

The magazine of Creative Education Trust schools

Issue no.19 October 2020

Connected

Scaling up Safety

Socially distanced schools

New Colleagues

Why us? Why them?

Blended & Remote

It's here to stay

Plus

Y8 Creative Writing Prize, Apprenticeships, 2020 Transitions and a gallery of commendations to staff and students



The New Normal

Glenn Cooper, Site Manager at Woodlands has been buoyed up by the support and gratitude of parents for the safety measures he put in place before September and appreciates how quickly parents and pupils adapted to the one-way route through the school and the new rules for drop-off and pick-up. At the same time as coordinating the risk assessment process for Covid-19, Glenn and his colleague, caretaker Shane Wilshire, have completed major projects that were planned pre-pandemic – installing a new canopy, re-fitting all lights with LED bulbs, servicing the gas supply and testing electrics. Glenn pointed out the primary ‘advantage’, that classes tend to stay in one room all day for the whole year, so planning social bubbles and cleaning regimes has been simpler than it is at secondary level. Even so, supplying PPE, training teachers, and communicating changes has required a great deal of organisation. Staff at Woodlands have supported Glenn throughout, preparing their classrooms over the summer holidays and keeping up to date with guidance: everyone worked hard to make the environment reassuring for the new term.



Glenn began installing new hygiene procedures at Woodlands before lockdown commenced.



The Hart site team, left to right: Paul Lewis, caretaker, Tina Garrington, site technician, Adam Newell, site technician, Dave Rushton, premises manager, and Marita Deeley, senior site technician.

Dave Rushton, Premises Manager at Hart, had some big decisions to make as the team started planning for September, but most significantly, lunchtime arrangements. Staff agreed early on the importance of a hot lunch for every student, but the dining spaces could not accommodate 1200 bubbled students. The team built two temporary lunch ‘sheds’ outdoors, equipped with serving hatches, tills, hot serving stations and special trolleys for transporting food from the kitchens. They also installed thumb scanners to reduce the number of touchpoints used by students, supported by the IT department to set-up the parent payment scheme. The result was a huge success, and Dave was especially impressed with how quickly new year 7 students adapted. Although parents were kept informed through regular bulletins, walk-round videos during the summer, several renovation projects excited and surprised students on their return in September, including a refurbished computer suite and a specialist sixth form common room. Dave noted that the collective effort and collaborative ethos cultivated across support and teaching staff has been remarkable. Taking a risk assessment beyond a mere paper exercise is an experience that he and the team will build on in future.



Site managers agree that rigorous hygiene standards and permanent expectations for cleanliness will be no bad thing in future ‘new normal’ schools.

Scaling up Safety

‘Back to school’ in September 2020 provoked a root and branch upgrade in safety measures, as premises and policies were adapted to meet the health and safety guidance of the Covid-19 pandemic. During lockdown, we featured news from site staff across the Trust who were coping with an ever-changing situation and a massive reduction in staff and students on site. Now, after so much change, Jessica Douthwaite salutes the multi-skilled teams across the network who have enabled education to continue: bubbled year groups, complex timetabling and socially distanced teaching procedures, hand sanitisers and washing protocols, one-way systems, information posters, intensive cleaning schedules and the PPE to which we have all grown accustomed to seeing and wearing. Schools could not have opened at full capacity without a heroic collaboration in the name of school safety.



The Lynn Grove site team. Back row, left to right: Alan Taylor, evening caretaker, Samantha Harrison, daytime cleaner, Paul Tidman, senior caretaker. Front row, left to right: Viv Cunningham, daytime cleaner, Richard Slater, daytime caretaker and Diane Banyard, housekeeper.

Paul Tidman, Senior Caretaker at Lynn Grove, was concerned to ensure that students could continue to access a broad range of subjects and that teachers could continue to plan varied activities. An intense schedule of timetabled cleaning, he said, to sanitise and protect the equipment and teaching spaces is all worth it if teachers in graphics, DT, music, PE, cooking and science, can teach in a nearly-normal learning environment. Like other site managers, Paul seized the opportunity to make the most of lockdown by running a series of improvement projects and deep cleans that have left the school sparkling. The new atrium takes pride of place in his list of accomplishments because he was able to support a local business when contracting the work. The unprecedented combination of planned works and urgent preparation for school re-opening, says Paul, has been an eye-opener and proved that anything’s possible.



