

*The magazine of Creative Education Trust schools*

Issue no.2 March 2015

# Connected



## Five plays, five ways

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Tragedy, comedy and history in a day of performance at Ash Green School

## Onward & upward

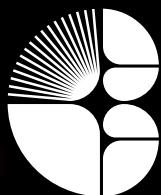
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Ambition, access and two new prizes for CET sixth formers

## Design & maths

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Architectural computation, pattern by numbers and geodesic geometry



## Knowledge connected



### Creativity eludes definition.

Widely supposed to involve mysterious and subjective intuition, exercised in a context of total freedom, creativity is – to many people – virtually the opposite of academic rigour. So while few

would argue today against the encouragement of creativity in education, the 'how' of that encouragement breeds suspicion and controversy.

Not at the Creative Education Trust. The first issue of this magazine proffered a definition of creativity: the ability to recognise or make connections between the things we know. The more you know, the more connections you can make. This is as true of a pathologist, solicitor or engineer as it is of an artist or creative professional. Our definition dispenses with the total freedom notion: knowledge may indeed narrow your choices, but that's not the same thing as restricting your creativity: ask any Lego enthusiast.

Six concepts are driving a new collaborative GET project to connect knowledge: a set of exciting cross-disciplinary activities and a programme for personal development and employability.

In the meantime we welcome four new schools to the Trust: Lynn Grove, Caister and Woodlands Academies in Great Yarmouth and Three Peaks Primary Academy in Tamworth. The expansion brings the ingredients of creativity: more knowledge and more opportunities to connect.

**Emily Campbell**

Director of Programmes

## HOT-A-TWEET

140 characters from the Chief Executive

*Abbeyfield's new Head Girl and Head Boy lead the school community with intelligence and maturity, and plan their university careers with clarity. Impressive.*



## Cross-Trust events

### Principals' meetings

**19 March**

CET, 35 Old Queen Street, London

**29 April**

RSA, 8 John Adam Street, London

### Heads of Sixth Form meetings

**30 June**

**Design Faculty meeting 19 June**

**Public Speaking Prize final 18 March**

**Day of Service 26 March**

**Staff Awayday 1 July**

**Day of Sports 2 July** Weavers Academy

**Day of Shakespeare 4 December**

## CONGRATS

To **Ash Green** and **Fair Oak** for their letters from Minister of State David Laws commending their success in significantly reducing the gap in overall performance between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students. Ash Green are celebrating their £5,000 award from the minister for having narrowed the gap to 2%, compared to a national score of 25%.



Left to right: **Sara-Jo Kane** (Queen Eleanor)  
**Natalie Bennett** (Weavers)  
**Shona Ambrose** and **Becky Goult** (Thistley Hough)



# Learning on the job

**T**each First is a national charity determined to develop leaders who will end educational inequality – either as teachers or by their influence in other spheres. Since its launch in 2002, over 5,000 new teachers – high-achieving graduates – have supported more than a million young people from low-income communities to build their future. Seven of these teachers are now in CET schools.

What makes people apply to the programme? Sara Kane at Queen Eleanor grew up in a deprived part of Newcastle but had supportive parents and good teachers. She had always considered teaching and puts her motivation very simply: “I wanted to be my form tutor for the children in my class, the tutor I had.” Natalie Bennett at Weavers wanted to pass on the privileges of her own education to young people who were disadvantaged – some shockingly so, as she ultimately found.

Others – Shona Ambrose and Becky Goult at Thistley Hough, for example – bring world travel and voluntary work among vulnerable communities to their Teach First posting. Ambrose’s perspective, and her subject, geography, have a special role to play in Stoke-on-Trent where waves of immigration and over 30 first languages disguise a culture that can be rather settled and inward-looking.

PGCE eases graduates into the life of a teacher via a year of theory and two short bursts of experience in a school, whereas Teach First puts graduates straight into the classroom after six weeks of training, most of which is leadership rather than education theory. It sounds brutal, but none of the teachers wishes they had had more preparation. When “nothing could have prepared me for it”, as Bennett and Goult put it, why hang back in lectures and seminars? Ambrose believes that she got command over her first class much more quickly because the students didn’t see her as

*A bigger challenge than PGCE, but ultimately with a bigger impact*

a trainee, while Goult describes Teach First as “a bigger challenge than PGCE, but ultimately with a bigger impact” because the training is all on-the-job.

