

The magazine of Creative Education Trust schools

Issue no.24 July 2021

# Connected

## Local Influence

### Local Advocates

School teams coached by top barristers

### Odes to All Sorts

The Day of Poetry, live and virtual

### Action!

Research Showcase 2021

### Where You From?

Four departing heads describe their coming of age

### Adaptive Thinking

New practices borne of pandemic thinking

**Plus:** Take our online survey about Connected!



# Action!

## Research SHOWCASE 2021

**Nimish Lad**, Curriculum Research Lead in the Education team, introduces a new academic venture for the Creative Education Trust network

Earlier this year, we embarked on an ambitious, Trust-wide project, to improve the impact of teaching on pupil outcomes by using research. Under the broad headings of Effective Pedagogy, Coaching Strategies and Tackling Disadvantage, more than 20 staff applied research-informed strategies that they had read about in books, journals and blogs to their practice. Each of these groups has been supported by me, Isaac Howarth (Headteacher of Queen Eleanor), Dawn Ashbolt (Vice Principal at Wrenn) and David Howell (Assistant Principal at Wrenn).

Five key 'Action Research Projects' took the spotlight at the Creative Education Trust's first research showcase event on July 1st, which was attended by colleagues from across the network, including Principals and senior leaders, teachers, executives, and Board members.

These projects demonstrate the breadth of research that staff have engaged with, and the practical nature of the projects which have had a direct impact on pupil outcomes.

**Jessica Delf** Teacher of English, Caister

### Raising attainment and engagement of disadvantaged boys in English

My aim was to ensure that the disadvantaged boys in my class – and by extension all students – got engaged, achieved, and 'loved' English. I wanted to unpick the myths that surrounded boys' learning. I was also very aware that my Y10 class had missed a chunk of Y9 because of the pandemic, and therefore, had missed out on vital skills necessary for the transition to KS4. I wanted to reignite their spark and enjoyment surrounding English.

I started by looking at research around the curriculum and investigating strategies I could use in the classroom to catch my students up in an impactful way, and get them to access English in a way they enjoyed. Among other books, my understanding was supported by:

**Symbiosis Kat Howard and Claire Hill (2020)**

**Unleashing Great Teaching David Weston and Bridget Clay (2018)**

**Several Short Sentences about Writing Verlyn Klinckenborg (2012)**

**Boys Don't Try Matt Pinkett and Mark Roberts (2019)**

Next I started looking at the engagement of boys, specifically, and worked out how to apply what I had learned from the books to boys in the classroom. Pinkett and Roberts's *Boys Don't Try* really helped here.

From my general reading, it had become clear that I needed to focus on recall/retention, feedback and questioning as practical strategies to improve engagement and attainment. From my reading on boys, I also knew that I needed to consider the rapport I had with them, the stereotypes that influence us, and the potential of competitions to engage them.

I can report impact: 5 out of 6 Pupil Premium boys achieved at least a grade higher in their summer mock than in their end of unit test in autumn. The handing in of homework also increased, and 3 out of 6 of these boys have said they're reading more outside of school.

**Helen Paul** Head of Science, Lynn Grove

### Using diagnostic questions improves pupil progress by unpicking misconceptions

I have always been aware of the importance of good quality questions to assess the understanding of my pupils and to inform my teaching. To develop my own practice, but also that of my department, I have constantly looked for the most consistent and robust way to do this. The biggest problem was finding time to write good quality diagnostic questions to include in schemes of learning for me and the whole department to use.

My research purpose was to find out how much impact diagnostic questions had on pupil progress through a topic. If they were written into a scheme, was there an impact, beyond my own teaching, on the quality of T&L in my department, and on the progress of all pupils?

Diagnostic questions are designed to give more information about why a pupil hasn't yet grasped a concept. They're usually multiple choice, with carefully chosen distractors to reveal misconceptions.

My project rapidly grew into a full-blown randomised control trial (RCT) involving the whole of Y7 and all teachers in my department.

Our STEM learning centre was planning a project to develop teacher-led research with the Education Development Trust, and I thought that this would be a great opportunity to take my project a step further and learn more about how to carry out research in the classroom. We had lots of CPD on designing, carrying out and analysing RCTs in the classroom.

The data is still being analysed, but the questionnaires show that teachers found the B.E.S.T (Best Evidence in Science Teaching) resources useful for identifying and dealing with misconceptions. One teacher, for example, said "After identifying where the common misconceptions lay, I was able to address them at the front of the class, which really opened the lesson up to a class discussion. It was an incredibly useful aid to the learning."



**Joanne Crofts** Teacher of Science, Hart

### The effects of retrieval questions on the progress and engagement of disadvantaged pupils in science

My aim was to engage disadvantaged students and increase their progress in science through the use of 'Retrieval Practice.' Among the introductory books I read was Kate Jones's *Retrieval practice: Research & resource for each classroom* (and two other titles in her series: *Implementing, embedding & reflecting* and the *Resource guide*). Having visited her website regularly and reached out to her on Twitter, I was fortunate that she agreed a video call to talk about all her research findings.

Acting on this research, I introduced a regular recall and review lesson for year 9. It began with a preliminary session on what retrieval practice is, its benefits and its different forms of action. Next, I introduced flashcards for revision, modelling how to write good quality cards with specific questions on the front and detailed answers on the back. Then I explained the Leitner tracking system and how students should form a habit of using it. We provided time in class for students to practise producing the cards and testing them – and each other – using the Leitner system. They can now test themselves weekly on areas they need to develop. The process also enabled us to set specific science homework tasks for year 9 on the topics they did not perform well on during their assessment. I can report that now:

- **Over 95% feel that the 'low-stakes' retrieval practice starters benefited their scientific knowledge recall and made them feel more confident.**
- **86% of key stage 4 students now engage in and enjoy regular retrieval practice starters**



*"I needed to consider the rapport I had with boys, the stereotypes that influence us, and the potential of competitions to engage them."*

**Jessica Delf, Caister**





**Dawn Ferguson** Teacher of Science, Weavers

## Sketching for memory

My project was to improve skills of retention and recall so that students could apply their knowledge better in a test or written situation. My research from books and blogs included Understanding How We Learn by Megan Sumeracki, Oliver Caviglioli, & Yana Weinstein (2018), Dual Coding with Teachers by Oliver Caviglioli and The Science of Learning by Bradley Busch & Edward Watson. These suggested three phases of action:

- 1. Sketching to remember: I (teacher) do – Modelling a sketch; We (class) do – We sketch a process/diagram together; You do – Students read text and are able create their own sketch**
- 2. Using the sketch to retrieve knowledge. Use the visual prompts to evoke memory and then slowly remove the scaffold.**
- 3. Applying the sketch-retrieved knowledge to an exam question to write a better quality of written answer.**

These practices led to improved engagement (even a bad sketch evokes a memory). Students bought into the sketch idea as a skill to trick their brain into remembering facts and processes more easily. This strengthened their confidence as they can see and feel the improvement in retention and recall and in the quality of their answers. My key recommendation are, first, involve the students in the process and tell them “We’re doing this because it’s a skill you can take with you.” Second, keep it simple and start by guiding them: I do, we do, you do.

