Claygate Primary School lower down the pecking order.

But parents of Long Ditton St Mary's Junior are furious their child could lose a place at the only local state school in the area. Children who attend Long Ditton St Mary's Junior School have traditionally gone to Hinchley Wood Secondary School, but the admission changes could see local students deprioritised from their closest high school and forced to go elsewhere.

The 'outstanding' Ofsted-rated school frequently comes as one of the top places in Surrey. Ben Bartlett, CEO of Hinchley Wood Learning Partnership Trust, said he had "massive sympathy" for those worried about the proposed changes and understood parents always want their child to get into the "best" school.

An academy trust, Hinchley Wood School is legally and financially one organisation so it shares resources such as safeguarding, SEND provision, disadvantaged learners and educational subjects like French, Music and P.E with trust schools. Mr Bartlett argued giving the two primary schools priority keeps children and their parents "in the Hinchley Wood [trust] family".

Mr Bartlett and Co-Headteacher Ms Maria Cachia explained keeping students in the trust means any safeguarding

information or education can be easily transferred as schools have “shared values and strategic aims”.

Now, parents say they are having to decide whether to send their children to the Ofsted-rated ‘good’ Thames Ditton primary school to have a better chance of going to Hinchley Wood, or to send them to the ‘outstanding’ Long Ditton St Mary’s Junior. One dad said it was like “you’ve got a gun to your head from the local state school”.

Shaya’s son goes to Thames Ditton Infant School. He said his family has been “torturing ourselves for eight months” to decide which junior school to send him to in the hopes of getting a good secondary school place which could have a “profound impact” on his longterm future. Shaya said: “We’re being forced to choose whether to prioritise our son’s immediate educational means at the sacrifice of his long-term education.”

Shaya, who lives less than 1km away from the secondary school, said: “The withdrawal of the catchment area clearly demonstrates the Trust wants to prioritise children who do not live locally over local children, and its own financial health.” But the senior leadership at Hinchley Wood argued it would not be fair for children attending a primary school within the Trust to not proceed to the secondary school just because they live out of the catchment area.

Antony Warren, parent of two children at Long Ditton St Mary’s Infant School, said it is “wholly unfair” for the academy to change its admissions suddenly. He said: “We moved, we invested significant life savings into our house and in the community as a whole [so] we knew we were in the catchment area.”

If children do not get accepted into Hinchley Wood Secondary, the next nearest school could be in Kingston where the council has no obligation to accept Surrey pupils. While the Long Ditton students could walk down the road to the secondary school, they may have to get the bus for 30-45 minutes to Esher High or a Kingston school. “I pay my taxes,” said Antony, “I feel my children deserve the right to go to their local state school.”

For many of the young children their first years of education were riddled with Covid and lockdowns, leading to disrupted education and interrupted friendships. Some children now struggle with anxiety and stress, which many parents fear will be exacerbated if the kids start new secondary schools out of the local area where they will not know anyone.

A tight and close-knit community, parents said the Dittons and Hinchley Wood are entangled together with sports teams and extracurricular groups. Preventing children from going to the local secondary school fractures these ties and uproots them from their social connections.

“It’s just not right that a multi-academy trust can just wield its power and prioritise their own schools for their own benefits for their own financial gains [and] totally disregarding the needs of the local community,” said Annette Whymark, who has a son in Year 4. Annette and her husband James Whymark started the action group to spread the word in the Thames Ditton community.

The campaign group, made up of around 65 parents, feared changing the admissions could disperse children into Surrey and Kingston, causing a ripple effect on school admissions. Parents understood those at Hinchley Wood and Thames Ditton primary schools will be in favour of the admissions change because “they want to do what is best for their children”. However, they emphasised it as “grossly unfair”.

Some argued that the Hinchley Wood’s consultation is “financially driven” because it prioritises the primary schools within their trust by encouraging parents to send their children to that school. By increasing the pupil number, the school will get more funding from the government.

Mr Bartlett disagreed the consultation was motivated by financial gain, and stressed the student admission number for the two primary schools was actually being lowered in line with a falling birth rate.

Based on school admission data from Surrey County Council, Mr Bartlett and Mrs Hogan told the LDRS there would be a “minimal” impact in the number of students from Long Ditton entering the school. The CEO said the area was “blessed with a spread of fantastic schools” from Esher to Kingston, where children can frequently get local buses to school.