Learning on the job is bound to contain surprises. Kane has found herself astonished by the number of hours teachers put into their job; Ambrose and Goult upbraided by the sheer variety of students and the challenge of differentiation. There are positive surprises too: mostly in relationships with students and a personal sense of having made a change to individual lives. Goult is encouraged by students’ incredible responsiveness to small gestures of help and support. She calls Teach First “the most stressful and hardest, but ultimately rewarding, challenge of your life”.

Ambrose reflects that Teach First attracts high-achieving individuals who can be very hard on themselves, and that this makes the network vulnerable. But while some sink under the pressure, all our Teach First teachers have acknowledged warm and dependable support from their schools. Holly Hartley, Principal of Thistley Hough, struggles to put the real impact into words: “Shona and Becky’s infectious enthusiasm to make a difference has changed life in the classroom and beyond it. I couldn’t now imagine Thistley Hough without them.”



Left to right: **Jos Ashley** (Rugeley Sixth Form), **Mark Williams** (Ash Green), **Magnus Wallace** (Weavers) and **Tony Mills** (Abbeyfield)

# Four SIX- smiths

**A dynamic quartet of teachers is driving ambition and success at the Creative Education Trust sixth forms. But what are sixth forms for?**

"A springboard from secondary education into the world of employment and university life" was one pleasing and totally plausible formulation proffered by our Heads of Sixth. But there's something more deeply pervasive. Raising aspiration in the way that sixth forms do has "a generational impact on families and communities" in the words of Magnus Wallace, Head of Sixth at Weavers. "Five years ago, two students had parents educated beyond 16. There are still only four, but now 40% of our sixth formers have siblings at university."

Getting career focus and academic ambition into the bloodstream of a school where university has not been the expectation takes careful work. Jos Ashley, Head of the Rugeley Sixth Form Academy, speaks of "cultural limiting factors" in a town where parents often fear, for example, expense and estrangement as a result of the unknown that is university education.

Giving confidence to parents is merely one aspect of the great pastoral challenge raised by sixth forms. Mark Williams, Head of Sixth at Ash Green, speaks of "garnering the confidence of fragile souls" at an educational stage that is acutely transitional to adulthood. Magnus Wallace, who originally came to Weavers to fulfil the teaching requirement of an MSc in psychology, initially undertook a pastoral role in the school which, very logically, shifted to the leadership of the sixth form.

Most of the Heads contrast the pastoral side with their own sixth form experiences, "laissez-faire" environments in which they "sank or swam" for two unmonitored, tutorless years of inconsistent teaching quality. In various ways, they all cite intimacy as a persuasive advantage of in-school sixth forms rather than independent sixth form colleges. Students' strengths and weaknesses are known, their growing up is a "graduated process" and they're "more of a person; less of a number".

Jos Ashley has better memories of his sixth form days. "It was the place where I was allowed to grow up and express myself, where I realised I loved books." Growing up needs a variety of aiding and abetting: encouraging independence and personal motivation among people emerging from the GCSE exam factory is the necessary counterpart of pastoral nurture. All Heads are firmly focused on developing the habits of independent study; shifting students' motivation from external pressure to the internal self; getting them to work not because they're told to, but because it will get them where they want to be. Sometimes it's about enabling students to picture a future. Again, Jos Ashley recalls "a couple of inspiring teachers who nurtured my skills and turned them into something I could make a living from".

Sixth forms can have a profound and transformative influence on the lower years of the school. The Rugeley sixth form helps younger students "visualise the greater maturity and trust of people over 16", while Magnus Wallace speaks of the sixth form's "holistic impact" and, again, a "clear and visible link" to progression beyond GCSEs. Sixth form peer mentors at Weavers attend Year 7 and 8 registrations, and support Year 11 students in period 7 after school. For Mark Williams, the sixth form shouldn't be the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, but their driver.