**Donna Mileham** Teacher of Science, Caister

## Coaching to improve students’ outcomes in science

The purpose of my research was to investigate how modelling and coaching could improve students’ application of knowledge to novel concepts and ideas. The project was informed by Rosenshine’s Principles In Action by Tom Sherrington (2019), More Authentic Science Education by John K Gilbert (2004) and a variety of blogs on modelling and dual coding as coaching methods.

Our actions included scripting the key questions to ensure consistency and clarity in the exposition and instruction phases. I also used ‘I do, We do, You do’ to model explanations to help students build their own fluency and mastery. By thinking methodically about explanations and key information students, we could sequence instructions clearly, which I hoped would increase the impact of our teaching.

It became apparent that ‘I do...’ part of the modelling process was the most effective factor. It allowed students to consolidate their understanding of key concepts before we introduced novel ones in a context of independent practice. To support the process, students received constant 1-1 or whole class feedback.

We found students far more confident with their work, especially those who were unsure to begin with. The response in their independent work showed a deeper understanding, which led to more accurate retrieval in lessons. Our assessment results improved by 10% on average – approximately a grade.



# Where You From?

We bid farewell in July to five treasured senior leaders, each of whom has been director and steward of significant improvements in the performance and culture of our schools. Marc Jordan, Chief Executive, has praised the vigour, courage and undaunted willingness with which **Michelle Strong** undertook challenging professional assignments as Principal first of Caister, and then Bulwell. He acknowledged **Craig Avieson**’s skilful and inspiring transformation work at Wroughton and wished him well in his next role as the director of education at a MAT of twelve primary schools in Norfolk and Suffolk. He drew attention to **Steve Elliott**’s focussed and successful work in bringing Wrenn back from the brink to Ofsted ‘Good’, and his admiration for **Fiona Seddon**’s bravery and determination to continue her leadership work at Milton Keynes despite serious illness. Last, but very far from least, Marc expressed gratitude on behalf of the executive to **Mark Mumby** for his expert leadership of our primary schools, his oversight of our safeguarding work and the reliably “well-informed, thoughtful and objective advice on the full range of matters that the leaders of the Trust have to consider; always guided by a commitment to the futures of the children and young people for whom we work.”

*Connected asked each of these colleagues to describe their background and transition to adult responsibility as educators.*



**Mark Mumby,**  
Director of Standards

I was born in Ilkley in the Yorkshire Dales and spent my childhood living with my parents, older brother and younger sister in a village north of Leeds. I went to primary school in the village and then to a secondary school in Leeds, seven miles away. I was raised with strong values about behaviour, the difference between right and wrong, and an important sense that nothing in life is free – you have to earn it.

Being isolated in a village with relatively strict parents meant that my social life during my younger teenage years was limited, so leaving the hills and dales of my childhood was a transformation – a massive shift to independent life in a city and making new friends.

Wanting to do a better job than my own experience at school made me want to be a teacher, so after my degree in biology at York I went on to Ambleside in the Lake District for a PGCE. I never seriously considered a different career, although if I had had some careers guidance, I might well have done something different. My ambition was to be a headteacher, but my mentor predicted during my first few months in the job that I would become an inspector – something to do with my expectations and my attention to detail I think. Not only did my teaching evolve far beyond my initial ambition, but she turned out to be correct: I was appointed as HMI in 2005. Ten years as an HMI and Senior HMI was a fantastic and privileged learning experience. It prepared me well to put something back for many children through my work at Creative Education Trust.

## Craig Avieson, Headteacher, Wroughton

I was born in Manchester and grew up in Blackpool with one brother and a sister. I switched schools regularly and went to six different ones. Although I was the first and am still the only person to go to university in my immediate family, my childhood accustomed me to managing change, and I also adopted a strong work ethic from Mum, who would often have two jobs as a carer and cleaner.

I was average at school, and had to resit GCSE English when I was 25 years old. But effort mattered to me, and I recall getting a '1E' in Year 11. 1 to 5 was effort, in which I got the top mark; and E was my GCSE grade. My mum couldn't comprehend how I could try so hard, yet do so badly. I retain that effort today.

My original ambition was to become a medical doctor but my financial situation prevented my access to that career. Despite not liking early mornings, being scared of most dogs and suffering badly with hayfever, I worked as a postman for a few months in Essex. I guess I've always taken the view that there'll be lots of roles to embrace until I figure out what I want to do. I'm still not sure what I'd like to do when I grow up.

I always enjoyed supporting children to develop, initially through sport and exercise and later in their education. Once I entered teaching I realised (partly because I don't like being told what to do) that leading others would be a good pathway. I always consider enabling adults to support children as a privilege that keeps me humble. So the high points in my career have either been when I've seen an adult growing in confidence, or when a child has said something funny, utterly honest and without the filters of adult social etiquette.

I have worked with wonderful colleagues on all fronts at Creative Education Trust and I will miss the fantastic, hard-working bunch at Wroughton.



## Michelle Strong, Principal, Bulwell

Those who know me also know I'm a proud northerner and especially proud of being from Lancashire. I was fortunate enough to grow up in a little cottage surrounded by green fields in a lovely village nestled at the foot of Pendle Hill. Dad was a farm labourer and was never happier than when he was outside surrounded by his animals. Mum was a weaver for many years, then as the cotton mills all started to close, she took a huge step and went back to college to train to be a nurse; fulfilling a dream she had had from being a little girl.