A familiar sight, 2-metre distanced tape and a line for left and right traffic marks a corridor at Wrenn

Major building works continued at Wrenn despite the additional work against the pandemic. Here, the library at the London Road site is fitted with a fire-rated corridor screen.



The mix of older and newer buildings at Abbeyfield (and many other schools) means that 2-metre distancing is harder to fulfil in some classrooms than others. The amount of furniture that needed to be removed from classrooms to create space – and the question of where to store it – was an unexpected complication. Still, students returned to discover a new playground canopy opening (installed a week ahead of schedule) and a new staircase in the English block converted from an outdoor fire escape (pictured left). Jenny Pullin, HR & Operations Manager, praised cleaners and caretakers for never wavering in their commitment. In the six weeks it took to get the school ready, the positive attitude of parents, teachers and support staff has created a unique community feeling of which Jenny is especially proud. Everyone returned to school feeling informed, safe and confident.

new Colleagues

Welcome to some of the new recruits at Creative Education Trust, who join us with a range of distinctive background motivations.



“Being too far removed from the action is the risk and challenge of system leadership; not being able to respond to need in time or have an impact on children’s education quickly enough. Being part of a team that can think imaginatively, and at pace, to address the system’s conundrum was very attractive. For me, everything hung on the quality of the Trust-wide teams; their openness and enthusiasm. I’m thrilled that what I had hoped for has turned out to be reality.”

Gwayne Webb,
Director of
Learning and
Teaching

“Days after getting my A-level results, I had my first child. Until I was about 22 I worked in retail jobs, then started as an admin assistant at a local transport company and qualified in accountancy over the next 12 years. A holiday re-awakened my dream of becoming a teacher. I resigned, and enrolled on an English and Psychology degree at UEA, but in the meantime I had become a divorced single mother with four children to support, so to get my degree I held down an evening job at Next, worked three days a week as a TA and went to university two days a week. I completed my teacher training at Ormiston Denes and rose to second in the English department. One of my children graduated from Lynn Grove with a wonderful sense of independence and confidence. Because of this, coupled with some exceptional CPD I’d done at Lynn Grove during my training, I knew this was the right school for me.”

Louise Lonergan, teacher
of English, Lynn Grove



“My education in Canada and the UK introduced me to one of the greatest mathematics teachers of our times, Caleb Gattegno. He observed that people often complain, ‘I teach, but they don’t learn’, to which he would respond, ‘then stop teaching in a way that doesn’t reach people, try to understand what there is to do.’ When I was looking for a headship, Creative Education Trust definitely looked like an organisation that seeks to educate children by understanding what there is to do for each child”.

Isaac Howarth, Head Teacher, Queen Eleanor



“I grew up on a council estate nearby in Stafford, always encouraged by my family to be adventurous, creative and caring. I worked hard and got into university to study furniture design, and after practising as a cabinet maker, I qualified as a teacher and started at Fair Oak Academy in 2004 as a teacher of Design and Technology teacher and later, Engineering. Our results surpassed the local JCB specialist engineering college, and in 2015 I was honoured with the national Outstanding Teacher Award from the D&T Association. Becoming faculty leader in the early days of Creative Education Trust design programme gave me the taste for leadership: the chance to have an influence beyond my own classroom and to change the lives of more children. I became Assistant Principal and then Vice Principal, and I got my NPQH, with opportunities along the way to develop my leadership in projects at Abbeyfield, Bulwell and Ellis Guilford. I start my new role with some challenges – Covid-19 safety measures, the partial closure of a Year 7 bubble, DfE and Ofsted inspections all within the first month – but they fill me pride and determination. I think we really nailed it during our recent branding workshop for the Hart School: We can. We will. We do.”

Rachael Sandham, Principal, The Hart School

"I'm really passionate about championing the underdog. I've spent my entire career working with schools who have higher than national levels of disadvantaged children and I'm especially keen to continue support those who have either fallen behind or who require additional challenge. I'm excited to be joining the organisation under new educational leadership, and my specific key areas of responsibility are curriculum, assessment and attendance in our secondary academies. I'm looking forward to working with school leaders on our collective mission."