## Find out about the new sixth form prizes



All the Heads are evangelical about systems, particularly the rigorous use of data to disclose trends, inform support and predict progress accurately, so that the right students get the right grades for the right universities. This is about more than accountability measures, and connects explicitly with students' independence and self-motivation: the real use of data is to help students understand where they are, and take ownership of their progress.

*Two inspiring teachers nurtured my skills and turned them into something I could make a living from*

Jos Ashley admits to being stunned by the capacity and potential of students, and knows that high expectations are the secret to realising this potential. David Hargreaves, an experienced former history teacher, head of sixth form and boarding school housemaster, has been commissioned to support CET schools in a specific aspect of high expectation: university applications. In addition to assessing the quality of UCAS processes, developing common best practice and providing bespoke support, David is working with each school to encourage more ambitious option choices and applications to more prestigious institutions. In addition, as the personal statement becomes more of a differentiator among candidates, he is running workshops with students and training teachers in writing UCAS references. 'Authenticity' is a favourite word, and a goal in statement writing: "I encourage students to get an independent relationship with their subject, not just what the teachers tell you."

While David is struck by the remarkable cordiality and comfortable relationships between students and teachers in CET schools, he stresses the work to be done in expanding the range of subjects and making the combinations of subjects more appealing to the top universities. There is movement in the right direction: Abbeyfield's numbers are up for further maths A level, and for girls taking two or more sciences. Tony Mills put his five-year vision in explicit terms: "A bigger, oversubscribed sixth form with an average point score above 220 and regular Oxbridge applications." Meanwhile, at neighbouring Weavers, university choices are getting braver – Sheffield, Newcastle, Manchester, UCL – and a current Year 13 student has a good offer to study linguistics at St John's College, Cambridge.

Joining the network of a multi-academy trust has given all Heads access to a range of advisers, and to each other. The Heads of Sixth form is particularly valued – for one Head, "the most productive days of training I've had". Another described it as "a chance to throw ideas around and measure your own progress against something in a similar context". Michael Marchant is another experienced former sixth form Head who provides CET with bespoke support and monitoring across the range of sixth form activity, and convenes the group. He reflects "The mutual support and encouragement of the group is especially useful, for example, in the effective use of data to track progress. It has also enabled a collaborative approach to the diverse, 'three-course', enrichment menu of personal development, intellectual broadening and subject-knowledge deepening which is now offered to sixth formers." Jos Ashley sees special value in a higher-minded discourse around education, because "sixth form leaders shouldn't be afraid of intellectualising things". Likewise, Magnus Wallace, observing how "the rigour of the accountability hoops can cause teachers to fall out of love with their subject", is concerned to keep the intellectual passion in teaching.

As one Head put it, sixth forms present a "dynamic picture" at the moment, because we have to provide increasingly for those considering alternatives to university. The fragmented picture of apprenticeships and vocational routes needs mapping and coherence. A family of schools with scale and geographical focus is in a good position to develop the partnerships to deliver alternative routes, while we fiercely guard outstanding A-level provision.

## Two new sixth form prizes

### CET Essay Prize

The CET Essay Prize sets a theme in four categories, each identified in consultation with an expert adviser who also joins the panel of judges for the prize:

#### Language and Literature

### Fiction and reality

Guest adviser: **Nikesh Shukla**, novelist, television writer and discussion host

#### Humanities

### The world is shrinking

Guest adviser: **Jonathan Katz**, teacher of Classics (Latin, Greek and ancient history/civilisation) and librarian

#### Science

### Keep morals out of science

Guest adviser: **Hugh Aldersey-Williams**, popular science writer and exhibition curator

#### Material World

### Design should change lives

Guest adviser: **Emily King**, design critic and exhibition curator

### CET Public Speaking Prize

The CET Public Speaking Prize is for a ten-minute speech on a given theme followed by a ten-minute response by the speaker to questions prompted by their speech and by the wider context of the theme:

### Young people have never had it so good

Guest panellists: **Miranda Sawyer**, journalist and broadcaster; author of *Park and Ride: Adventures in Suburbia*; and **Mary Groom**, CET Trustee; solicitor specialising in charities, social enterprises and education



**Gill Howland** brings wide experience of education leadership to her new role as Chair of Governors at Thistley Hough: secondary school teaching, further education strategy, local government positions and advisory posts, Ofsted inspection, directorship of two Learning and Skills Councils and a major university executive pro-vice-chancellorship. Here, she narrows her focus to the challenges of local school governance.

