

The magazine of Creative Education Trust schools

Issue no.6 July 2016

Connected



We'll Meet Again

Singing, dancing and symbolism by Year 7 across the Trust

Heads up!

New appointments at Queen Eleanor and Ash Green

Young Professionals

Our most powerful ambassadors



New leaders and new experiences



Between ensuring that our pupils and students progress towards the skills and qualifications measured by government, and realising our promise of a genuinely high-quality, creative education, lies a great open space of possibility, especially

given the freedoms granted to academies to innovate in the curriculum and operation of schools. Two factors will always determine our ability to fulfil that promise: the quality of leadership in schools, and the quality of the school experience for pupils and students.

Connected no.6 interviewed the new heads at Queen Eleanor and Ash Green, and we summarise the fascinating and incisive research projects undertaken by our Teaching Leaders group at their first cross-Trust event. And congratulations to Claire Morrell and her leadership team for steering Abbeyfield to a richly deserved Ofsted 'Good'.

We know that in an environment made fiercely competitive by new and renewed schools – with free schools and academy trusts proclaiming attractive, modern offers – our pupils and students are potentially the best ambassadors and cultural representatives for the Creative Education Trust. For this reason we've introduced professional training that helps make students essential to the communication tactics used by each school, and you can read about the students' activities on pages 8 and 9. Finally, the centre spread of this issue testifies to a great student experience involving the whole of Year 7 across eight secondary school: *We'll Meet Again* – a commemoration of the Second World War. **Emily Campbell** Director of Programmes



Cross-Trust events

Next year's calendar will be circulated in July with dates for a rich list of meetings and events for the 2017 academic year:

Principals' meetings

Head Teachers' meetings

Governors' training days

LGB Chairs' meetings

Design Faculties' meetings

MFL Teachers' meetings

Maths Teachers' meetings

Music Teachers' meetings

Teaching Leaders' meetings

Heads of sixth form meetings

Sixth-form Essay Prize 2016 panel

Sixth-form Speaking Prize 2016 final

Day of Performance (Shakespeare)

Day of Performance (Chorus)

Day of Sports (primary)

Day of Sports (secondary)

Young Photographer 2017 final

Sixth-form Prize 2017 launch

HOT-A-TWEET

140 characters from the Chief Executive

As summer approaches, I especially look forward to witnessing the competitive spirit and excellence of all our sportswomen and sportsmen.





“This excellent Ofsted report reflects the great strides Abbeyfield has taken since joining the Trust and now the aspiration is for the school to achieve ‘Outstanding’ in all categories at the next visit.”

Marc Jordan, Chief Executive

Abbeyfield School in Northampton became the first Trust secondary to be visited for a full section 5 Inspection by Ofsted under its new, more-demanding framework in May 2016. With the emphasis now very much on the progress being made by each and every student, inspectors conduct rigorous checking of work in books to monitor how effective the teaching really is. The outcome – ‘Good’ in all categories – delighted everyone at the school and replaces the July 2014 report when the school was judged to “require improvement”.

Claire Morrell, Principal of Abbeyfield, said “The team from Ofsted recognised all the improvements we’ve made to our teaching, attitudes to learning and marking, and the impact these have had on results. In particular, they were very impressed by our monitoring of the work of each student – the attention given to every individual.” Naturally, she was very pleased that the inspectors commended the quality of governance and leadership too.

Following two important appointments for the new academic year, *Connected* interviewed Daniel Smith, incoming Head Teacher of Queen Eleanor, and Harry French, future Principal of Ash Green.

The coincidental fact that both candidates share a background in design brings advantage to a Trust where a central focus on design is a non-negotiable feature of membership. Harry French's education and professional background in industrial design and manufacturing gave him not only models of business leadership and branding, but an exceptionally clear ability to articulate his brief: "To make sure that the school provides the highest possible standard of

education for every child, all of the time, without exception or excuse." Daniel Smith, a Science teacher by specialism and an accomplished woodworker by personal inclination, has emerged in recent years as among the most talented and ingenious design teachers in the Trust, with a perfect understanding of the value that conceptual discipline lends to a creative subject.

