

The magazine of Creative Education Trust schools

Issue no.22 March 2021

Connected

Pattern- recognition

Universal remote Key Concept
days for Y7 and Y8

Our Next Steps

Strategy Workshops with Everyone

World Book Day

The first cross-Trust challenge

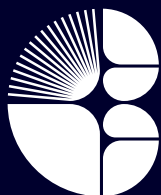
Where You From?

What 8,000 students said

Leadership

From the Screen

Plus: Training, Wellbeing, social media, alumni in the spotlight



OUR NEXT STEPS

2021 is the tenth year of Creative Education Trust's operation as an academy sponsor, and the anniversary will be marked in various ways throughout the year. Since 2011 the Trust achieved much to improve the lives of the many children that have studied with us, and although anniversaries are a great time to look back, this is also a time to look forward. The Creative Education Trust Strategy helps us to identify what we want to achieve and how we are going to get there. **Dena Smart**, Director of HR, reports on the recent strategy workshops held in every school.

To ensure the success of the high-level strategy agreed by the Board to take us to 2023, everyone who's part of the Creative Education Trust team needs to understand it and the part they play. We intended a roadshow to meet all our staff and get their views, but the current circumstances made that impossible, so our Headteachers and Principals came to the rescue and offered to deliver the message for us, with a little help from the power of video. Allocated to different groups, team members listened to Marc Jordan's powerful message about why he set up the Trust

"Education matters more than almost anything. If we don't get this right nothing much else falls into place for people. All the government measures of attainment and progress, all the improvements in Ofsted grades we work so hard for, are only proxies for the real and individual advantages we give to each Creative Education Trust child."

Every school approached the workshop slightly differently, but with the same message – this is the strategy: how do we support it as a school, where does each of us fit in, and what do we need from the Trust?

Our strategic goal of being recognised as a leading educator has these key elements:

Growth increase the network of schools to enhance the current portfolio

Education achieve success across all measures and become a system leader

Creativity develop pupils' ability to combine knowledge and skill in new ways

Community makes schools active and valued participants in local and regional life

People recruit and develop the best people with the right skills in the right places

Places make our estate safe, functional and uplifting

Finance maintain financial viability and create surplus to invest

Reputation gain recognition as a system-leading MAT and influence public policy

The remote delivery of the workshops was a huge success with a consistent theme in the feedback from all the schools. The events gave participants a greater sense of belonging to Creative Education Trust; and of being part of a larger team with a shared purpose.

"Education matters more than almost anything. If we don't get this right nothing much else falls into place for people."

SWOT analysis from Creative Education Trust schools

Strengths

- Strong vision from CET
- Staff know the children
- Improving parental contact/interaction
- Ambition for the children
- Strong, motivated leaders and dedicated staff members
- Supportive environment (school community); nurturing/caring
- Sense of pride, community, purpose and direction
- Children well prepared for high school
- Results improving
- Investment in school buildings
- Student numbers improving
- Trust wide curriculum planning
- Academic Communities
- Supportive and challenging Academy Improvement Boards
- Support from central team

Weaknesses

- Training opportunities for staff – particularly support staff
- Insufficient number of Teaching Assistants
- Lack of rooms/space for intervention/ science facilities
- Finances/budget limitations
- Reputational legacy
- Communication / working together with other Trust schools
- Not feeling valued by Trust
- Need more vocational subjects for SEND
- Need own alternative provision
- Infrastructure specifics e.g. toilets, reception provision
- Knowledge Connected days/Trust visits – insufficient notice
- Trust staff don't meet all staff – particularly support staff
- IT facilities
- Too many steering groups lead to confusion
- PFI restrictions

Opportunities

- Development of creative subjects – Music/PE
- Great environment – outdoor space etc
- Staff development in all areas
- Opportunity to be involved in CET strategy
- Widening community links
- Show students how education transforms lives – Marc Jordan to share his story with older students
- Bringing parents alongside vision
- Engagement with feeder schools
- HO induction / video for all staff
- CET community fun days
- Enhanced curriculum
- Visits to other schools
- New ways of working – centralise systems to reduce duplication
- Listen to students
- Work experience and careers for students

Threats

- Funding – lack of resources/ under-investment
- Staff retention
- Covid
- Parental involvement
- Setting students up to fail in academic subjects they can't achieve
- Lack of time to be creative and for research/training
- Low aspirations for students
- Transition primary to secondary
- Health and Wellbeing
- Poor brand recognition
- Ofsted inspection
- Lots of change in a short space of time

Many strengths and opportunities were identified for each schools. Key messages for the Trust were to ensure we allocate appropriate resources to each school, support cross-Trust working and enhance development opportunities.

In amongst some great feedback from the event, the message below (sent to the Principal at Thisley Hough) definitely comes from the heart and sums up the difference that education can make.

"I'm a new trainee joining on site next week, and I wanted to say what a wonderful introduction the Aligned Strategy Workshop was to my placement. Having worked in HR and industry for many years I have NEVER seen organisational values brought to life in such an honest and passionate way. I want to pass this on to those that I teach during my career!"

Start doing to support the strategy

In School

- CPD for all and embed training already given
- Involve community more
- Use outside area more, school garden
- Collaboration between year groups
- Bring outside experts – particularly local industries
- Make the curriculum more creative
- Develop reading
- Encourage children to lead their learning
- More curriculum days
- Communicate with and hear the voice of all staff
- Fun days, creativity days, creative homework
- Ofsted-ready mindset all the time
- Clear behaviour expectations that enable staff to challenge students
- Adapt Knowledge Connected to be relevant to students
- Plan community events

Creative Education Trust

- Be accountable for what they provide to schools, follow up what they promise & make sure we have what we need
- Valuing KS1 data
- Consider primaries more; greater focus on primary training
- Remember individual schools are all different
- Encourage links between schools e.g. moderation, specialists teach in other schools through Zoom, inter-Trust exchange programme, CPD visits.
- Staff development – particularly support staff
- Recognise and interact with all staff to communicate key messages; seek regular involvement from everyone
- Fund an alternative curriculum to widen experiences and cultural capital of whole school
- Provide more space
- Cross-Trust art exhibition and sports events
- Unplanned visits to see schools in action 'real time'
- More links with employers
- Head Office people visit Norfolk schools more
- Share Progress 8 data across whole Trust
- Increase diversity and inclusivity
- Integrate Knowledge Connected so it's not an add-on
- Develop a Trust SEND policy to support SEND students through curriculum and creativity

Stop doing to support the strategy

In School

- Worrying about taking risks e.g. creativity
- Being hesitant
- Being sceptical about the Trust
- Maintaining strict timetable – need flexibility
- Making decisions without consultation
- Forcing students to take subjects they won't be successful in
- Pastoral staff working in isolation
- Making changes in one area without considering the impact elsewhere
- Trying to do everything ourselves – use support from the Trust

Creative Education Trust

- Concentrating on secondary schools
- Reduce travel to Trust events e.g. make Towcester (primaries inset) day virtual
- Share resources between schools
- Don't jump ahead until basics are right

Where You From?