Luke Bowers, Director of Performance



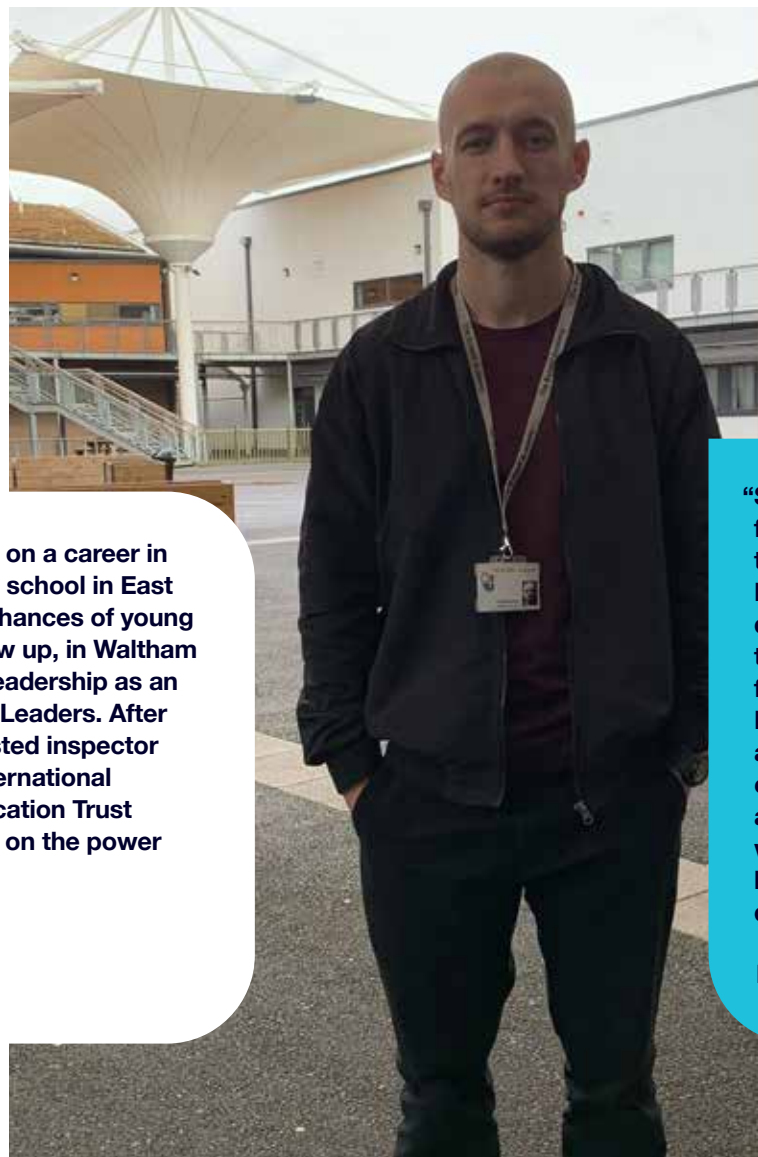
"My journey to Caister began with studying performing arts at a young age, leading to professional training, recognition as an Outstanding teacher and starting my own dance company. I'm going to foster a thriving, inclusive attitude towards dance at Caister: there's already a buzz about dancing and performing amongst male students. Everyone can look forward to amazing performances, showcases, and competitions for the community."

Sarah Sharpe, teacher of Performing Arts, Caister



"I graduated in English and psychology and had fixed on a career in law, but an eye-opening volunteering placement at a school in East London altered my path towards improving the life chances of young people. My teaching career started right where I grew up, in Waltham Forest. I advanced pretty fast, appointed to middle leadership as an NQT and selected for the inaugural cohort of Future Leaders. After a series of senior leadership roles, training as an Ofsted inspector and consultancy appointments with national and international organisations, I'm thrilled to be joining Creative Education Trust because it's mission-based and we're totally aligned on the power of education to transform lives."

Umbar Sharif,
Principal, Ash Green



"I graduated in a class of about 50 in the cornfields of Illinois, spurred on to further study by *To Kill a Mockingbird*, still my all-time favourite book. Five years later I graduated alongside about 2000 others from the University of St Andrews with a degree in English. My own high school teachers are among the people who've had the most profound impact on me, and so I'm excited to join Milton Keynes Academy as a Teach-First, 4000 miles and six time zones from home."