Asked to reflect on the quality of his own education, Harry French singled out one "great teacher" and department, D&T, as having set him on his path. The grant-maintained boarding school in Norfolk he attended, still in operation, was a highly structured environment with three hours of supervised 'prep' every night and lessons on a Saturday. It had its advantages. "Because most of the teachers lived on site you had incredible access to help and

"Raising standards is bound to require change. To resist change is to resist raising standards."

Daniel Smith



The New Brooms

support and the opportunity to build very strong relationships." In spite of good opportunities at school, "public speaking, story writing, yacht racing – definitely beyond the curriculum", Daniel Smith says retrospectively that he wishes he'd had more "ownership" of his learning; "It was always the school or the teachers in control." He explains ownership as "knowledge of what the next steps should be; what will make you successful; the big picture." He got a big picture soon enough as a teenager when his family emigrated to New Zealand, "making the world accessible to me". In contrast, the one regret Harry French expresses – and aims to improve on as a school leader – is the lack of opportunity to travel afforded by his school experience.

Notwithstanding a shared interest in design, their journeys to leadership could hardly be more different. Arriving at Queen Eleanor in 2009 with seven years of teaching behind him, Daniel Smith was instantly struck by the welcoming environment, examples of leadership and opportunities to develop – opportunities which he has grasped avidly, especially the chance to help other staff flourish. “The Head, Ann Kershaw, saw in me what I had begun to see in myself – the potential to develop other staff.” This propensity to lead and share, to nurture and advance, underpins everything for Daniel Smith. The thrill of the job is “seeing things work, a concept having impact, new structures engaging children, a group of teachers with different levels of experience having a positive conversation about a change we’ve made”. He has an acute sense of the significance of small parts in affecting the whole. One of his first ambitions as Head is to transform Queen Eleanor’s library from the corridor it is now to “an irresistible environment that will make reading central to the school”. For all his thoughtfulness, Daniel Smith recognises urgency: an inspection visit on the 36th day of the academic year taught him that every day counts on the road to improvement.

Harry French has risen swiftly from being a secondary school Head of Creative Faculty to Assistant Principal and his first headship, thence to Executive Principal of Greenwood Academy and Firs Primary Academy in Birmingham. Both headships began as extreme challenges. Greenwood had suffered negative publicity and local parents had expressed their concerns about standards by rallying outside the school gates and throwing eggs at staff. “Teachers had been on strike and lost faith in themselves; children had stopped believing they could succeed.” Harry French then took on Firs when the senior leadership team resigned and the Head went on long-term sick leave. The school was on the brink of closure. A year later, both schools have a stable staff, growing rolls and either a ‘Good’ Ofsted rating, or well on the way.

Alongside building teams, giving opportunities, creating support structures and putting faith in young people, Harry French above all recognises the transformational effect of a common goal. “Faith” and “belief” in this goal are favourite terms. “Most of my school leadership experience has been about leading people through adversity where belief has been incredibly important to bring about and accelerate change.”

The hardest challenge facing leaders at the moment, observes Daniel Smith, is protecting staff from the negativity with which the teaching profession presents itself, particularly on social media, as participating in a ‘disaster’ with the



“Belief is incredibly important in leading people through adversity.”

Harry French

government as its enemy. The negativity goes back years: Harry French remembers that many people reacted very negatively to his career switch from business to teaching. The negativity is mostly about changes: the Department for Education stopping some things and starting other things. But Daniel Smith points out that Year 4 pupils are actually coping well with curriculum material that used to be taught in Year 6 – one such change. “Raising standards is bound to require change. To resist change is to resist raising standards”, he says, with a leader’s logic. Meanwhile Harry French has never regretted the decision to become a teacher that others second-guessed, and he means business in turning Ash Green – which has “so many positive attributes” – into an outstanding school.

Successes and special commendations

Students



To the **Woodlands** pupils who won the privilege of representing Norwich City Football Club on a visit to Everton.



To **Ellie Morgan**, Year 8 at **Lynn Grove** who represented the Eastern Region and won the National Sports Hall Athletics final in Manchester.