By Martyna Drzewiecka,
Bulwell Year 11

Everyone loves a good story. As children we listen to them, embrace them, believe in them, and we become obsessed by the concept of our own fairy tales – the dashing prince, the ugly duckling, the damsel in distress. Well, today I am going to tell you my story – a real story – and you can make up your own minds whether the ending is fairy-tale enough.

May 15th 2014. A day when my whole life was packed up and moved over a thousand miles. Me, a determined young girl, who back then didn't speak a single word of English, forced out of her own country by malicious threats. We will get to that part shortly. First let me tell you how it all began.

Once upon a time, I was growing up in a small town on the South border of Poland. The town was surrounded by great forests and lakes, which made it a popular tourist attraction. From such a young age I was exposed to so many different cultures making their way into my small town, but to me this home town felt enormous – full of excitement and a new experience around every corner.

As every summer passed more and more tourists flooded my town, and my curiosity grew... I remember reading books about Ancient Greek traditions and watching documentaries of Polish journalists going into some of the most remote locations to get to know some of the most exotic cultures. What I didn't know was that I would belong to an exotic culture myself in the future.

At the end of 2011, my mum fell in love with an Egyptian man. The next thing I know, he's on a plane moving his whole life to Poland in the embrace of my family. A great man that fell in love with my mother – it was like a fairy tale; the princess finally finding her prince.

“From a young age I was exposed to so many different cultures making their way into my small town.”

Above: The town of Kudowa Zdroj in Lower Silesia, Poland

Right: Martyna with her mother and stepfather



10

Perkbox

Creative Education Trust has negotiated a fantastic new benefit for staff which will be launched to mark the tenth anniversary of our incorporation as a company.

Look out for your introductory email on 28th April 2021.

“Primary school was such a scary place for a little girl who didn’t know or speak a word of English. I was always left out, always by myself at break and lunch.”

This man has now been my amazing stepfather for almost ten years, and the only father figure I have ever had. Even though we neither spoke the same language nor had the same beliefs, our family grew stronger every year. Love knows no language.

Remember the very multicultural town I talked about earlier? Well even though so many people from so many places appeared each year, my stepfather wasn’t accepted. All because he was different. Slurs were thrown at us whenever we walked the streets. The already small town never felt smaller. We were outcast for betraying our people and for associating with ‘terrorists’. Do you know how it feels when your own family members are ashamed to be related to you? People would throw rocks, kicks, punches and words our way many times a day. These people forced us out of our country.

England was a place of refuge and a place of opportunity. A place where we could be free to believe what we wanted; where we thought we would escape judgment. Thrown into the middle of a primary school year, I remember clinging to my mother’s legs for dear life. It was such a scary place for a little girl who didn’t know or speak a word of English. I was always left out, always by myself at break and lunch. Despite my fierce efforts to learn a second language, other kids didn’t want to speak to me. Many wouldn’t even look at me. All because I was different.

Secondary school was even worse. I remember being told to go back to my own country, even getting physically assaulted.

More recently, with Brexit, people started to tell me I was an illegal immigrant, that I came in under a lorry and that BREXIT MEANS EXIT. All because I was different.

You might brush this off as a joke, and so did I. I laughed along with the people who teased me just to hide the pain of not fitting in. I would come home every day and wonder what I was doing wrong.

What I have realised is that I don’t want to fit in. I want to be different, unique, extraordinary. Being different isn’t wrong. Thousands of people like me are being harassed every day because of their beliefs and origins. This needs to stop. If we stop putting each other down and bring each other up instead, our community will improve beyond recognition.

I am extremely proud of each and everything about my multicultural household and the countless hardships we have overcome. Through the many years of being alone I’ve realised who I truly am and what my story needs to be.

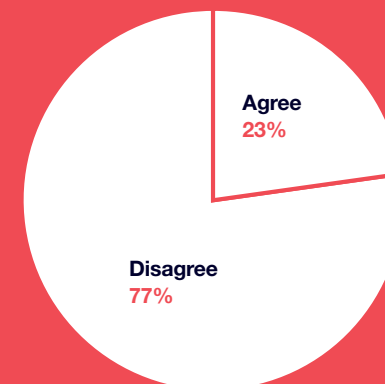
I am Martyna Drzewiecka and I am different.

I am Martyna Drzewiecka and my difference is my strength.

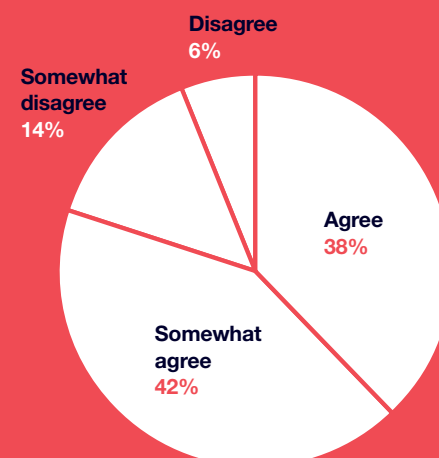
I am Martyna Drzewiecka and I will create my own story.

Where You From? Extra!

I think it matters where you're from



I expect where I'm from to influence my life in a good way



You will have learned from previous issues of *Connected* that the Programmes team carried out a survey asking secondary school pupils their thoughts on the place where they live (or ‘come from’ more distantly) and whether or not it matters where you’re from. Almost 8000 students contributed their perceptions, forming a number of aggregate insights:

- When asked where they think of themselves as being from, the most popular response was ‘the country I live now’, shortly followed by ‘the town/city I live now’. The least common responses (apart from ‘other’) were ‘the region/county I live in now’ and ‘the street I live on now’. An appreciable 15% of students chose ‘the country where my parents were born’, suggesting a strong thread of inherited cultural identity.
- Creative Education Trust students revealed themselves as overwhelmingly positive about where they’re from, with 92% either selecting ‘agree’ or ‘somewhat agree’ to the statement ‘I’m glad about where I come from’.
- Many Creative Education Trust students recognise the unique qualities of their local communities, with 35% agreeing that ‘the place I’m from gives me positive things which people from other places don’t have’, and an additional 43% selecting ‘somewhat agree’.
- A statement on which responses are more divided is ‘I enjoy imagining my future in the place where I live now’. 30% agreed, 31% ‘somewhat agreed’, 20% ‘somewhat disagreed’ and 19% disagreed.
- Over three quarters of students disagree with the statement ‘I think it matters where you’re from’.
- However, and perhaps contradictorily, students overall are positive about how where they’re from is likely to influence their life. When asked about the statement ‘I expect where I’m from to influence my life in a good way’, 80% selected either ‘agree’ or ‘somewhat agree’.