#### You know a lot about schools. How did this come about?

My education career started in teaching, but I've had experience right across the sector. I've been a Chief Education Adviser, an Ofsted inspector, a Governor and a University Pro-Vice Chancellor. I've also worked in further education and for a non-departmental government body. Throughout my career I've been involved in some fascinating research projects, for example on classroom interaction, middle leadership and – right now – on how schools collaborate with each other across geographic areas and different phases, from primary to post-16. It's been a real privilege to see education from such a wide perspective.

#### What stays with you from your days as a teacher?

The potential of young people. If you have high expectations, the energy and creativity you can set free is astonishing. You cannot set limits on what young people can achieve. Pupils will respond if they feel someone's listening to them, and the relationship between pupil and teacher is really important.

# Governance spotlight

*25 years ago there was more funding to bring teachers together to innovate and talk about what matters. There was a buzz.*

I have always believed that 99% of teachers go into teaching for the joy of seeing children learn and my experience has proven this. But too much unhelpful bureaucracy can squeeze the energy and desire out of people. We need to give teachers the confidence to reflect on their practice and to engage in regular dialogue about what really matters in teaching and learning.

## **And tell us about the influence of your own education?**

After the local primary school that served the council estate on which I grew up, I took my eleven-plus and went to a girls' grammar school. It offered a very traditional curriculum and I studied French, Latin and German at A level. In both primary and secondary schools, there were some wonderful teachers who were passionate about their subject and inspired me; I have very fond memories of them.

## **In your view, do the best schools share common features? The worst?**

No school is 100% brilliant or bad. But a good school will have high expectations and an idea about where it's going; it will have confidence and vision. Most importantly, a good school knows that its purpose is to benefit the pupils. Sadly, some schools lose sight of this, especially when leadership is weak, morale is low and a blame culture develops.

## **Is the relationship between academia, education policy and schools effective?**

There are some great examples of schools working with universities – in teacher development, for

example – but it's inconsistent across the country. The understanding between the parties is incomplete and there are bridges that need to be built. Some teachers have a perception that academics look down on practitioners from their ivory towers, but in my experience this is rarely the case. More can and should be made of the necessary and interdependent contributions of both; more debate and discussion between them. The academic community has a valuable role to play in helping teachers reflect on their practice. If you go back 25 years, there was more funding to bring teachers together to innovate and talk about what matters. There was a buzz – many of the people starting these conversations have gone on to be great Heads.

## **What drew you to the position at Thistley Hough?**

The school has great potential to build on its growing reputation, to raise the standards of achievement for all its pupils and to offer really positive life chances and choices for pupils. As former Executive Director of the local Learning and Skills Council, and from my time at Staffordshire University, I have a good understanding of the social and economic challenges in the area. I believe that the Local Governing Body can play an important role in helping the school make a difference. Since taking up the position of Chair, I've been getting to know the governing body and we're building on its strengths. We continue to develop capacity in teaching and learning, assessment, marking and giving feedback. The mock Ofsted in the autumn was very useful. Thistley Hough has high expectations, a clear vision and determination, and its confidence is growing. We're celebrating achievement!

## **In Britain's new landscape of education provision, what should governance be like?**

Governors should know the school and be confident that they have a grip on its performance and priorities. In my opinion governors need to be strategic, but with their feet on the ground. This is sometimes a difficult balance. At present there is a range of interpretations about what good governance looks like and as we see the emergence of new structures, such as Academy Trusts and chains of schools, there is a fascinating debate on the purpose, role and operation of governing bodies.