My childhood was idyllic in many ways. We didn't have lots, but my parents made sure I never felt I went without, and I have countless happy memories of roaming the fields and playing outdoors from morning till night. Fortunately, I loved learning and could often be found with my head in a book. My primary

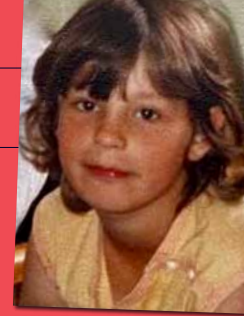
school days were happy ones, with my headteacher seeing something in me and encouraging me all the way. I remember being determined to make him and my parents proud by being the first in the family to pass my 11+, even though at the time I'm not sure I really understood what it meant. I wasn't really expected to do well at school, but I was expected to work hard and do my best; a mantra I follow to this day, and expect of my staff and students.

At Clitheroe Royal Grammar School I often felt like the underdog, so my secondary days weren't always the easiest. But it only served to make me more determined to succeed. I was devastated when my dream of joining the police force was shattered at the age of 16. I discovered that people who wore glasses could only join up if moved to London; which back then I couldn't imagine doing. At this point one of my teachers convinced me that university might be for me and persuaded me to apply to study German, Russian and Politics in Newcastle. I got to spend part of my year abroad in Russia and while I was there, asked to teach English in a school. My love of teaching was born and I've never really considered doing anything else since.

Throughout my time as a teacher and subsequently as a leader, I have always made a conscious effort to work in schools that serve deprived communities. I know first hand the impact teachers can have and how they can change lives.

I've loved my time working for Creative Education Trust and know we have made a difference to the lives of the young people in the communities of Caister and Bulwell. I wish all the readers of Connected continued success in the future.

## Fiona Seddon Principal, The Milton Keynes Academy



I was born in Greater Manchester to a joiner father – autocratic with a propensity to run a tight ship – and a creative mother prone to dreaming. My position as a middle child of three in this mix enabled me to hone great diplomacy skills. When I was four we moved to rural Ireland where my mother's family owned some land. My father built our house, and my abiding memory is sitting under the rafters using the plastered walls as a chalk board. Here my passion for teaching was born, as I waxed lyrical to an imaginary class.

It was either my older sister's sporty success, or the endless hours of homework and mandatory Gaelic, that inspired me to find my own true passions: theatre and the English language. Back in England, I joined a primary school as the eleventh child in a class of ten – not an easy transition. By comparison, secondary school represented the ultimate freedom. I sat next to my now best friend on day one and absolutely loved school from that moment. I relished every opportunity and spent many a day rehearsing in the choir and performing whenever I could. Although I didn't necessarily get the star parts and my singing voice was down below Alto, I was intoxicated by the sense of belonging.

I considered going into law and was offered the chance to train with a local law firm. But, spurred by my working class background, I and my group of ten friends – all imbued with the expectation of doing well by our teachers – were determined to go to university. Privileged with our tuition fees paid, and an accessible grant to support my living costs, I was beckoned towards a joint degree in Theatre and English at Lancaster University. My passion for the subjects grew alongside my affinity with teaching and I continued to a PGCE in English and Drama at Warwick. I was thrown into a tough boys' school on placement, because my tutors told me it would suit a strong northerner.

Now certain that teaching was my vocation, I rose rapidly through the ranks with a mixture of intuition, fortuitous circumstances, and some unbelievable happenings in places where the culture of achievement is not a given, and generational unemployment has falsely capped aspirations. I learned from fantastic leaders in two contrasting settings and it became my dream job to follow in their footsteps.

To be appointed as Principal of the special and extraordinary Milton Keynes Academy was an enormous privilege. I would like to thank the students that have given me so much joy, and even those that presented problems, for reminding me that a keen sense of humour is needed at all times. The highs have always outweighed the lows, and we should never underestimate the impact we have in shaping lives. Thank you, colleagues, and all the wise people that have coached, counselled and cajoled me over the years.

## Steve Elliott Principal, Wrenn School

I was born in Glasgow but moved ten years later to a village in South Wales, with plenty of sports to choose from and a magnificent castle to explore. My father was a quality control engineer for Ford and mother a secretary in a hospital in Abergavenny. I was educated at Monmouth Comprehensive and really enjoyed my school life, especially playing rugby, football and cricket. This upbringing was sheltered compared to city life, but despite my inevitable naivety, I was very grounded and learned that if you chose to do something you should do it to the best of your ability. My successes have been based on this philosophy. I moved to Leeds in 1984 to start my sports degree at Carnegie, the Leeds Polytechnic sports college. The most amazing three years of my life began as I (ignoring my philosophy) truly let down my hair down in the bright lights of Leeds.

Having graduated with no better ideas, I stayed for another year on the PGCE PE and Maths secondary course. I taught a rugby lesson on my first day at St Michael's Middle School in Seacroft and knew at once I wanted to be a teacher. I put that old philosophy to good use this time and finished top of the class of 92 students with a distinction. My first teaching job was at a school with no playing fields in the centre of Halifax; just a gym and playground. I would walk through town with thirty students carrying shot puts and javelins to the local park for an athletics lesson! After four fabulous years, I took time out to travel the world, coaching soccer in the USA before travelling to New Zealand, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand – having a great time and being exposed to other cultures.

When I returned to good old Yorkshire it was time to get serious about my career. After a brief spell at the infamous Ridings School, I rose through the ranks of Airedale High School in Castleford over fifteen years to become Vice Principal. In a seconded Headship at the Wakefield PRU for 10 months, I turned the school from a grade 4 to a grade 2, then spent eight months at a college in Maidenhead before accepting the Headship at Wrenn six years ago. My Wrenn journey has been turbulent at times, but truly memorable, and contained the two proudest moments in my career. First, taking the school from inadequate to a resounding good in 2018, then getting the Pearson Secondary Headteacher of the Year Award in 2021. Retirement now beckons me to my family back in Pontefract.

Education was the best career choice and there were no alternatives on the table. I would not change my 33 years in education for all the tea in Yorkshire!



## Successes and special commendations

## Students

To **Sarah Arnold**, librarian at **Caister**, for leading a group of Caister's year 7s in their virtual meeting with young people from The Herring Era Museum in Sigluþjóður in Iceland to compare their local histories and cultures.



To **Sarah Bailey**, Operations Manager at **Harpfield**, for completing her qualification as a mental health first aider.