The survey has yielded a baseline of perceptions from secondary school pupils. With the survey now closed, the Programmes team are developing exciting new cross-Trust creative projects which celebrate locality and enable students to give expression to their understanding of the place they’re from.

8,000

students contributed

15% of students chose ‘the country where my parents were born’, suggesting a strong thread of inherited cultural identity.

Leading from the screen



The theory and practice of leadership enjoy a tense interplay, and the social distancing measures imposed on schools have shifted the dynamic for our leaders again. As we transition from pandemic conditions into a changed school world, two governors, a Principal, several NPQ candidates, the Director of Education and two teachers keeping the school council flame alive, reflect on what it's like to lead – and to anticipate leadership – from the confinement of the screen. **Nicole McCartney**, Director of Education, opens with these thoughts to share with our leaders out there:

- I've been conscious of a real need for frequent check-ins with team members that you would otherwise expect to see every day.
- Not only that, but the need to make the time you have with others 'count', meaning that quieter team members may need prompting in busy, online meetings.
- It's critical to give yourself time to think and reflect away from the screen, as difficult as that has been – and continues to be – under the constantly shifting conditions.
- Take advantage of being still by reflecting on strategy when you can, rather than crisis.

“Instead of multiple smaller conversations, online meetings made me think through everything in one go.”

Tracy Warrener



Leaders on the ground

New insights from middle and senior leaders in school

My NPQSL project was based on developing effective teacher modelling strategies to enhance students' written outcomes, and it focussed on the use of modelling through the prism of the visualiser. It turned out to be well-timed as a tool to be added to the teaching and learning kit, as remote teaching brought this versatile piece of equipment to the forefront of live online lessons. The project write-up was daunting in length, especially the appendices, and if there was any positive to the lockdown sequel, it did give me the time to read in greater depth, write with more authority, and sort those pesky appendices.

Jill Spencer, Director of Learning – Humanities, Abbeyfield

The NPQML gave me the opportunity to take a step back and evaluate both my own skills and my department's qualities. It was a catalyst for sustainable changes: metacognition modelling (my project focus) is now a regular feature of my department's teaching practice. Completing the qualification during the pandemic brought some advantages, because it became a valuable asset during lockdown, which helped to maintain a momentum of exam skills in KS4. Remote leadership made it harder to solve some of the 'quick problems' that arose in my project. You could no longer pop across the corridor or into a member of staff's classroom to discuss potential barriers. Overall, completing the NPQML in both 'normal' and remote conditions demonstrated that leadership needs to be fluid and flexible.

Elizabeth Tyrrell, Teacher of Geography, Abbeyfield



While extremely challenging, leading remotely also created an opportunity to grow. The circumstances made me re-consider time management, for example. Not being able to just go and speak to someone, but having to arrange an online meeting, meant I thought through everything needing to be discussed in one go, instead of having lots of smaller conversations that can take up so much time. A group of people who were working at different times because of bubble timetables created far more emails and Teams chats, and inevitably multiplied the miscommunications that can happen. Staff wellbeing became front and centre in leading the faculty and the school, and will stay there as we return to a slightly more normal way of working.

Tracy Warrener, Associate Assistant Principal, Thistley Hough



Distance and Clarity

Chris Rushton, Chair, Harpfield Primary Academy Council

These certainly have been very different times in school leadership, and I have felt it particularly as Chair of Harpfield's Academy Council.

I'm a very 'hands on' leader, so the very fact that I haven't been able to pass beyond the Reception window has almost tormented me. In normal times I would visit the school on a weekly basis to catch up with the Head over a cup of tea, then have a walk around school, sticking my head around the classroom door and simply saying "Hi" to the staff and pupils. A couple of times a term I would also take the whole school assembly and visit off-site activities.

I feel that this sort of interaction with children and staff by Academy Council members is so important.

But how things have now changed! We've been presented with the challenge of remote leadership and in every walk of life we seem to live in front of the screen in meetings. In the middle of the pandemic at Harpfield, we've had the Head Teacher retire and the Deputy step up to Acting Head. This is a time of transition when I would particularly want to be in school and to give as much 'face to face' support as I could.

Of course we can communicate quite readily on Teams and by phone, but I do feel that visual governance is important. When our neighbouring secondary, Thistley Hough, had our transitioning Year 6 pupils in school, I was able to link in a few times just to say "Hello" to the children.

At Christmas I walked the school perimeter with Santa Claus and at least had some interaction with all the year groups.

It's been important to still be available for the school community as a governing body, to the extent that link Council members are able to fulfil their roles remotely – even tasks such as Health and Safety audits! And personally, I think the lockdown has given us all the opportunity to reflect on our purpose, because we've had to hone in and adapt to these new ways of supporting the school.

I, for one, will emerge from this lockdown with a clearer sense of the Academy Council member's role. The new AIB (Academy Improvement Board) meetings that have been introduced during lockdown has really focussed my mind in supporting the Senior Leadership Team. Communicating throughout with the Head Teacher has also reassured me that staff can adapt to new and very intuitive ways of teaching, and importantly, they can succeed. I'm sure we have more unknown challenges ahead but we're now equipped and in the right frame of mind to tackle them.



Governance by Teams®

Richard Tapp, Wrenn Academy Council

When I was approached to join the Academy Council at Wrenn early in 2020, thoughts of a global pandemic were far off. Whatever opportunities and challenges came to mind, online learning, social distancing, centre-assessed grades and Covid-19 safe environments were not among them.

Just as all these challenges had to be overcome, so did the transition to virtual governance. A year on, it has still not been possible for me to meet most of my fellow Academy Council members in person. It's clear, though, that their culture and ethos have been carried through into the 'new normal.'

Academy Council meetings are now online, but senior teams from both the school and the Trust have continued the disciplines of regular reporting and engagement. If anything, Council members have taken their responsibilities even more seriously than before, both in general and for individual areas. Each field, including safeguarding, looked-after children and health and safety, has assumed even greater importance.

As a Solicitor and Chartered Governance Professional, I also serve as a trustee on a number of charitable boards. I see the challenges and demands of discharging governance remotely at first hand. Good governance is a combination of the right people, their relationships, the culture and the processes which underpin it. When people can't be together, we have to work even harder on the basics.

At one level, this means that Council papers must be made available in good time, that Council members can find them, and that the Teams platform functions well. At Wrenn,

“When people can't be together, we have to work even harder on the basics.”

we continue to learn how best to use Teams, but Council members are clearly very engaged. With the support of our Clerk, Tina Mayes and the leadership of our Chair, Bill Mandeville, we are able to hold effective meetings which support, engage and hold to account. Council Members have also been able to participate in much of the normal range of school meetings – including in my case, for example, the appointment panel of a Vice-Principal.