“This is a genuine consultation and no decision has been made yet,” said Mr Bartlett. After the consultation finishes, the responses will be read and considered by the governors and trustees for the school.

Monica Harding MP for Esher and Walton, said she was concerned about the impact of the proposed admission changes and has shared these with Ben Bartlett. She said: “I have urged HWS to explore alternatives that better serve local families. I will continue to speak with the leadership at HWS on this issue.

“I have also raised these issues in both meetings and written correspondence with the DfE and Surrey CC. The DfE assured me that they are taking these concerns seriously and will “monitor and work with the trust and Surrey County Council to ensure no schools are made vulnerable by such changes if they occur.”

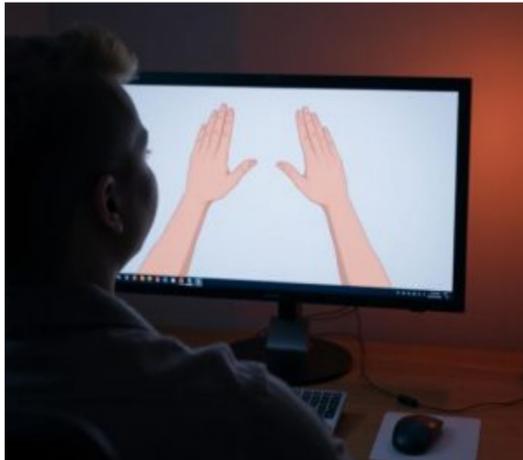
“I am very aware of the anxiety these proposals are causing parents, and I remain committed to advocating for solutions that keep the best interests of our children at the forefront and ensure all of our local schools are thriving. I encourage all parents to participate in the consultation process to help ensure the final decision reflects the needs of our community.”

“I also recognise that local schools are facing huge financial strain and that they are all challenged to deliver high-quality education without commensurate funding. I will continue to push the Government hard to provide the resources necessary for our children to have the best possible education.”

Campaigners outside Long Ditton Infant school. (Credit: Emma Pericas Sims)

Surrey Uni to lead on speech to sign GBT computer programme

20 May 2025



A large-language model (LLM) built to meet the needs of the Deaf community, translating between signed and spoken language, is the aim of a new project led by the University of Surrey.

SignGPT: Building Generative Predictive Transformers for Sign Language has been awarded £8.45m from the UK Engineering & Physical Sciences Research Council. The five-year project will build tools to allow spoken language to be automatically translated into photo-realistic sign language and video of sign language to be translated into spoken language - a complex translation problem that is yet to be solved.

Surrey will work alongside the University of Oxford, the Deafness Cognition and the Language Research Centre at University College London, key Deaf stakeholders, and the Deaf community.

Professor Richard Bowden, Principal Investigator of the project from the University of Surrey's Institute for People-Centred AI, said:

"Large language models such as those behind ChatGPT and Gemini are transforming many aspects of our personal and working lives - and that transformation is happening at a blistering pace. Our project, SignGPT, is not about replacing humans, but it is about ensuring the Deaf community is not left behind in this revolution.

"By creating technology that serves the community, we're enabling equal access to information, working towards seamless communication between the Deaf and hearing world, and demonstrating that AI can be a tool for inclusivity and empowerment. SignGPT isn't just about accessibility for Deaf people - it's about setting a standard for how innovation can address inequities, strengthen human connection, and build a more inclusive society. In a world shaped by rapid technological change, projects like this show that AI's potential is greatest when it uplifts everyone."

Globally, there are around 70 million Deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals, many of whom use sign language as their primary form of communication. For many, written/spoken languages serve as a second or third language, and proficiency in these languages can vary. There is no universal sign language: sign languages are natural human languages created over centuries by Deaf communities and are not derived from spoken languages. Their underlying rules and structures remain a rich area of linguistic study. Each sign language has its own unique grammar and lexicon, relying on both manual gestures (hands) and non-manual expressions (body and face), along with spatial elements, to convey meaning.

Professor Bencie Woll, sign linguist, co-investigator of the project, and founder of the Deafness Cognition and Language Research Centre at UCL, said:

"This project is a unique collaboration between vision scientists and sign linguists with Deaf and hearing researchers working together towards our common goals."