To **Claire Bradley** (above), HR Manager at **Hart**, for working incredibly hard over 18 months to complete her Level 3 Diploma in HR Practices with the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

To **Maggie Zhu**, Teach First MFL teacher, and the year 9 and 10

students at **Weavers** (above left) who took part in 'Europe goes to Tokyo' and showed such imagination. The live event, hosted virtually by Business Language Champions, introduced Japanese language and culture, and presented the challenge of designing an aircraft, merchandise and an inflight announcement combining French, Spanish and Japanese culture.



To **Anya**, Year 13 at **Bulwell**, who, alongside her mum (pictured left), has qualified to give Covid vaccinations. Anya is studying Health & Social Care with Bulwell's sixth form and hopes to become a physiotherapist.



To **Ifeanyi**, Year 12 at **Bulwell**, for being accepted as an official Nottingham Open Ball Boy for the 2021 championships.



To **Wrenn**, for being awarded Secondary School of the Year in the Northamptonshire Education Awards.

## and staff



To **Rebecca Brunt** at **Hart**, for completing her National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL).



To **Courtney Morson**, KS3 leader for completing the Mental Health First Aid course and has joined **Weavers'** Mental Health Working Group to support the wellbeing of all of the school community, in pursuit of the St Andrew's Healthcare Mental Health Quality Mark.

# Local Advocates

This summer term, three schools have had the opportunity to participate in a pilot of the Trust's first Advocacy Challenge. Year 9 pupils of **Weavers, Lynn Grove** and the **Hart** are learning about advocacy and active citizenship by putting forward pitches in response to the question 'What does this community need?'

The project is delivered in partnership with the Kalisher Trust, a charity focused on developing young people's advocacy skills, and in the longer term, diversifying England's criminal bar. They passionately believe that everyone should have a voice. Sue Freestone, Director of Education at the Kalisher Trust, shares her hope that the challenge will help students develop the skills and confidence to express the views that matter to them. "Advocacy is a skill that supports success in all areas of life. When we can speak articulately on behalf of other people or to support something we believe in passionately, we are personally empowered and become a vital part of making good things happen."

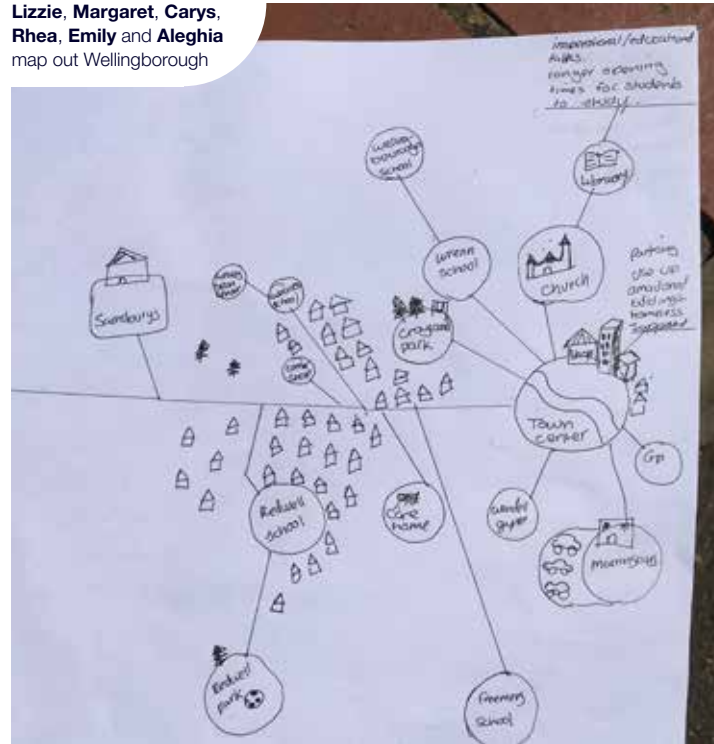
*"Our year 9 students have handled the topics with empathy and maturity, and the coaching has been a once in a lifetime experience for them."*

**Hollie Rush, English teacher at Lynn Grove**

The project takes place in three different stages. The first stage, in which over 500 pupils participated across the three schools, is the opportunity for students to be creative, mapping out their communities and identifying the causes that most need their attention as spokespeople. Stage two is all about research and building the evidence to drive forward their argument. They develop a written and spoken pitch answering the question 'What does this community need?' Next, each school is supported to identify five finalist teams, who receive coaching from a Kalisher Trust barrister on their public speaking, before delivering their pitches before an audience and a panel of judges at a final to determine the winning team.

The challenge has been designed to enable students to make a genuine difference. The winning team in each school will be supported to take forward their recommendations in outputs such as a campaign, events, or a fundraising drive. The teams will also be supported to influence local leaders as advocates for

**Lizzie, Margaret, Carys, Rhea, Emily and Aleghia** map out Wellingborough



**Teams map out the places and groups that make up their local community. The activity encourages pupils to reflect on what might be missing, whether there are barriers preventing certain groups from accessing the different spaces, and whether any spaces could be better used or transformed.**

their chosen cause - two schools have secured an audience for the winning team with their MP.

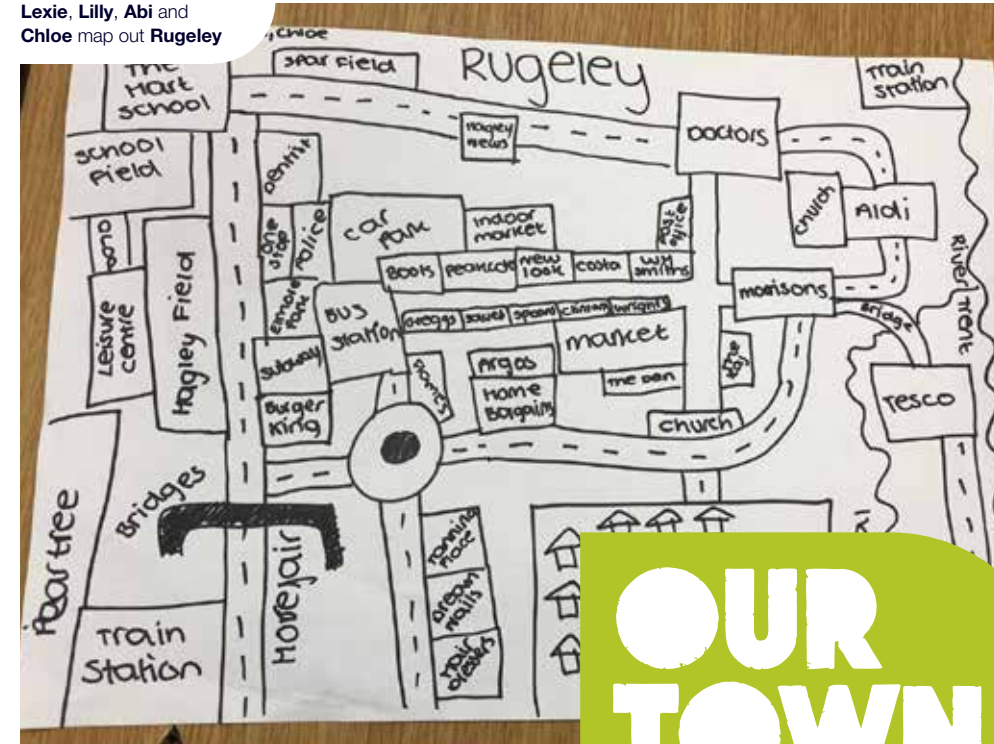
The challenge has provoked passionate, well-argued, and extensively researched pitches. They call for improvements in a range of areas, including in mental health, homelessness, the PHSE curriculum, women's safety, public transport, the environment, and opportunities for young people.