To **Max Farah** and **Georgia Tomczyk**, Year 5 at **Queen Eleanor**, who beat 200 others in the Northampton Town cross-country competition.



To the 50-strong cast of the Wild West musical *The Lemonade Kid* at **Woodlands**.



To the Year 9 Lynn Grove Knowledge Connected group and competition winner, **Ireti Joseph**.

To **Mackenzie Knell**, Year 7 at **Lynn Grove** for his impressive fundraising for National Autism Awareness week.



To **Lily Sunter**, **Stephanie Billings**, and **Molly McKinney** at **Thistley Hough** for achieving first place in the *Calling You Out* dance competition.



To **Kate Vince**, pastoral support worker at **Lynn Grove** for her outstanding work in enriching the Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) programme by organising visits by theatre and other professional groups.

and staff



To **Amy-Leigh Worrall**, Year 5 at **Three Peaks**, who has landed a role in a stage production of *Grease* at The New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham.



To **Misha Marjoram**, Year 8 at **Lynn Grove** for a Gold Certificate and two symbol badges at the UKMT Junior Mathematical Challenge.



Queen Eleanor's 'Goalball' silver medalists who made it to the Northampton County finals.



To **Three Peaks** for establishing strong links with the Wasps rugby club union club. Year 5 are shown arriving at the Ricoh Arena for a behind-the-scenes tour of a Premiership rugby union club.



To **Bryony Kelsall**, Year 10 at **Thistley Hough**, for her place on the waiting list for the prestigious Yale Young Global Scholars Programme in the USA.



To **Harriett Roberts**, Year 4 at **Three Peaks** who represents Birmingham City Football Club Ladies Under 9s across the Midlands.



To Year 10s at **Thistley Hough** who visited Oxford University and won high praise from the organisers at University College for their exemplary conduct.

Performers and production teams from all eight CET secondary schools joined forces in a spectacular Year 7 Day of Performance. *We'll Meet Again* was a series of musical theatre excerpts from contemporary commissions in commemoration of the Second World War, produced with generous support from the Arts Council of England and PRS for Music Foundation.

Thistley Hough's gorgeous 'jitterbug' opened the show, terminated dramatically by the voice of Winston Churchill announcing the state of war with Germany. Two new pieces for the Creative Education Trust premiered at the event. *Domaci*, performed by Thistley Hough, expressed the experience of refugees in war, while in *Operation Dynamo*, Lynn Grove and Caister described the Dunkirk evacuation in song and dance from the perspective of the Great Yarmouth harbourside. Other excerpts, by turns humorous and harrowing, explored the Home Front, the Blitz and the Holocaust from the point of view of children.

We are grateful to HMDT Music for devising the production and recruiting a fabulous range of professionals to work with the schools in rehearsal and performance. Students have said how emotionally moving it was to be in *We'll Meet Again*, and as Chief Executive Marc Jordan commented in his closing words, we in the audience all wished we had learned history in this dynamic way.



WE'LL MEET AGAIN



Clockwise from upper right:

Sam Jones in **Thistley Hough's Domaci**

Lucy Kildin in **Weavers' I'll be Seeing You**

Amelia Lodge in **Lynn Grove's Hackney Chronicles**

Alisha Horne, Freya Mainwaring and **Orla Karibwami** in **Ash Green's I'll Be Seeing you**

Emily Salmon, Rohanna Cripps, Jodie Capewell and **Alanna Jones** in **Caister's Operation Dynamo**

Charlotte Gray in **Lynn Grove's Hackney Chronicles**

Natasha Money, Angel Marsh and **Romani Dave** in **Rugeley's Hear Our Voice**

Natasha Silvester, Emma Bowers and **Molly Varley** with classmates in **Thistley Hough's Domaci**



Design Programme



The Opposite of War

In the term when all Year 7 students learn about the CET Key Concept of Meaning, and to coincide with the performance of *We'll Meet Again*, all Year 7 students across the eight secondary schools completed art and design projects relating to the Second World War.