Remoteness makes it all the more important for us to approach governance through a lens of constant vigilance, and some things become even more important. The role of our Principal, Steve Elliott, is key to ensuring the right people come to meetings, are properly prepared, and report in detail. The processes which Creative Education Trust brings to the school are diverse, but also critical. New structures have enabled staff to deliver education in such a different way while maintaining an absolute focus on the student. New professionalism has been brought to health and safety and facilities management in creating a Covid-19 safe environment. The Academy Improvement Board is a new concept. In each case, the 'knowledge connected' enhances governance and provides assurance to stakeholders.

A Virtual Stage Entrance

Chris Keen, Principal, Ellis Guilford

Leading any school remotely is a challenge: leading a new school remotely, an even greater challenge. Yet still exciting.

As school leaders, we all understand the importance of communication. During lockdown, we've had to find ways of expressing the vision, ethos, standards and expectations without compromise to all stakeholders' understanding of the school's proposed journey. Our socially distanced communication sets the contextual scene and gives us the chance to perform before a captive audience, to live out the 'theatre' of the school hall, on screen.

As a new Principal, dressing the set for one's monologue as Chief Protagonist is crucial. When we returned in September, fortified by a team of cleaners with their cloths, antibacterial spray and gallons of sanitiser, with metres of social distancing and an updated Risk Assessment, the stage was set.

Leading a school is serious interactive business: you need to see the reactions, the facial expressions, the rolling eyes, the nodding heads. I've taken the time to speak to staff directly at every opportunity, but we're constrained, and leading remotely has required adjustments to our normal practices. More specifically it's required 'Teams': a new piece of everyone's

ever-expanding technological vocabulary. Teams has become the norm for every meeting and briefing. Alone in my office, I address the staff each week, and every week my PA enters saying, "Mr Keen, you are on mute". The mouse hovers in embarrassment and clicks the microphone icon. I start again.

We've tried to keep our meeting times, structures and expectations as normal as possible: faculty meetings, pastoral meetings, SLT meetings, whole staff briefings. This has yielded consistency and clarity amidst a world of pandemic confusion. Furthermore, the regularity has intensified our focus on the school improvement agenda and on pedagogy and practice. It's created opportunities to listen and reflect, and opportunities for staff to get involved in the cross-Trust Academic Communities. We all have new, creative and innovative ways to learn.

The safety of pupils who are absent from school has been the number one priority. Regular phone calls, email contact and home visits have become the norm. Teaching lessons from behind a screen with a permitted background, facilitating student 'chat' questions in virtual 'breakout rooms' – it's all a new way to deliver learning, and it's forced leaders to place a much greater emphasis on engagement than on learning per se; on pupil welfare rather than on data collection.



“Maintaining structures and expectations has yielded consistency and clarity in a world of pandemic confusion.”

The once revered school hall is now a Covid Testing Centre. Bays, swabs, mirrors, medical gloves take the place of the sacred lectern and rows of chairs. We all simply get on with it, do what is required. As leaders, we've needed to be pragmatic, aware of nuanced changes to legislation, adaptable and yet dependable. The commitment of staff to our schools and pupils cannot be underestimated; and neither should the power of "thank you".

And so, to our return and a warm welcome back with smiles and positive assurances. March 8th, 2021 was the new September 1st, 2020. A re-boot strategy is in place, chairs are placed two meters apart in the hall, pupils sit silently, masked, awaiting the entrance of the Protagonist, stage left, and the beginning of a new scene entitled "Expectations, opportunities, the future".



Distanced Voices

Bill Cassie, Progress Leader for Year 10, Wrenn

While the activities that constitute 'pupil voice' varies from school to Creative Education Trust school, its purpose is to shape teaching, learning, the built environment, school culture and vision from the students' perspectives. To this extent, pupil voice is a form of leadership, often discharged through the vehicle of the student council.

Connected interviewed Bill Cassie, who took on the leadership of student voice at Wrenn from September 2020, between the first and second lockdown. From experience, he was sceptical of staff and student 'voice' systems. The former had degenerated into a termly, 'tick-box' procedure that satisfied no colleagues' desire for change or attention; while the latter, conventionally a system of student councils or parliaments with representatives elected from the student body, never seemed effective in representing constituents' views or tackling what they raised.

Initially, Bill trialled new procedures among colleagues. He replaced the termly 'staff voice' with direct emails and conversations asking open questions in pursuit of reflection and dialogue. The volume and quality of responses was impressive and the turnaround almost an instant feedback mechanism. Staff praised the new protocol which made them feel listened to rather than threatened.

Moving on to student voice, Bill looked up the work on student voice published by Gretchen Brion-Meissels at the Harvard School of Education and adhered in particular to two of her principles. First, 'Regularly solicit student feedback', and second 'Engage students in studying and assessing their school'. He began a cycle of feedback by asking a wide range of students (not just their elected

representatives) specific questions on topics from curriculum to welfare, culture and behaviour. In the Autumn term, he installed a mechanical 'voxbox' polling device, where students could drop in to answer questions such as "What's most fun to do in science?", "Where in school do you feel safest/least safe?" and "What format do you want your homework in?". The self-activated 'robot' recorded each student's response, prompting greater spontaneity and less resistance than typing.

Bill anonymised all the responses and relayed them to the relevant senior leaders, who took action. He then fed back to 1300 students by email, attaching a PowerPoint framed by "We asked - You said - We did". This missive also contained the next question on which SLT sought student voice and - a new Lockdown having been imposed - asked students to respond to a survey. As this cycle of question and response got underway, students began to submit their thoughts at length by email, and to send in their own questions - about mock exams, masks in school, and their own futures.

Bill is confident that eventually students will identify themselves as ambassadors and advocates for the student body, taking issues to SLT without needing the facilitation he currently provides: "If we allow this system to evolve, natural leaders will emerge".

Eventually, students will identify themselves as ambassadors and advocates for the student body.

'Nightwoolf' designed by **Eloise**, Reception at **Woodlands**. Inspired by Julia Donaldson's *The Gruffalo*.

World Book Day

Crafting stories, creating characters, trying out illustration and learning the art of the book: this much-loved annual celebration of reading was approached with enthusiasm by students and teachers alike and resulted in the fantastic examples shared here.

Jess, Year 8 at **Wrenn**, redesigns a book cover for horror novel *The Twisted Ones* by Kira Breed-Wrisley and Scott Cawthon.

Work inspired by Roald Dahl's *The Enormous Crocodile*, **Riyansh** at **Queen Eleanor**.

Reading together: two Reception pupils from **Wroughton** share story time.

A diorama of a scene from *The Kiss*, written by Linda Sunderland and illustrated by Jessica Courtney-Tickle. Made by **Zara**, Year 2, **Harpfield**.

Mahilan, Year 1 **Harpfield**, shows his self-made accordion book version of *Herbie's Big Adventure*.