# DAY OF PERFORMANCE 2015

Five plays, five ways at Ash Green School

[www.youtube.com/user/creedacad](http://www.youtube.com/user/creedacad)

## SHAKESPEARE 5X5





Top row left to right:

**Chris Norrington** and **Ruth Sherry** as *Richard III* and Lady Anne (Abbeyfield), **Shania Campbell** and **Luke Davenport** as Gertrude and the Player King in *Hamlet* (Ash Green), **Aaron Harris** and **Harvey Watson** as Horatio and *Hamlet* (Ash Green), **Ellie-Mae Taundry** as Miranda in *The Tempest* (Rugeley).

Bottom row left to right:

**Alex Lancaster-Lennox** and **Amelia Litchfield** as Lysander and Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Weavers), Rugeley's Ariel puppet, **Shania Olojugba** and **Connie Sergenant** as first and second witch in *Macbeth* (Thistley Hough); **Ross de Costa** as Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Weavers).

**S**hakespeare 5x5 was a day of spectacle and language: rich, powerful and metaphorically captivating. It began with an austere and devastating *Hamlet* by Ash Green, followed by an enchanted *Tempest* island ruled by Prospero and his puppet-spirit Ariel from the Rugeley Academies and a *Macbeth* of spine-tingling intensity performed by Thistley Hough. In the afternoon Weavers drew us into a dark, exotic and slightly sinister *Midsummer Nights' Dream*, a visual and audio world conjured by actors, musicians and designers in exemplary creative collaboration. Abbeyfield's *Richard III* was an immersive showcase of dance, movement and image,

enveloping expert dramatic dialogue between the protagonists of virtue and villainy.

Teachers directed three of the five shows, while HMDT Music recruited professional directors for the remaining two, plus specialists in voice and text, design, puppet-making and physical theatre to work with students in the eight weeks leading to the event. In students' own words, the experience was "exceptional" (Grace Kelsall, Thistley Hough), "powerful" (Shania Olojugba, Thistley Hough), "fantastic" (Amelia Litchfield, Weavers) "brilliant" (Chris Normington, Abbeyfield) and "life-changing" (Liam Tiesteel, Thistley Hough).



## Successes and special commendations

# Students



To **Hubert Pietrzak** and **Nikita Jerofejvs**, Year 1 at **Queen Eleanor** for the Christmas trees they created with great resourcefulness out of paper and plastic spoons.



To **Anna Harrison**, Year 1 at **Harpfield**, for her inspiring cheerfulness and bravery through months of intensive medical treatment and an imminent kidney transplant.



To **Chidimma** and **Chinenye Oleka** at **Queen Eleanor** for their Athletics triumphs in the local Sainsbury's School Games.



To **Jordan-Lee Chapman** (**Weavers** Year 9) for his impressive determination and success in go-kart racing at national level.



To **Chloe O'Brien**, (**Three Peaks** Year 6) for being accepted by audition to attend lessons at the Royal Ballet School and being invited to apply for a residential boarding place.



To **Jack Buckley** and **Kai Harvey** (**Fair Oak** Years 7 and 8) for their international kickboxing medals won in Tunisia.

# and staff



To **Chloe Harper**, winner of the 2014 **Ash Green** Pride Trophy, for her natural talent and unstinting commitment to supporting vulnerable students in the school.



To **Christopher Imber**, Three Peaks Year 6 teacher, who has had his first comic published.



To **Linda Philips** for energy, efficiency and calm under pressure, all easing the stresses of the new Principal of **Ash Green**.



To **Neil Donlan**, **Thistley Hough's** new Director of Mathematics, who arrived with a great track record of improving teaching and learning and is already making an impact.



To **Marie-Claire d'Arcy Barron** and the **Rugeley** MFL team for starting the Staffordshire Limousin Exchange Programme for Year 10 students.



To **Noreen Robinson** for her great contribution to outstanding outcomes for vulnerable students as Teaching Assistant at **Ash Green**.



To **Jo Bevan** and **Sarah McMahon** for leading **Queen Eleanor** towards the Primary Science Quality Mark at bronze level – and well on the way to silver.



To **Hannah Prentice** (**Weavers** Year 13) for her offer to read linguistics at St John's College Cambridge.