Reflecting on the bombing of Coventry Cathedral during the Blitz, Ash Green produced collaborative pieces in the style of stained glass windows. The Rugeley Academies, Fair Oak and Hagley Park, and Abbeyfield explored the Holocaust in powerful examinations of personal identity and 'what is

left after we are gone'. Thistley Hough's paper-wrapped sculptures and souvenirs signified exile and Caister's wire figures fear and loneliness. Lynn Grove created memorial dioramas for the community, while Weavers invoked the 'make do and mend' spirit of the Home Front in textile art using 'unrationed' materials.

Every student was also challenged to design a black and white symbol for 'the opposite of war'. With doves and olive branches banned, this proved to be a rigorous workout in non-verbal expression, resulting in the brave and inventive symbols you see here.

Selected works from each art project and 192 of the best symbols were on display in each of the CET schools and in local community venues.





Left:

Kinetic sculptor **Jim Bond** shows his work to Year 7 at **Abbeyfield**.

Below:

Designer **Michael Cross** tests a windmill prototype built by Year 7 students at **Caister**.

The 'launch days' for each of CET's Key Concepts

that originated at Abbeyfield are now regular fixtures in the Year 7 timetables of Caister, Thistley Hough and Weavers. Embarking on Performance, a key concept of engineering, three designers led whole year groups in the building of machines.

Kinetic sculptor Jim Bond and 240 students took over the Abbeyfield theatre to turn junk materials into one long chain reaction. Working collaboratively, students had to

Performance

consider not only what the action of their simple machine would be (a ball rolling down an inclined plane or a swinging pendulum, for example) but also how to trigger the action, and how their action would trigger the next group's. While not a seamless chain reaction, it was a grand and spectacular experiment in converting potential energy into kinetic energy.



Ways

Harry Trimble of Studio PSK asked Weavers students to devise a new unit of measurement for three challenges: how high you can jump, how far you can reach and how far you can travel in two seconds. He then challenged them to build simple machines that would outperform their 'unassisted' human performances i.e. jump higher than they could, reach further and travel a longer distance in the same time. Using basic art supplies, students contrived an impressive range of elastic-band-powered jumping machines, lolly stick scissor arms, and catapults, thus turning potential energy into kinetic energy.

Michael Cross's engineered structures capture wind, write with snow and enable walking on water. Under his inspiring tutelage, Caister and Thistley Hough learned to harness the power of the wind by engineering sails to turn a windmill. There were many variants to consider: how many sails; what materials; how big and what shape the blades should be; and at what angle they would catch the most wind. That is, how to convert the energy of the wind into rotational energy.

Below:

Designer **Harry Trimble** with Year 7 students from **Weavers** demonstrating the machine they built to improve their performance in one of three tasks.



Schools in the Creative Education Trust have been finding ways to integrate students into essential development and communication processes.

Recognising that our students are potentially the schools' most powerful ambassadors, and the people most able to influence perceptions, Lynn Grove, Caister, Thistley Hough and the Hart School (formed by the merger of Fair Oak and Hagley Park in Rugeley) all embarked on a recruitment and training drive for a student 'outreach squad' to make presentations to primary schools and parents in the upcoming season of secondary school choice. Each 'ambassador' has been trained by a professional marketing and communications agency in the tools of their trade: understanding audiences, crafting messages, planning, and delivering presentations with impact. Short films featuring our ambassadors are available to view on respective school websites.



The participation of students and staff has likewise been essential to the development of designs for improvements to the environments at and between the two former Rugeley Academy sites, now joined as the Hart School (see *Connected* no.5). Architects DK-CM enlisted the help of the school's student council members, gifted

and talented design students and several members of staff in the development of designs. The working group will become the principle advocates for the project in the school and in the Rugeley community, with several opportunities to present and answer questions on it.

The skills and experience acquired by students in these processes are key to employability in many sectors: identifying priorities and communicating key messages, brainstorming and developing ideas, user research, storytelling and creative problem solving.

Young Professionals



Round-up

Lead on!