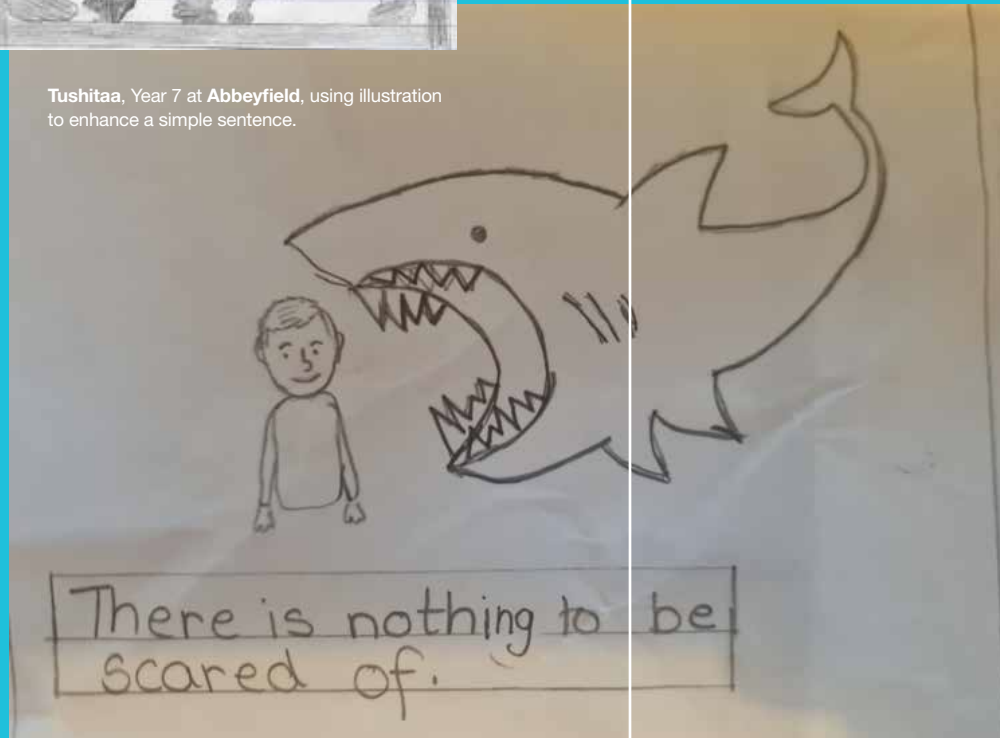
'A Shelter for Sadness' designed by **Ferne**, Year 2 **Three Peaks**.
Inspired by the book by Anne Booth and David Litchfield.



Illuminated 'C' by **Callum**, Year 9 at **Thistley Hough**

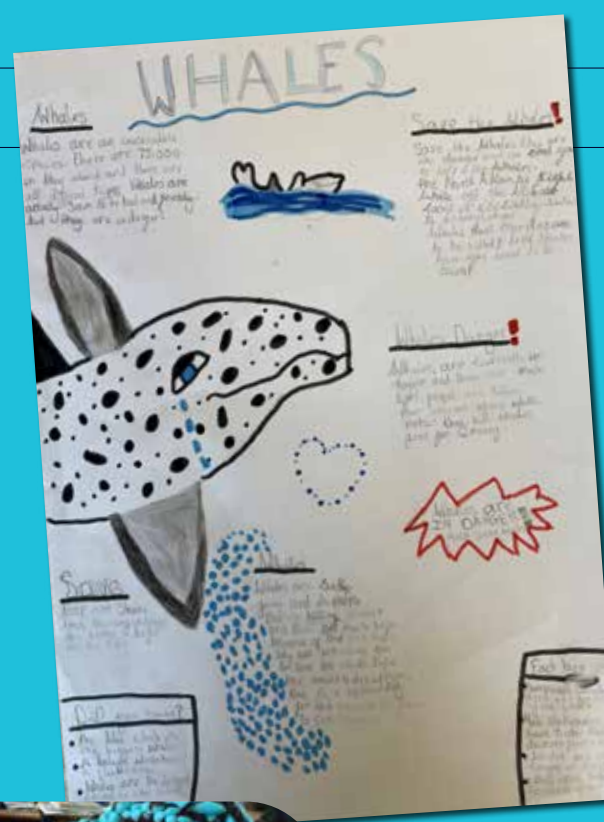


Tushitaa, Year 7 at **Abbeyfield**, using illustration
to enhance a simple sentence.



Lily, Year 5 **Three Peaks**,
campaigns for whales. Inspired
by Rashmi Sirdeshpande's
'How to Be Extraordinary'

Bibi, dressed as Uma from
"Uma's Wicked Book", plans her
book design. Year 4, **Wroughton**



Illuminated letters by **Raina**, Year 7 **Abbeyfield**
(left) and **Stefan**, Year 9 **Weavers** (above).

The CIA assassinated their undercover agent.

A six-word story from **Karol**, Year 10 **Weavers**.

The unlikeliness of seeing my family in the near future was the only reason for my refusal to turn in for the night. Even my cousin, who adored being the subject of attention and flattery, was evidently submitting to slumber. I wished to be alone at this moment, to bury myself in a book and enter my own state of tranquil observation. Laughter erupted, and my father and uncle – both hazy and swayed by alcohol – took centre floor.

A description of a party, written in the style of Jane Austen by **Grace**, Year 9 at **Hart**.

Biting weather on December eve, tasting hot chocolate was harder now my tongue was burnt. Cabin in the sunless abyss. My blood pressure rising while knocks on the door became hostile. Knowing the snow was ten inches thick. Blood curdling laughter. A nightmare I'd never wake from.

Emily, Year 11 at **Lynn Grove**, practices tension and terror with a very short story.

Thea, Reception, **Harpfield**, with her version of *Little Red Hen* – retold page by page in her own book.

*I met a long-white-bearded wizard
Once in a store full of magical things
He was cooking up a spell
While he watched me
His golden glowing sceptre
In his hands
"What are you buying young witch"
He asked in his crooked croaky voice
"There is a potion that can turn you into
Any animal you desire
A drink that can give you flight,
Invisibility and teleportation
A book that can give you information
When you look at a title"
So much to choose from
In a store full of magical things.
But once I looked at it,
I knew what I would take home with me
What I am taking with me everywhere
What I am sending now to you
A potion that can turn you into any animal
A potion that can turn you into any animal.*

Poem by **Mia**, Year 6 at **Harpfield**

ALUMNI IN THE SPOTLIGHT

In September 2011, Creative Education Trust began operation as the sponsor of its first schools in Rugeley. To mark the tenth anniversary this year, *Connected* will interview an alumnus or alumna in every issue. Our second interview is with **Maisie Scoins**, who won the first ever Creative Education Trust public speaking prize. Maisie tells us about her time since leaving Hart School in 2016.



When asked if there was a particular highlight from her time at school, Maisie said that she couldn't find just one. "I had such a good time; I couldn't fault it. When I left, I felt I'd achieved what I wanted to. It all fell into place, which is a lovely feeling. The teachers were great, and everyone was there to support what you wanted to do".