Mark Wheatley, CEO of the Royal Association for Deaf People (RAD), said:

"I am pleased that this important grant will empower the Deaf community to have further equal access by harnessing AI and large language models. We will ensure that the University of Surrey, Oxford University, and the Deafness Cognition and Language Research Centre at UCL, alongside Deaf-led stakeholders such as RAD, take a people-centred approach to ensuring ethical responsibility and the accuracy of translations so that we, the Deaf community, can use them for everyday purposes."

Professor Kearsy Cormier, one of the Co-Investigators on the project from University College London, said:

"So much work in sign language technology is undertaken by researchers with no understanding of how sign languages work, nor any lived experience of deafness themselves. This project will allow real co-creation/co-development of this technology with Deaf and hearing researchers in linguistics and deaf studies working alongside computer vision specialists - with each group learning from each other - and, importantly, building capacity amongst Deaf researchers so they may lead this field in the future."

SignGPT's research team will produce the largest sign language dataset in the world and use it to build a sign language LLM that can provide the breadth of application to the Deaf community that current LLMs provide for written/spoken languages. In doing so, the project will also generate tools for data annotation that will be released for use by the wider community. The project already has Deaf members within both the research team and wider partners, but it is hoping to recruit more staff for whom British Sign Language is their primary language.

The challenge of automatically translating between sign languages and spoken languages is highly complex and remains unsolved. SignGPT will produce open-source toolkits for linguistic use, web-based demonstrations for accessible knowledge exchange and run outreach programmes alongside collaborative workshops.

Surrey University leading on alternative ADHD treatment

20 May 2025



A multisite clinical trial has launched in the United States to investigate whether non-pharmaceutical methods can be used to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in children ages 7-12. This trial is currently recruiting new patients and seeking FDA clearance.

The trial uses a wearable device - Novostim 2 - developed by Innosphere Engineering Ltd. The company anticipates FDA clearance by Q3 of 2025 and has already received approval for sales in Israel.

The novel treatment builds upon years of research into non-invasive brain stimulation techniques led by the University of Surrey's Professor Roi Cohen Kadosh. The research team carried out multiple studies in which children with ADHD were treated with transcranial Random Noise Stimulation (tRNS) coupled with cognitive training (CT).

tRNS is a non-invasive technique that delivers a weak and painless electrical signal to the brain to enhance activity in regions associated with attention. In the studies, children who received tRNS and CT experienced significant improvements in their ADHD symptoms, working memory, and processing speed, along with changes in their brain activity, which could be linked to the improvement of their symptoms in the long-term.

Two clinical trials have been completed using Novostim 2 at Hadassah Medical Center in children aged 7-12, which showed significant improvement in ADHD symptoms, including a 43% reduction in ADHD symptom severity and overall symptom alleviation.

The trial, over a two-week period, involves 20-minute treatment sessions in which Novostim 2 is used to deliver tRNS over specific regions in the brain associated with ADHD and during which participants engage in attention-based digital games.

For more information on the latest trial, visit ADHDtrial.com

Professor Roi Cohen Kadosh, Head of the School of Psychology at the University of Surrey, said:

"We were thrilled by the success of the previous clinical trials, which brought us one step closer to providing a safe and effective non-pharmaceutical option for children with ADHD. The device's ability to modulate brain activity and enhance cognitive functions may hold the key to long-lasting benefits, potentially reshaping the landscape of ADHD treatment. By harnessing the power of psychology, neuroscience, and technology, we can empower young patients to improve their focus, attention and overall wellbeing. The need continues to grow, and I hope to see this technology become available to many children and their families soon."

Rami Shacour, co-Founder and CEO of Innosphere, adds:

"For decades, stimulant medications have been the cornerstone of ADHD treatment. At Innosphere, we're parents first, driven by a mission to give families more personalized, effective options for their children. With Novostim 2, we're redefining what's possible in ADHD care. We're thrilled to announce sales approval in Israel and eagerly anticipate FDA clearance this year. This is just the beginning, as we explore Novostim 2's potential to complement existing therapies and transform lives."

Image: Professor **Roi Cohen Kadosh**

Special case for VAT exemption for special education needs?

20 May 2025



Private schools are “not a lifestyle choice but a necessity” for children with special educational needs (SEN), argues the headteacher of an independent school in Reigate.