In addition to identifying root causes of these problems, students have thought creatively about solutions that could make positive change. As Sue Freestone says, "All communities needs spokespeople. Whilst many hold strong views and are happy to grumble in the background, it is those who are able to express their concerns in a persuasive and convincing way who become the engines of change to the benefit of those communities."

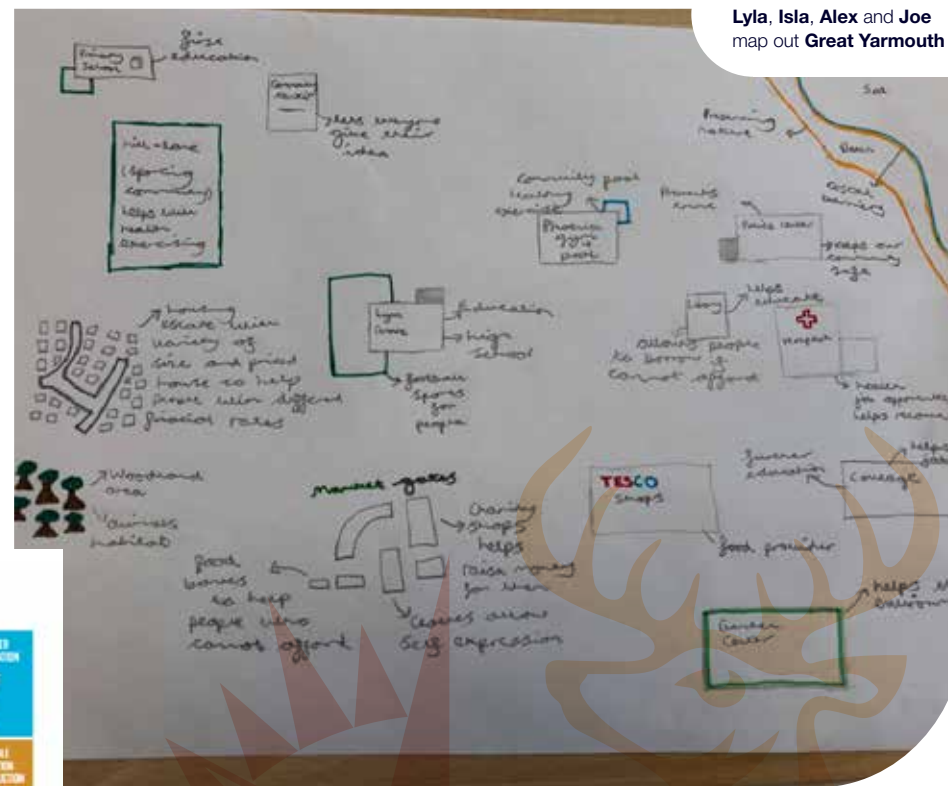
**The Sustainable Development Goals, agreed by world leaders in 2015 to tackle the global issues today, are a helpful framework for prompting teams to consider 'What does this community need?'**



**Lexie, Lilly, Abi and Chloe** map out Rugeley



**Lyla, Isla, Alex and Joe** map out Great Yarmouth



## OUR TOWN COMMUNITY FUND

As Creative Education Trust school communities re-open after the disruption of the global pandemic, the Board is distributing funds to support student-led social action in the community during 2022. This project expresses the Trust's strategic aim for our schools and their pupils to be active and valued participants in their localities, and responds to school leaders' request for a cross-Trust community initiative. Bids to the fund are invited from all primary and secondary schools to support projects that promise to address the objectives of Learning, Creative Skills, Impact, Employability, Inclusiveness and Sustainability.

Contact **Emily Campbell**, Director of Programmes, for the brief [emily.campbell@creativeeducationtrust.org.uk](mailto:emily.campbell@creativeeducationtrust.org.uk)

For this issue, *Connected* interviewed **Jemma Adlington, former pupil of Harpfield, who returned to her childhood school in 2013 as a teacher, and was confirmed in April 2021 as its substantive Head.**

*“I know this area so well and I used to play where they play now.”*



Jemma Adlington

# ALUMNI IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Looking from her office window, Jemma has a view of the former site of Harpfield Primary School where she studied until 1997. “It was a long time ago – we had chalk boards then and one computer, and we were based in a Victorian building, but I can still visualise the layout. I remember some of my lessons, the songs we used to sing, and some of the teachers that are still here today. I won’t mention names!” Jemma recalls the highlights, including being in the netball team (where former headteacher, Mrs Robertson, was her coach), and playing Princess Jasmine in the school production of Aladdin.

Some of the opportunities offered to pupils then remain in place today. Harpfield students still experience a residential stay at Stanley Head Outdoor Education Centre, having the chance to get involved in activities such as climbing, archery and raft building. “I remember being quite homesick, but I did manage to last the week!”

Jemma reflects on how things have changed for children growing up in the local area. While Jemma and her friends would call each other up after school to go to each other’s houses and for bike rides, everything is more virtual for students today. Despite these changes, Jemma claimed that the key thing that’s still in place today is the sense of community in Hartshill.