# Design Programme

## Mathematical reasoning

Geometry, dimension, distribution, proportion, scale ... design is full of maths. Engineers, architects and industrial designers calculate with minute precision, usually with the help of computers. At an earlier design stage, even for these designers – and others whose practice is more intuitive and aesthetically-led – the mathematical calibration is performed by an expert eye and skilled hand rather than a calculator or an instrument of measurement. An experienced designer knows how to balance the distribution of visual features, to alter the radius of a curve or the angle at which planes intersect, to change the proportional relationship between parts without recourse to figures, and yet all this is mathematical.

The CET Design Programme features a growing series of 'design and maths' activities. Year 9 at Rugeley spent a day exploring primitive and not-so-primitive spherical geometry, building platonic solid polygons and geodesic domes big enough to get inside. Year 7s at Abbeyfield, Weavers and Thistley Hough explored plan and section, with the inspiration of Samuel Worthington, designer of the

hit Plumen lightbulb, so pleasingly complicated in its three-dimensionality.

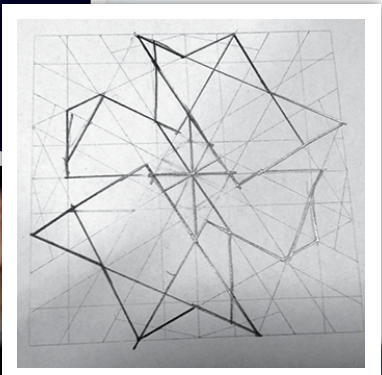
Jonathan Rabagliatti's job at Foster+Partners is computation; that is, devising the mathematical formulae that generate the structural patterns of buildings like the Gherkin and the new Crossrail terminal. To launch the concept of Pattern at Abbeyfield, Jonathan conceived exercises involving students 'self-organising' in the hall, and applying rules to generate 'cellular automata' patterns on paper. He gave a fantastic illustrated talk on his professional work – fabulous structures going up with our guest speaker in attendance in his hard hat.

Alex Bellos, the *Guardian's* maths blogger and author of *Alex's Adventures in Numberland*, visited Weavers for a day to inspire Year 7 with the historical sweep of pattern design from ancient Greek temples to the ultra-fashionable surfaces of Shoreditch, via the rules and astonishing complexity of Islamic pattern design using nothing but a ruler and a pair of compasses.



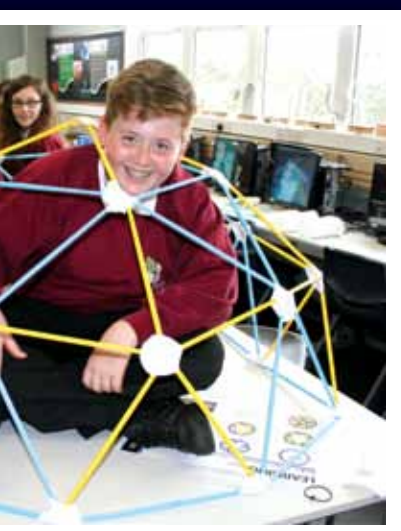
Jonathan Rabagliatti





### Primaries day

Daniel Smith and other Queen Eleanor teachers collaborated with the Programme team to develop a 'sharing day' for CET primary schools, focused on the Design Programme and its key concepts. The day, hosted by Queen Eleanor, combined conceptual thinking about how to use the six key concepts to link subjects, and practical skill-building sessions for design and construction using drawing, textiles and wood. Reflecting on the day in the final session, each of our 12 participants pledged their next steps and ideas for new schemes.



# Round-up



## New Executive Principal at Rugeley

We are delighted that Chris Keen joined CET in January 2015. His appointment follows a successful career as a teacher of English and senior leader in secondary schools in Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent and Sheffield. Under his leadership, Firth Park Academy was the most improved school in Sheffield for two consecutive years. He is a regular speaker at national education events and a governor at a local sixth form college, and outside his work as a school principal he conducts orchestras. Chris Keen's arrival signals a new era for the Rugeley Academies, an opportunity to build on the marked improvements of recent years to achieve transformative innovation and growth.