Maisie kept very busy during sixth form. As well as studying drama, psychology, Spanish and biology, Maisie was involved in various extracurricular activities. Maisie played key roles in school performances, was part of the student council, and was head girl of the academy, which involved leading a range of fundraising events. Maisie also signed up for the first cross-Trust public speaking competition in 2015 and was our first winner! Knowing her ambition to be a midwife, the Trust set up meetings for her with senior staff at the Royal College of Midwives and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health in London as part of her prize.

Maisie always knew that she wanted to be a midwife. However, the path getting there wasn't straightforward. Midwifery is a very competitive degree, and Maisie didn't initially secure a place at university. Very disappointed and unsure of what to do, she focused her energy on working 3 jobs, gathering savings, and re-applying. In 2017, Maisie accepted an offer from the University of Wolverhampton. "My local hospital was a placement option for the University of Wolverhampton, so it worked well. Securing a place was hard work and stressful but I learned so much about myself during the process".

The degree was tough. Student midwives balance working full time while completing a degree and, in Maisie's case,

balancing that on top of a part time job. Maisie shared how exhausting it often was managing her time and responsibilities, especially after night shifts; but that A levels had helped prepare her for the workload.

Maisie's time at university was complicated further by COVID-19 in March 2020. Given a choice of whether to continue through the pandemic, Maisie chose to opt in and worked on a maternity ward. During this time, Maisie wrote her dissertation and received an exceptional grade. "I was so proud of it, and to have achieved that at such a time of uncertainty."

Maisie graduated with a first-class degree and got a full-time job with the University Hospitals of Derby and Burton after qualifying. Now working full time, Maisie talked about her experience of being a midwife. "I feel so privileged to be a midwife- women and their families literally put all of their faith in us for the most important time of their lives. There are inevitably many challenges to the role, particularly during these times, but I work with extraordinary people who are so supportive. I love how midwifery is a career which means I will always be learning!"



Learning the Law

A dozen Milton Keynes sixth formers had the privileged opportunity to ask experienced barristers about their life in the law.

In order to produce a more diverse criminal bar that better reflects the society it serves, the Kalisher Trust is a charity that supports young people to develop advocacy skills. Creative Education Trust has partnered with the Kalisher Trust to offer Q&A sessions to students interested in legal careers. In this Careers Week fixture, our students were able to ask their questions of Martin McCarthy of Farringdon Chambers and Michael Polak of Church Court Chambers, in a panel chaired by Sue Freestone, Director of Education at the Kalisher Trust.

The speakers gave a fantastic insight into the varied work of a criminal barrister today: explaining their work on fraud, modern slavery and human trafficking, sanctions in international law, and getting human rights into the public eye in Vietnam and Somalia. Martin described the complexities of justice and courtroom processes involving multiple defendants online during Lockdown, while Michael likened being a barrister to "a choose-your-own-adventure book: you take on the cases you're interested in and select your own adventure".

Martin and Michael acknowledged the long hours and the unpredictability of the job, but called it was "the best job in the world". Both talked about the importance of advocacy and of standing up for justice. "Your client needs you to stand up for them and do the right thing, whatever the consequences might be".

Students were keen to hear what it takes to become a lawyer, and what they can do to get experience. Michael encouraged students to be imaginative and ambitious, for instance by contacting local firms and chambers, or looking into voluntary roles. "Don't close yourself off. Look at cases you're interested in. Find the organisations connected to them. Law is everywhere, and every organisation has a legal team".

For those wanting to find out more, the Kalisher Trust's excellent advice and resources are available here: <https://www.thekalishertrust.org/becoming-a-barrister>

The socials

You may have seen a bit more from Creative Education Trust on social media recently. We've been working hard to make more noise about the excellent work being done by colleagues and students across the Trust, to showcase the wonderful opportunities offered to students and highlight the talents of the people who provide them.

It's also time for us to engage more with national campaigns and conversations, and to work together to do so smartly.

Our aim isn't just to gain followers for the Trust channels. We also want to promote a shared pride in the collective work of the Trust and to encourage sharing each other's success. With our Knowledge Connected Pattern Days, National Careers Week and World Book Day just behind us, we've been sharing more content and comment than ever before. And with two of these events being national campaigns, we've also seen a huge rise in the number of people seeing and engaging with what we've published.

But what of the schools' own social media channels?

Each school has a different community to serve, and it's quite possible that a channel that suits one community will not suit another. But for most schools, Facebook is the place to talk directly to the parents and carers of our pupils.

Richard Penn-Bourton, Headteacher of Three Peaks, takes the notion of talking directly to the community literally. Richard's mantra in communicating through social media is to "dispense with the formality" and one of the ways in which he does so is broadcasting live videos on Facebook. Hundreds of followers have tuned in to watch what's happening as it happens – from updates on school reopening, to congratulating pupils, to broadcasting science experiments from the classroom.



Headteacher Richard Penn-Bourton addresses his Facebook community in a live broadcast

And many more watch back after the event.

Fun is the secret to the success. There's a team of three behind the content: Richard and class teachers Simi Sandhu and Alex Barton. "We all really enjoy it! And that enthusiasm makes it easy."

Although planning social media content is certainly integral to a well-run channel, it's also important to enable material to be collected when something interesting and shareable happens. For Richard, an iPod Touch in each classroom enabled teacher Peter Hoare to capture the palpable excitement for the lava lamp experiment he recently ran with his Year 2 class, posted on Facebook just a few hours later. The sound of thrilled pupils as they witnessed this wonderful phenomenon gives a great sense of their school experience.

Of course, this quick collection and distribution of material gathered in school means that we all have to be keenly aware of the safeguarding issues it raises. We must never picture or name students without explicit permission to do so.

At Bulwell, student commendations and congratulations feature regularly on their social channels. 'Shoutout' videos were posted weekly during lockdown and undoubtedly had students watching in anticipation of popping up on screen. A lighter, more ad hoc version has continued now the students are back: individual posts written in response to teachers nominating students for their work or attitude.

A shoutout to recognise students' hard work following lockdown

The fear of negative comments in a public forum can weigh heavily. Colleagues should not hesitate to hide or delete comments that are inflammatory or offensive. But Sarah Cruse, Media and Communications Officer at Bulwell, recommends not censoring all such remarks lest you appear not to be listening to parent and student voices. She recommends contacting those with real and identifiable concerns directly and privately to discuss

how the issue they're raised can be resolved. And the other angry, but possibly unjustified slurs? Take a deep breath and a bit of a time away from the account. Follow up with a response in the following days to confirm any actions that were taken and offer direct conversation with anyone who continues to express their discontented. "Above all", Sarah says, "don't take it personally! And find some positive posts to put up in the following days."



Wrenn's 'community school style' permeates their social media messages and is well received by their followers.