Jemma was born and raised nearby and has always remained close to the local area. Knowing from year 10 that she wanted to go into teaching, Jemma got her BTEC diploma in Early Years at college, where placements in schools and nurseries confirmed her vocation. She went on to study Primary Education for four years at the Crewe campus of Manchester Metropolitan University, before becoming a teacher in 2008. “In 2013 a job came up at Harpfield. It wasn’t in my plan necessarily to go back, but I jumped at the chance to work there.”

Jemma reflected on her favourite thing about working at Harpfield. “As Headteacher, I still feel a part of the Harpfield family. We work together as one to do the best for our children. Whenever we have visitors to the school, we get feedback on how warm, welcoming, and friendly our school is”. Belonging to the Hartshill community has really helped Jemma relate to the pupils and their parents. “I know this area so well and I used to play where they play now. Having taught at the school for 9 years before becoming headteacher, I could really hit the ground running.”

In the long-term Jemma would like to make more local connections. Harpfield has strong links with the local church and hospital. “Schools are a community’s heart. You walk down the street and you’ll always know somebody”. Having started her headship in the middle of the pandemic, Jemma looks forward to what she can achieve in future. “It’s a strange feeling, but a nice one, to have gone full circle back to my old school. It’s onwards and upwards from here.”

# SAFETY ON SITE

**Jon Ward**, Director of Estates and Facilities has worked with his team across the Trust to develop the systems we need to make our schools as safe as they can be. Despite the pandemic, the whole team has worked to implement better systems, improved reporting, and robust auditing. Increased training and development from September 2020 specifically focuses on health and safety, on which the Estates and Property Committee receives updated reports regularly.

**Three Peaks** have been preparing for a new **Health and Safety Forum** meeting in the first week of July. In the manner of many other Trust schools, the team led by Richard Penn-Bourton, Ange Pickering and Rob Elscey brings together excellent progress in managing health and safety systems. The Forum will meet termly to review accidents and incidents, site safety, compliance and training milestones, along with actions undertaken as a result of audits. To accomplish all of this, the Forum makes use of the real-time reporting which is now available through SmartLog to all the schools.

During the past year, Creative Education Trust has been providing opportunities for all staff to better understand Health and Safety, and Three Peaks staff have now completed approximately 75% of all mandatory training for Health and Safety, Fire Awareness and Manual Handling. Rob Elscey is among the staff who are nearing completion of the full suite of competence-based programmes, including safety-critical features such as Legionella management, Asbestos Awareness, Fire safety and COSHH.

The Forum meeting provides staff with an opportunity to discuss things that can be improved, near-misses, training achievements and further development. Three Peaks can now demonstrate 100% systems compliance for the long list of safety checks and tests that are required in all our schools.

*“The Forum makes use of the real-time reporting which is now available through SmartLog to all the schools.”*

Across the Trust, Forum meetings will enable us to identify common issues and causes of accidents, and the Three Peaks Forum sets the standard for the management of safety on site. Data from all the schools enables us to pick up important intelligence and assess trends, which gives us foresight of problem areas and safety issues so they can be dealt with quickly. Slips/Trips and Falls, for example, is the biggest single accident type in all the schools, and we must develop a shared focus on well-kept surfaces, legible markings, and training for all members of the school community.



# Adaptive Thinking



From teacher-assessed grades to the Year 11 prom, from transition to technology, Creative Education Trust schools have adapted with energy and creativity to the challenges of socially distanced life. *Connected* learned about summer schools and modified transition events to ease the passage from primary to secondary, and about the vigour with which Harpfield has sought to guarantee the quality of learning on portable devices.

## EASING THE TRANSITION

The **Hart School's** summer school for the incoming year 7 aims to make up for enrichment activities lost in lockdown, including STEM and arts and crafts days and a trip to Go Ape on Cannock Chase. Principal Ms Sandam promises "We'll also provide tips to help settle in smoothly so that new pupils can hit the ground running in September 2021, making a fabulous start to their Hart School career."



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**Abbeyfield** invited their Year 11s back on site for a taste of what it means to be a successful post-16 student. Two days of study skills workshops included: planning your time, note taking, researching skills, independent learning and 'setting yourself apart'. Students considered and discussed a variety of topics such as the cycle of learning, accessing MOOCs and the benefits of volunteering. They also had a remote session on

financial literacy delivered by Barclaycard. Having been given 'flipped' learning tasks in advance, students spent week Two getting to grips with their subjects independently before diving right into the more challenging work. This is where they really got a taste of sixth form life, starting with a great day of team building and problem solving, getting to know their new tutors and colleagues by competing in a range of challenges. The rest of the week comprised taster lessons in each subject and study periods to complete independent work and read around.

**Bulwell's** Going Places Transition Summer Project is designed to give Year 6 an opportunity to prepare for year 7 by getting to know the Secondary site, making new friends and meeting some secondary staff. It's a week of free, fun packed activities run by Bulwell staff in partnership with Nottingham Trent University and the Toy Library. Year 7s-to-be can look forward to sports, team games, arts and crafts, cookery, literacy and science; with a graduation at the end. Nottingham City's Holiday Activity Programme for 6 to 16-year-olds will also run for four weeks of the holidays on the Bulwell Academy site as part of their Community Partnership.

**Milton Keynes's** Sarah Dorrian explains the detrimental impact of Covid-19 on students' social skills, attendance, achievement and mental health. "In addition to running exciting virtual transition events with interactive tasks for our new Year 7 cohort, the Milton Keynes Academy will be holding a summer school. Our aim is to deliver a blend of academic education and enrichment activities that will familiarise new students with the building and staff, as well as giving them an academic platform for September through our literacy and numeracy offering. There will also be sporting activities, performing arts, science and catering lessons to build and develop the interpersonal skills which have been stymied by the pandemic."

98 incoming year 7 students have signed up to attend **Thistley Hough's** summer school in July. The two-week event – literacy and

numeracy projects, healthy eating and plenty of physical activities – has been designed to develop their confidence and self-esteem, and to help them to get familiar with new classmates, staff and the school building. Some who may find the transition from primary to secondary particularly challenging are targeted with special attention to give them a flying start in September. Parents are invited into the Academy to celebrate the students achievements, meet staff and share a selection of foods from the school canteen on the final Friday afternoon.