Tuition fees are expected to soar from Wednesday January 1, 2025 as the government is scrapping the tax exemption on private schools across the country. The tax is expected to bring £1.7 billion a year, according to the Treasury.

But Mrs Michelle Catterson, head of Moon Hall School, a Specialist Dyslexia school, said: “If you can afford to pay, you should. But there should be exemptions for SEN kids.”

Around 200 children between the ages of seven and 16 attend Moon Hall School- all of whom have been diagnosed primarily with dyslexia, a learning condition that can cause difficulty with reading, writing and spelling. Moon Hall provides a student-to-staff ratio of about 12:1 so pupils get extra support and adapt to meet their learning needs.

Mrs Catterson explained her students with SEN, 70 per cent of whom have an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP), often cannot have their needs met locally in state schools, so there is “no viable alternative” for education. The Local Authority, like Surrey County Council, will pay for specialist provision in these instances.

“We offer local authorities good value for money,” Mrs Catterson claimed, with most of the school’s GCSE results boasting higher than average.

The head teacher said she believed “100 per cent of the kids [at the school] have SEN” but because of long and complicated process of applying for an EHCP, many parents often “give up” on the process. Instead, around 30 per cent of students pay for the specialist education.

Fees used to start at £7,505 per term for a child in year 7, according to the school’s prospectus. But now, parents could be set back £10,424. The Department for Education has said it does not expect school fees to increase by 20 per cent as schools do not pass VAT onto parents. But as tuition fees is Moon Hall’s only source of income, Mrs Catterson argued that they have no choice. “Small, specialist settings like [Moon Hall] simply cannot absorb the additional costs imposed by VAT,” she said.

Most Children with EHCPs have their needs met within the state sectors, according to government officials. If an EHCP assessment concludes a child can only be supported in a private school, the local authority funds that child’s place and can reclaim the VAT they pay.

Despite the expensive tuition fees, the headteacher claimed Moon Hall is “not an affluent school” and the government will find “no swimming pools” on the grounds. As a charity, any extra income is put back into the school by spending on staff to help the students, according to Mrs Catterson.

Impact on the parents

“It’s really short-sighted,” said Mrs Catterson. The head claimed adding VAT to SEN private school fees will mean more parents will apply for an EHCP, causing further backlog and creating extra costs to the government, which will need to provide for those needs.

Alternatively, some parents take on two jobs to fund their children through private school. Mrs Catterson stressed it would be an “awful situation” if a “settled, happy child, making good progress” was moved to the state sector where their needs cannot be supported.

Chris Coghlan MP for Dorking and Horley, said: “Moon Hall provides an outstanding education for children with special educational needs in Surrey. Adding VAT to school fees will place an unbearable strain on families who already make significant sacrifices to afford them. The Government must exempt specialist schools like Moon Hall from VAT to ensure children with special needs can continue to access the support and education they deserve.”

“Punish independent schools”

Built in 1863, Moon Hall is a grade II-listed building which was purchased by the founders of the dyslexic school and repurposed as an educational building some forty years ago. Although a grand historical building, repairs and maintenance costs to the site are almost constant- Mrs Catterson said the roof needs replacing which is expected to cost £1.6m, even before pricey specialist chimney repairs.

Not only is the school facing the VAT axe, Moon Hall will have to wrestle with changes in national insurance and minimum wage increases like many other charities. The head told SurreyLive she “still doesn’t know what the true figure will do” to the school and where it can find the extra money. Mrs Catterson said: “It feels like the Labour government is trying to punish independent schools.”

Rebuilding “confidence and trust”

A government spokesperson said: “Ending tax breaks on private schools will help raise additional funds to break down barriers to opportunity and support the 94 per cent of pupils who attend state schools to achieve and thrive including those with SEND.

“Pupils with the most acute needs will not be impacted by this policy. Work has already begun to rebuild families’ confidence in and reform the broken SEND system we inherited. The Budget invested £1b extra in day-to-day provision and earlier this month £740m was directed to support local authorities in creating more specialist places in mainstream schools.”

They added: “We are committed to improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, and ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs, restoring parents’ trust that their child will get the support they need.”

Related reports:

[Surrey Tory MPs against school fees VAT](#)

[Taxing question for Surrey’s private schools](#)

Image: Outside Moon Hall School, Reigate. (Credit: Emily Dalton/LDRS)