"Understanding who you are helps consistency of messaging" advises Hannah Jones, Assistant Principal of Wrenn. Working in the team with her, Network Technicians Nick Mallard and Terry Ekins appreciate the need to understand the character they ought to project: a community school. Supported by their hashtagged motto #ProudtoBeWrenn, they write their messages with that in mind, "to raise a wry smile" with a style that's amiable, relaxed and frequently humorous.

On social media, where nothing stays current for long, there's always work to be done and improvements to be made.

See how the story unfolds by following the schools, and of course Creative Education Trust.

Click here



Learning more

Human Resource practitioners are professionally accredited through the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). Evidence of continued and sustained professional development – whether in generalist HR or in Learning and Development – is a requirement of CIPD membership. **Mel Platten**, Regional HR Business Partner for Norfolk, reports on her latest qualification and a new development initiative for support staff.

With a Postgraduate Diploma in Personnel and a Masters in Employment Law already under my belt, I was keen to expand my knowledge into more specific areas of Human Resource practice. I have always had a keen interest in Learning and Organisational Development and it's an underrepresented area within our current team. During my performance review it was agreed that I could complete an Advanced Award in Designing, Developing and Evaluating Learning and Development through the CIPD. After four months of study, I completed it successfully in February 2021.

The course required me to evaluate theory and practice critically, from an ethical and professional standpoint, and to apply my knowledge and skills practically within an organisational context. The syllabus covered the lifecycle of organisational learning and development in its entirety: from undertaking a learning needs analysis, through identifying and designing suitable learning interventions for adult learners and delivering training courses, to the effective evaluation of learning provision.

Now that I'm qualified, we plan to launch a piece of work on support staff development. The first stage – corresponding to the 'learning needs analysis' above – is to gather feedback from a staff survey this term. The exercise will help to identify the training needs for individuals in support roles and to build an understanding of those needs across the Trust.

Next, an eastern region pilot will involve interviews with key stakeholders and a job analysis of support staff roles. This will give us a more detailed picture of the knowledge and skill requirements for post holders to be successful allow them to be linked to targeted training interventions.

Once the analysis is complete, we plan to develop and launch training opportunities for our support staff job families, creating more opportunities for continuing professional development, as well as a greater focus on talent and career progression.

Support staff are invited to complete the [questionnaire here](#).

“Our pilot will involve stakeholder interviews and a job analysis of support staff roles.”



“The course has enabled Thistley Hough to have a first responder to work closely with any student struggling with their mental health.”

Elliot Payne, Thistley Hough

“I leapt at the chance to do the Mental Health First Aid training. We all know how vital it is to look after our physical health and we're becoming more aware that our mental wellbeing is just as important. The course taught us how we can best support our colleagues and friends at work in a crisis, and point them in the direction of help, hope and recovery.” **Larisa Ruane, Lynn Grove**



“What I have taken from the course is a lot more confidence in helping somebody – and even approaching somebody who I think may be struggling – rather than letting someone else deal with it. We've already come up with plans to make the Woodlands staffroom more of a place to get away from work. We're banishing the photocopier, laminator and guillotine and to the PPA room and rearranging the furniture!”

Glenn Cooper, Woodlands

“The course helped me understand how to be there for those who are suffering, and also how stigma around mental health can potentially stop people from seeking the support that they might need. One of the ideas at Lynn Grove is drop-in coffee meetings after school, to allow anyone to share what's going on in confidence.”

Kimberly Anastasiou, Lynn Grove

“This really insightful training has given us clear strategies to use with staff in a range of different situations so we can signpost the appropriate support. Our Caister plans include the launch of a wellbeing group and a designated support space for staff, and we're very excited about developing them.”

Angie Lumley, Sian Starky, Alison Baldwin and Sarah Butcher, Caister



Training

Wellbeing

Pattern- recognition

Pattern is repetition or series, a set of common features, or a rule that controls variation

The rules of pop art written and employed by students at Abbeyfield and Hart

Year 7 and 8 students had a remote Key Concept Day to explore Pattern, one of the six big, unifying ideas of Knowledge Connected. Packages of resources for remote learning were developed with teachers for students to access at home.

Pattern is repetition or series, a set of common features or a rule that controls variation. Our Key Concept Days are intended to expand understanding of pattern beyond surface decoration to its wider scope: towards recognising the rules that generate and regulate patterns and considering what purpose a pattern serves.

Year 7 had a menu of fun and practical activities to get their teeth stuck into. Any of them could be completed on paper or screen, but all required students to look at the world around them in ways that few will have done before.

Year 7 also took part in a data visualisation task. Each created their own rectangular 'tile' expressing personal information (what year they born, how many pieces of fruit they eat a week, their favourite school subject, etc) translated into colour and shape. Any individual's data makes for a striking piece of graphic art, but when pieced together we can see the patterns across Year 7 at Creative Education Trust.

"I can't tell you enough how fantastic yesterday was, especially for our year 7s who absolutely excelled and loved the activities. The feedback has been fabulous, and the staff here were really supportive and enthusiastic about the day."

Charlotte Cowley, Head of Year 8, Hart

"My year 8 class have absolutely loved their pattern lesson: it's been a delight to teach!"

Emma Pitcher, teacher of English and Assistant Principal, Lynn Grove

Year 8 students' days were divided into subject lessons in which they explored pattern in combinations of maths, science, English, art, history, and/or geography.

Each lesson has its own pattern-specific Learning Objective:

English – I can recognise patterns of language and imagery in texts (semantic fields) and can create a semantic field of my own.

Maths – I can give examples of the Golden Ratio in nature and in the manufactured world, and I can explain how it links to the Fibonacci sequence of numbers.

Science – I can group substances by their properties [of density, atomic radius and boiling point] and use my groupings as an example of pattern in science.

History – I can find out about history from the patterns of information shown in historical sources.

Geography – I can identify 'push' and 'pull' factors that generate patterns of international migration

Art – I can recognise a work of Pop Art because I know the features and techniques that pop artists use.

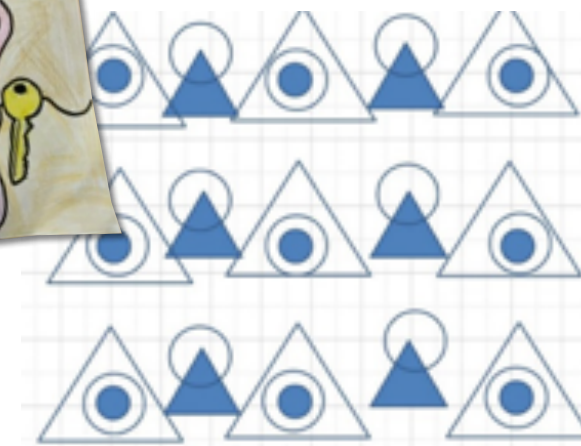
A spiral drawn using the Fibonacci series at Milton Keynes (Maths)



"Today made me think about patterns in a way I haven't thought about before, such as how patterns can be found everywhere and aren't always exactly what you'd expect them to be."