**Wrenn**, likewise, feel a summer school is essential to support year 6 students' transition into life at Wrenn. Their twin focus is firstly, to give the students a boost in the subjects they have missed out on during the national lockdowns, such as Drama, Art and D&T, PE and Science; and second, the Wrenn ethos which forms part of a wider character development programme: Work Hard, Respect Others, Enjoy Learning, Never Give Up and Navigate your Future. The highlights for the students will be exploring cooking from different cultures and a resilience day at the Bear Grylls Centre in Birmingham where they will challenge themselves on Europe's highest rope course.



## HARPFIELD'S EXCELLENT DIGITAL ADVENTURE

As the newly-appointed leader for Bended Learning at Harpfield, Katie Cooper began the school year with a vision: technology fully integrated into teaching and learning in a way that reduced Harpfield's carbon footprint, reduced staff workload and increased all pupils' digital literacy skills, and with that, their independence, progress and confidence in lessons.

"The natural next step after teachers' laptops and 65" touchscreen televisions is children using their own devices to follow and work during the lessons.

SLT decided we'd begin this journey with one year 4 maths class using Chromebooks and Seesaw – a digital platform for teachers and students to share their work. We'd adopted the principle that children need to begin in the same place with maths and access the same resources as far as possible. We also recognised that there can be no replacement for writing skills using a pencil and paper.

We borrowed another class's Chromebook trolley so that children could have 1:1 devices. This allowed the children to build their fluency on the Chromebooks quickly and without too much intervention from with staff. Within a few weeks of using Chromebooks daily for maths lessons, children could log themselves into Chromebooks and Seesaw fast and be ready to begin. We made it clear that we trust the children to use the Chromebooks appropriately and with great respect – not many schools have access to the wealth of devices we have built up over time at Harpfield and we make sure the children are aware of their privilege.

As a result of our experiment, year 4 are more confident when using devices and have better digital literacy skills. They confidently explore and tinker with new apps, websites and devices. They are proactive learners and the use of devices has become second nature.

We are now rolling the approach out to other KS2 classes and curriculum areas. Staff have had some externally and internally provided CPD over the past few months, and with the 1:1 devices we'll be using from September, we hope to see the Chromebooks support all the children's learning as they move through Harpfield.

Concrete materials still need to play a part in maths, especially as the younger year groups begin new concepts which cannot be replicated on an electronic device. Many children do like to show me their workings out in a photograph on Seesaw which, before, would have been tidied up and thrown away.

We rely on good classroom systems to make sure devices are always ready for use. In year 4, at the end of the day, children check the battery left on their Chromebook and if it's below 50%, it's charged overnight on the trolley ready for the next day's lessons."



# Odes to All Sorts

The fourth annual Primary Poetry Prize went virtual this year, with ten emotive pupil voices ringing clear across the WiFi.

A competition of two halves, Year 5 and 6 pupils from each of our primary schools are invited to perform poetry from an annually updated anthology, or to pen their own. The standard of the finalists was exceptionally high and they treated the audience to recitals of A. A. Milne, Robert Frost, Jan Dean, Robert Louis Stevenson, Stevie Smith, and Maya Angelou.



The panel of judges were Creative Education Trust's own executive directors Mark Mumby and Gwayne Webb, joined by our guest Dr Angela MacMillan.

Angela, associated for many years with the University of Liverpool's literature department, was a founding member of The Reader Organisation, and editor of three anthologies of poetry and prose for reading aloud: *A Little, Aloud*; *A little, Aloud for Children*; and *A Little, Aloud with Love*. Making the case that "poetry is for everyone", she explained exactly why it is so vital:

"We need poems in our lives to help us think about how to live. They make us understand familiar things in new ways, or offer us new ways of thinking and seeing; they make us pay attention to the world we live in and the people we live with. Whatever you feel – joy, sadness, fear, loneliness, anger, wonder – there will be a poem about it, saying what, deep down, we know but never quite put into words."

This year, the competition was so fierce that the judges took the decision to announce two Highly Commended runners up: Jaxon, Wroughton, whose Ode to Winter carefully crafted the contrast between human warmth and bitter chill and Fatima, Harpfield whose recital of *From a Railway Carriage* by R.L. Stevenson was animated and full of charm.

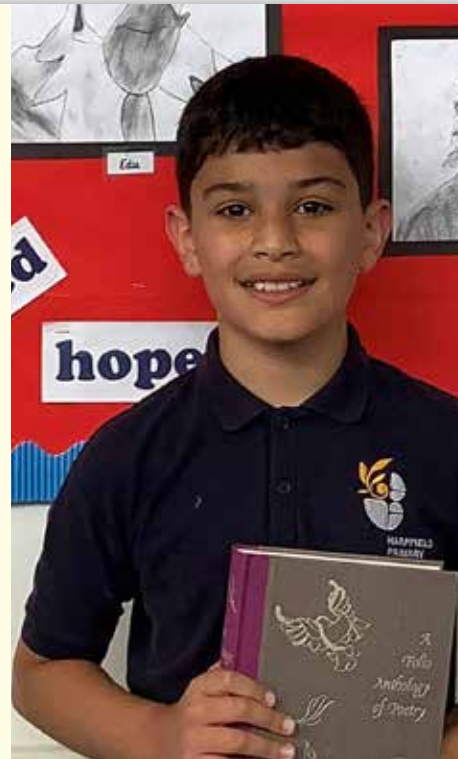
The winning recitalists were Evelyn, Three Peaks, who conveyed both the boredom and the excitement expressed in *Waiting at the Window* by A A Milne, a commentary on a race between two raindrops down a window pane; and Oliver, Harpfield, who imbued Jan Dean's contemporary poem *Angels* – a metaphysical contemplation of light, fire, joy, solemnity, time and transience – with a marvellous sense of wonder.

In a year when we have perhaps come to appreciate the little things in life, our poets were asked to write an ode, which is a poetic form in praise of an event, person, or thing, going back to classical times. Nine finalists paid homage to a wide range of subjects, from being outside, to NHS heroes and ice cream vans. Our winners of the original poetry prize were Shahram, Harpfield, whose Ode to a Shadow captured the tension and menace of war in a sophisticated, skilfully wrought twenty lines; and Lyla, Woodlands, whose Ode to the Ocean created a powerful sense of movement and mystery in a deceptively alluring sea.