Linus Erbach, teacher of English,
The Milton Keynes Academy



"Starting out from a complicated home life, I got into trouble as a teenager and found myself in a young offenders' institution at 17. I went to college to finish the qualifications I didn't get at school, and I took up peer mentoring with the Nottingham Probation Service, working with young people at high risk. I started a degree in Arabic and international relations in London with the intention of joining the Royal Marines as an officer, but an injury led me to abandon both. I joined Think for the Future, an in-school mentoring programme working with young people in Leicester, Tamworth, Nottingham and Derby known to the police and social services and I started my own company developing evidence-based methods to address child criminal exploitation and youth justice. The role created for me in the pastoral team at Bulwell is brand new. Formally, it's an opportunity to bridge the background I share with their vulnerable students and the professional aspects of safeguarding that I've learned in my career. In practical terms, it means I do the heavy-lifting of home visits, detailed social care and building up young people's resilience in all kinds of ways."

Hallam Walker-Smart, outreach worker, Bulwell

MOVING ON IN 2020

Every year schools recognise and applaud the personal growth and change experienced by students moving from key stage to key stage and from place to place. This year became an exceptional context in which to account for these annual milestones. Under the conditions of lockdown, transition has been unpredictable; here, Creative Education Trust school leaders offer their thoughts on its impact, while we celebrate some of the educational achievements made by students moving on in 2020.

Michelle Strong, Principal, Bulwell

Spare a thought for last year's leavers –

– I did constantly during lockdown. They were entering the most important time in their school lives before Covid-19's abrupt intervention. In their minds, all the build-up and prep for GCSEs and A-levels appeared wasted. No exams, no send-off, no prom. To many, it felt like the end of their world.

It was important to understand their perspective. We all felt the world had moved under our feet and, for a while, had little control. Those transitioning from years 11 and 13 were affected disproportionately. But they should not be remembered as the Covid-19 group. They are brilliant individuals who will go on to do great things.

Throughout lockdown, we made sure they did not feel forgotten about. We might not have been able to impact further on their learning, but we could support with their next steps. Communication was crucial. We kept talking about years 11 and 13 on social media and blogs. Letters were sent home keeping them engaged.

The rewards came on results day. We had discussed what we should do. I am so pleased we handed out results in person and not via email. It gave our students an opportunity to talk about experiences during lockdown and worries they might have going forward. We also wanted to see their faces and share celebrations (or disappointments).



Above: Michelle Strong with Abibsha Sapkota who gained five 8s, two 9s and two Distinctions at Bulwell.

Top: Bulwell's sixth form celebrated another 100% pass rate for BTEC Level 3, with 76% of grades awarded Distinction* or Distinction. John Underwood and Chelsea Higgins look cheerful about their successes in Business with Miss Cooper, middle.

Social distancing ruled out inviting parents and we staggered appointments. But it was worth the effort. 88% of year 11 and 100% of year 13 turned up at the right time to collect their results. That said a lot about them. For those not returning to sixth form, it gave them closure on their time at The Bulwell Academy, something they did not have in March.

I am so proud to be their Principal. The hard work of a team dedicated to doing right by these young people achieved the results their efforts deserved. We kept thinking about them through difficult times. We wish them all the best in the future.



Richard Woollacott, Head Teacher, Harpfield

Managing expectations and saying goodbye

Richard Woollacott observed that not being able to visit their new schools left many pupils daunted by the prospect of entering an alien environment. However, 18 pupils had the unusual and hugely beneficial opportunity to spend the whole summer term at Thistley Hough, where they used the school gymnasium as a socially distanced classroom. One departed year 6 pupil with whom Mr Woollacott recently had a chance to speak was buzzing about her new year 7 experience, because, she said, she had known what to expect. Her glowing report of transition shows that, for some pupils, exposure to the secondary environment during lockdown was well-worth the organisational effort.

Harpfield pupils and parents did not miss out on the annual celebrations that mark transition: an end-of-year awards ceremony was streamed live from the Thistley Hough gymnasium so that parents, carers and shielding pupils could watch on Facebook, while Mrs Adlington commended pupils' achievements with certificates and engraved shields. Pupils also created a leavers' goodbye video – a compendium for year 6 pupils to celebrate themselves, their classmates and their friendships in dance routines, home videos, musical performances and individual shout-outs to each other. On the last day of the school year, the year 6 socially distanced picnic on the school field, though a less extravagant party than they would enjoy in normal years, was a warm and festive chance to say goodbye one last time.



Year 6 Harpfield pupils wearing their yellow leavers hoods for a goodbye dance routine in their video for the class of 2020.



Above: Primary schools, like Harpfield, made the most of digital platforms to host transition events and mark the departure of year 6.

Right: Jemma Adlington, Deputy Headteacher, awards engraved shields to outstanding year 6 pupils at the Harpfield Facebook awards ceremony.