Rules clear and precise enough that someone else could continue this pattern from Wrenn (Year 7)



"I learnt new words! and more things about patterns that I never knew!"

The sky was covered with dark, cold, gloomy clouds that spread around quickly as the wind increased, making the other branches dance. A flash of enormous lightning appeared, hitting one of the trees. The tree fell. The Earth trembled in fear as if it was an earthquake. As the lightning struck once more, just for a moment you could catch a glimpse of a camouflaged house in the middle of the jungle, covered with leaves, standing still, afraid to be noticed. There was no one inside, but the fire. Standing far away, you could still feel the warmth of the flame. Its natural colours made the room feel livelier. The air was suddenly heavy and still, as if someone was staring. Something or someone walked in, there it was, the sound of terror.

Mariah, Thistley Hough, learns to employ semantic fields in her creative writing (English)]

"The history pattern lesson was really well made and gave the students an interesting way to look at sources... It helped them to more easily identify important information that may have been missed without the emphasis on pattern. I think it helped the students become more investigative and curious when looking at sources"

Jake Brennan, Thistley Hough History teacher

Successes and special commendations

Students

To the cleaning team at **Lynn Grove**, who re-painted classrooms in the latest lockdown, with special thanks to **Alan** and **Ricky** for their guidance.



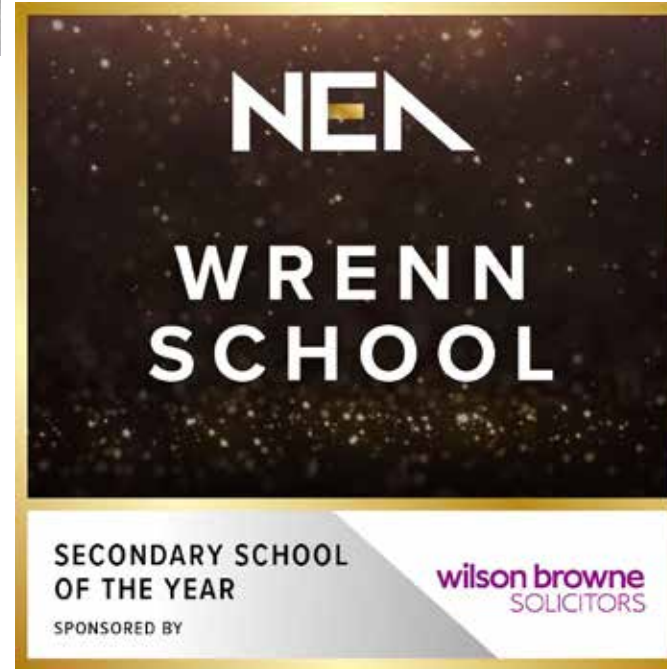
To **Zara Morrell-Donkin**, Reception student at **Harfield**, for outstanding home learning, going above and beyond expectations with no activity missed!



To the **Caister Academy** PE team, who motivated staff, students and parents to keep fit, and have fun trying, in a 30-day PE challenge run throughout lockdown.



and staff



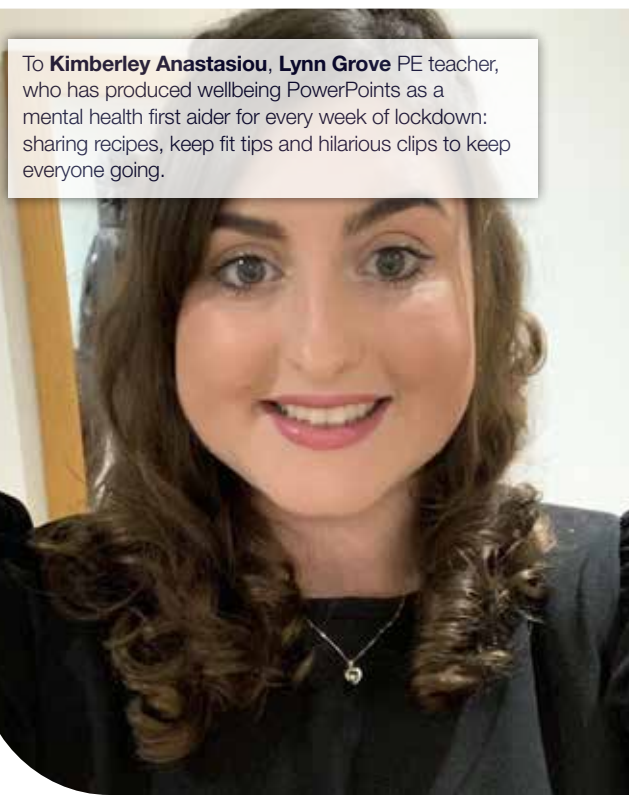
To **Wrenn School**, Northamptonshire's secondary school of the Year for the second time, on account of its "thriving in these exceptional education circumstances."



To **Woodlands** students, staff and parents who dressed up as superheroes for the Norfolk Schools Rainbow Superhero day and sent messages of thanks and hope to Critical Workers via social media, and also distributed donations to the local GP surgeries, hospital, fire station and police stations.



To **Miss Soanes**, Head of English at **Caister**, for enlisting the Lockdown Theatre Project in partnership with Ink Festival to perform live scenes of Romeo and Juliet to enrich the remote education of year 10.



To **Kimberley Anastasiou**, **Lynn Grove** PE teacher, who has produced wellbeing PowerPoints as a mental health first aider for every week of lockdown: sharing recipes, keep fit tips and hilarious clips to keep everyone going.



To **Diane Taylor** and **Neil Taylor** at **Milton Keynes**, commissioned by the Queen as Second Lieutenants to support the school's Combined Cadet Force.

Continuing the learning

We always hope our students leave a Knowledge Connected day preoccupied with the day's Key Concept. To encourage this curiosity, we issued an extra set of challenges for the following weeks. With Spring blooming all around us, we now invite all *Connected* readers to participate:

We can see evidence of the changing season all around us. When we log the changes over time, we sometimes see a pattern emerge. You might observe winter turning to spring by marking the time the sun rises and sets, the clothes people are wearing outside, or the number of buds appearing on a nearby tree branch.










What evidence can you collect that Spring is coming?

- Choose one or two markers of the changing seasons and document them through photographs, notes or drawings, for at least four 4 weeks.
- What changes have you seen? Can you use what you've observed to make predictions for the four weeks after that?

We invite you to send for findings for future publication to connected@creativeeducationtrust.org.uk



Pattern Key

	Born in 2008, red shading top left		Born in UK, diagonal lines lower right		Solid red circle, enjoys watching films		A green triangle for each piece of fruit eaten this week		A black letter to represent a favourite subject at school
	Born in 2009, blue shading top left		Born outside UK, horizontal lines lower right		Outline red circle, prefers listening to music		A green square for each sibling		

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