## Football and Rugby: partnerships and parties

Ash Green's new English teacher, Ian Dance, proposed a local Rugby Football Union link to develop student confidence and community links for the school. On Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings RFU training takes place alongside community activities. As well as raising nearly £1000, the Christmas Bag Packing event (in Mr Dance's own words) "encouraged the lads to serve others, work in teams and just get out there amongst it".

Weavers has also entered a partnership with the English RFU. Only three or four students in each year group had played rugby matches before; now the partnership provides teaching support in all PE lessons from Years 7 to 9, and matches for all three year groups. The Thursday after-school rugby club is a further opportunity to practise skills, and is open to any student. Weavers rugby club looks forward determinedly to improving its results and to welcoming Year 7 girls after Christmas.

Three Peaks has established a close relationship with Aston Villa FC, whose community coaching team extends curricular and extra-curricular coaching to special sessions in their Academy. When classes visit Villa Park as a case study in buildings and healthy living, video clips from the trips are used to encourage



and support writing, especially for boys. The Tickets for Kids scheme, piloted and developed with Three Peaks, allows pupils to experience Premier League Football Matches free of charge.

Finally, Charlotte Marrow, a Year 6 pupil at Harpfield, won a Christmas party for her friends with Stoke City player Marc Muniesa. Her concise and powerful 100-word entry argued that a classmate had lost his grandfather and everyone needed to have a good time. Richard Wollacott, Head teacher, is a Stoke City season-ticket holder but appreciated the event for other reasons: "This particular class of children are very deserving of this because they really look after each other."





## Abbeyfield keeps the memory alive

Every year, Abbeyfield commemorates the Holocaust and subsequent genocides such as Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. This year's hour-long assembly, conceived by Michele Dub, Tony Mills and Rory O'Neil, interwove poetry, drama and testimonials from survivors. It was presented to every student from Years 8–13 in a single day, closing each time with an act of remembrance for the dead, represented by the Jewish symbolic tradition of stones placed around a candle. Later, as part of Northampton's Holocaust Memorial Day observances at the Guildhall, Jess Smith sang *Pie Jesu* from Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Requiem*, Maisie Smith performed violin pieces, Year 10 students presented a drama of life before, during and after the Nazi persecution and sixth formers Sherry and Usha Dutton shared reflections on their visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

## Ash Green keeps it in character

The 2014 Young Writers creative writing competition 'Mini Monologues' asked students to write a 100-word monologue for a character or celebrity of their choice. Entries ranged widely, from Ed Sheeran in the hours before a concert to a World War I soldier on the home front. Twenty nine of Miss Cheeney's Year 7 students at Ash Green learned that their work was to be published in the West Midlands regional anthology.

## Day of Service 2015: Giving Nation

The Citizenship Foundation led a training day for teachers and students to launch their national competition in CET schools for the second year running. The Rugeley Academies, winners of the 2014 social enterprise category for their innovative toy library, led their counterparts from other schools through the ingredients of their success. The Citizenship Foundation's judging criteria are knowledge and research, innovation, communication and marketing, impact on students and impact on community. CET have added the challenge of design, and will arrange workshops for participating students with top service innovation companies who are pioneering the use of design-thinking in public services. Michelle Leeder worked with 20 students from Weavers and the Rugeley sixth form, helping them get right to the heart of issues that trouble them, as the first stage in creating a new social action project.

## Election fever at Abbeyfield

In February 2015, Westminster came to Abbeyfield School: representatives of four main political parties engaged with sixth form students in a Question Time-style debate. Issues from EU cost-effectiveness to votes for 16-year-olds and the use of NHS funding for obesity and breast augmentation were fiercely debated by a Conservative MP, parliamentary Labour and UKIP candidates and a Lib Dem councillor. Tony Mills, Abbeyfield's very own Dimbleby, chaired the event, pushing students to challenge further and to keep politicians on their toes. The purpose of the event was to increase the political participation and civic awareness of students, but the students turned the tables by challenging the panel – maturely and articulately – on failures of education policy and lack of engagement with young people.



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.

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Front cover image: left to right,  
**Alex Babmak, Grace Kelsall,**  
**Connie Sergenant, and Liam**  
**Tiesteel** in Thistley Hough's  
*Macbeth* for the CET Day of  
Performance 2014