The first cross-Trust meeting of Teaching Leaders (see *Connected* no.5) gave exposure to nine remarkable research projects with potential to address seemingly intractable problems in teaching and learning. The event opened with three short presentations setting the scene for leadership. Holly Hartley, driven by an 'innate moral compass' in her role as Principal of Thistley Hough, captured the courage required in leadership: "You accept help from others, but you need be able to stand on your own when the chips are down." Marc Jordan's theme, the 'theatre of leadership' – the importance of its 'manners and costume' – was picked up by Chris Keen, drawing an analogy with Shakespeare's Henry V, "wandering at night from post to post", in his advocacy of leadership by wandering (as in a learning walk) and "motivating the troops".

Teaching Leaders' presentations examined interventions to challenge and stimulate the progress of the most able (Hanna Crothers of Lynn Grove and Anna Dade of Abbeyfield), and others to close the Pupil Premium attainment gap (Gabriella Sharp of Abbeyfield) or raise attainment in Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) (Marie-Claire D'Arcy-Barron). Kirstin McRae-Smith presented interventions to raise attainment in KS3, while Katie Pointon addressed the KS3/4 transition in English at Thistley Hough. This research, along with Carla Boyd's maths intervention at Thistley Hough, Jasmine Costello's deprived pupils' intervention and Stephen Goddard's Year 10 tutor time strategy for Lynn Grove, is all available in the Knowledge Connected shared site in the Cloud.



Boot Camp

Year 4 and 5 pupils from the primary schools feeding Lynn Grove were invited to a two-day "World-changing ideas boot camp" during half-term as part of Lynn Grove's recruitment and transition strategy. 50 pupils were led through creative processes "to make your brain hurt in a good way" by the agency 7 Billion Ideas. The 'final' was a presentation to parents of a dozen extraordinary ideas, prototyped and presented with distribution, pricing and marketing plans. Alongside a solar-powered phone, a Lego laptop and a robot that grants your every wish, we scrutinised a range of personal assistive technology devices, including goggles for seeing through walls (in situations of danger) to goggles that permit views of the future (for preventative medicine). We saw a pen that writes what your brain is thinking, and a helmet that stores your memories (after injury or dementia). The intelligent sports shoe that self-adjusts its sole to studs, AstroTurf or sports hall, depending on the ground or floor surface, was a memorable wearable technology, while the overall winner, Megablast, whose inventors are pictured here, featured a set of earphones that automatically translate any foreign language within earshot to your own.





Young Enterprise, and Younger

Rugeley sixth-form students launched a company under the Young Enterprise Company Programme. Black Wick produces a variety of home and decor products that sold out at the Bruton trade fair where they were launched. Amanda Milling, MP for Cannock, later named the Rugeley sixth form in a question to the Prime Minister about inspiring the next generation of entrepreneurs.

Meanwhile, Year 4 children at Queen Eleanor were given the chance to set up their own companies starting with a £5 loan from their teachers. They had to research the market, invent a product and then devise company names, logos and posters. They wrote to local organisations asking for donations and created spreadsheets for income and expenditure. After hours of product manufacture at school and at home, the enterprise trade fair generated an enormous amount of profit totalling almost £500.



Lynn Grove Reads

Lynn Grove's library is among the most active and popular in the Trust, signifying a rich and healthy culture of reading. High Level Teaching Assistant Lisa Stothard organised the most recent author visit by Morris Gleitzman, author of *Once*. He praised Year 10 Book Club members Hannah Bensley, Eleni Christofi, Sophie White, Ella Bell, Gemma Mathers and Alyssa Osben for their great questions, none of which "could receive a yes or no answer, which is why we had such a good conversation".

Congratulations and thanks to Nettie Bowles, Library Supervisor, and her assistants Helen Dobinson and Holly Teasdale (pictured), for inspiring so many pupils to read for pleasure and for organising trips and after-school clubs and activities.



Creativity is the ability to recognise or make new connections between the things we know. Connecting knowledge is at the heart of an effective education. It is vital to improving standards, and it will make young people resourceful and employable in the world of tomorrow.

Creative Education Trust

Sicilian House
7 Sicilian Avenue
London WC1A 2QR
Telephone 020 7378 5760

info@creativeeducationtrust.org.uk

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