## Ode to a Shadow

*A twisted hunched up man,  
Wears a smart suit with an ugly frown.  
He brought war.  
He brought a group of cruel politicians,  
His company of friends and a team.  
Eventually they were betrayed.  
He brings out an imaginary gas,  
That shreds you into gloom.  
No one can match his evil,  
His appearance looks like a rat,  
Spreading a contagious disease.  
Lies, Lies, Lies.  
Lies that destroy people's lives.  
Fearful and hateful  
Without this man,  
Peace and harmony resumes.  
We celebrate.  
The rates commiserate.  
His reign is over.*

**Shahram S Mohammed, Harpfield**



## Ode to the Ocean

*The ocean dances to a melody,  
It curls and twists,  
Hypnotizing its victims,  
To trap them in.  
Like a door that can't be opened,  
What secrets do you hold?  
The creatures that lurk,  
The ruins that will suffer.  
The deep blue,  
So mysterious,  
Yet it feels so familiar,  
That it feels like home.  
The moonlight flashes over the surface,  
Stepping in,  
The coldness freezes your soul,  
Splash!  
The ocean has trapped you in...*

**By Lyla Easeman, Woodlands**



# Univerisify

Three year 10 students at **Weavers** will be spending a week of the summer at either Somerville or Jesus College in Oxford as participants in Univerisify.

It's a year long programme that supports students from the summer of year 10 and throughout year 11 with a summer residential, monthly coaching, and a GCSE revision weekend in the spring. The aim is to raise aspirations and attainment, while providing an authentic university experience.

Ben, Sophie and Pippa, shared their reflections with *Connected* ahead of the programme.

**What was your reaction when you found out you were being put forward for the programme?**

**Pippa:** 'I ran across the road to my friends and jumped up and down waving my phone around shouting 'I got in, I got in!' I was really pleased'.

**What would you be doing if you weren't taking part in Univerisify?**

**Sophie:** 'I would probably just be at home. I'm often out with family and friends, I do art and read in my spare time, and I love films'.

**What are you expecting the programme will involve?**

**Ben:** 'Helping with the skills I'll need in year 11; also helping me focus on any opportunities that may be available to me. I want to know more about what University can offer me and get a flavour of university life is like'.

**What are you most looking forward to?**

**Ben:** 'I'm looking forward to the help and support I can get from people who know the attitudes I need to do my very best next year. I'm looking forward to meeting some new people and getting a new experience'.



**Sophie:** 'I'm looking forward to learning more about university life and finding out whether it's right for me, to experiencing what Oxford is like and to get the sense of history there'.

**What would you like to get from the programme?**

**Sophie:** 'I'll have the benefit of experiencing university for an extended period before I would go there. It gives me the confidence that I'll know what to expect. It will take some of the fear out of it'.

**Pippa:** 'Better GCSE grades and easier ways to do my revision. I'd like to learn to write more analytically as I find that difficult. I'm looking forward to having a more adult experience and some more independence as well as seeing if university is right for me'.

**What are your aspirations for the future now?**

**Ben:** 'I'm thinking about studying something in Computing, but I also really enjoy history'.

**Sophie:** 'I want to study forensic psychology, but most importantly to be able to do a career that I enjoy – hopefully I'll learn more from this experience'.

**Pippa:** 'I want to be an author, fictional – sci-fi, fantasy, comedy, adventure, action!'.

# Knowledge Connected

# All Performance

Year 7 ends on a high with a final Knowledge Connected day devoted to key concept Performance: a fun exploration of how things work through investigation and light engineering tasks.

## AN INTRODUCTION

Some might say the wheel is the original and greatest performing structure of all. They help us transport heavy things – ourselves included – from one place to another. They have helped build some civilisations and move others from place to place. They enable the lifting of water from wells and grinding of wheat to make flour. They keep children entertained and they carry our shopping home from the supermarket. The wheel is where our Introduction to Performance film starts but certainly not where it ends. Year 7 are taken from the humble wheel to the engineering marvels of the built world, the wonders of science, the action of heat and raising agents in our kitchens and the spectacular performances of the natural world: tides; earthquakes; volcanoes; the orbit of the planets...

## SIMPLE PERFORMING STRUCTURES

How does a paperclip hold papers together? How does a lampshade diffuse the light from a lightbulb? How does a pencil sharpener make the point of a pencil sharper? Every Year 7 student is asked to interrogate familiar objects and ask: how do they do what they do? Here are two descriptions from Wrenn students, who have separated the performance of an object from the function.



Stills from the Introduction to Performance film explain how wheels reduce the effort in carrying loads.

FRICITION



## STUDENT POTENTIAL

Flinging pompoms and throwing paper planes sounds like a quick way to get into trouble but, during a Performance day, it's actually a great demonstration of energy conversion. And a fantastic opportunity to learn about prototyping, testing, and improvement.

Tasked with making freestanding catapults with no instructions, students across the Trust quickly discovered how to store potential energy in a stretched elastic band – ready to

be quickly converted to kinetic energy when the tension is released. Measuring how far a pompom flew, the teams were challenged to improve their contraptions to increase the distance covered. Weaknesses were identified, bases strengthened, cradles adjusted and elastic band power increased. All to encourage a few more centimetres of flight out of those pompoms.

Whilst most students have been challenged to make machines that move fast, jump, or reach, Milton Keynes set a different brief: take a familiar paper plane template and, through a process of testing and evaluation, adapt it to perform better. When you only have folded paper to work with, precision matters.

### What is it?

**An emery board**

### What does it do?

**Shortens fingernails**

### How?

*It has rough paper along the board. As it brushes against the nails it slowly chips away the nail. It creates friction.*

### What is it?

**A key**

### What does it do?

**Opens a lock**

### How?

*A key works when the key is slotted into a lock and the bumpy side of the key pushes on some pins at the bottom of the key hole. The pins move and a part of the key hole inside turns and moves a metal piece and unlocks the door.*



**A day of Performance is all about inspiring the young people in our schools to take a look at the things and people in action around them and think not only about what they are doing, but how. On understanding this, we encourage them to start to make things work better.**

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**Cover:**

The demolition of the Rugeley Power Station's four iconic cooling towers on 7th June drew emotional commentary from around the world. The Hart School was formed from two earlier schools, Fair Oak and Hagley Park, founded in the same years as the Power Station to serve the burgeoning community of families working in the Staffordshire mines during the 1950s. Weeks before the demolition, Hart School students posed for this photograph to signify the school's deep and valued connections with the town. The image was circulated in the aftermath of the demolition with the caption #wearerugeley.

## ***Connected Survey***

Please take a minute to answer the questions in our annual readers' survey of Connected magazine.

**[Click here](#)**



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