"They told me to dream big and shoot for the stars, and if it wasn't for my really helpful teachers, I wouldn't have got as good grades as I did. My biggest piece of advice for GCSEs is to start learning and revising way before the final year, otherwise it's nowhere near enough time to achieve the best grades you can. Mocks, I mostly treated as the actual GCSEs, and pretty much all of them were good."

Fathi Omer, left year 11 at Thistley Hough with 6 grade 9s, (Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Maths, French and Arabic) an 8, and 2 7s in his GCSEs and plans to do a degree in mechatronics.



Alison Mobbs, Principal, Lynn Grove

The Year the Clock Stopped

Over time, schools cultivate traditions and many of these are rites of passage. At Lynn Grove, traditions that support the psychological transition from school pupil to college student start in January of the final year when we have Mock results day – a full-on simulation of the real results day – complete with envelopes and anxious parents. And from then on, hard work is punctuated by events that signal the passing weeks. February brings the year group photograph, then the weekend revision sessions, then the delivery of leavers' hoodies, then the famous Lynn Grove slide show – on the last day of lessons – “yes you did look like that in on the trip to Colchester Zoo in year seven!”, leading to the final post-exam crescendo of the Leavers' Ball.

Below: Molly Cleaver of Milton Keynes achieved grade 9 in both English Literature and English Language GCSEs.



Only this year the clock stopped on the nineteenth of March. We gathered year 11s into the hall where the atmosphere was febrile – everyone knew all was not well. But why assembly on a Thursday afternoon? I am sure it was not my finest assembly – but how do you convey to 200 young people that the next chapter of their lives, an important chapter, had been, well, cancelled. They went home reeling; most came back the next day but a few didn't. The farewells were tearful. We closed the school to the majority of pupils on the twentieth of March. We agreed with our year 11s and their parents that they would take the next couple of weeks off and enjoy the Easter holidays – a kind of decompression period for them. Once Easter was over, we kept in touch with a weekly phone call and our local colleges kicked in with transition courses to smooth the path to their next phase. I am full of admiration for their stoicism over the period of lockdown. We were absolutely determined that they would have a proper results day and they did. The political brouhaha was resolved. The sun shone, the press and radio turned out to capture the moment adding to the excitement and the envelopes (a little creased from the last-minute opening and resealing – thank you BTEC) contained the results we knew the pupils deserved.

“I was somewhat disappointed at not being able to sit the actual exams but I'm glad the effort I put into my preparation allowed me to identify what I'd learnt, and gave me more time to experiment with revision techniques before the final exams; it helps to have a different method of revision for each type of subject.”

Jamie Secker left Lynn Grove with all grade 9s and hopes to study medicine after A-levels.

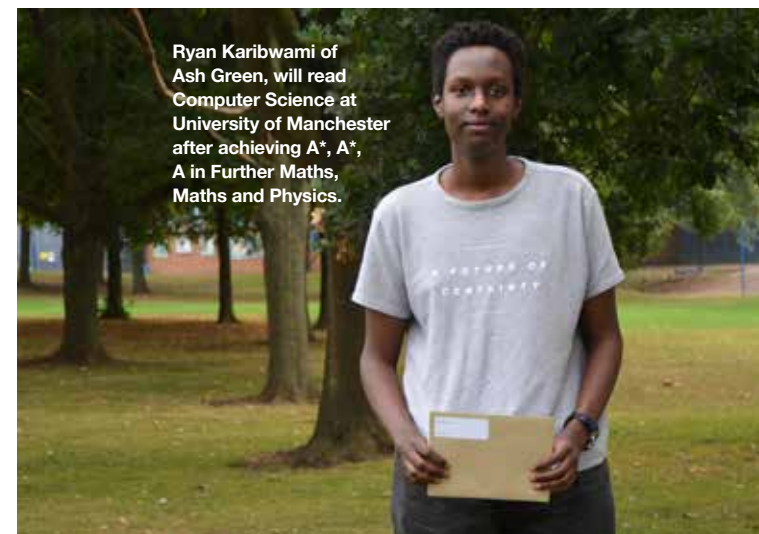
Left: GCSE achievements at the Hart continue included Alicia Astle (pictured) who secured 9 level 9 grades; Archie Duffy who gained 5 level 9 grades and 4 at level 8 and Dylan Wooley who achieved a grade 9 in four of his subjects.

Right: Of the year 13s leaving the Hart, Eddie Jenkins received A*, A, and A in his English Literature, History and Politics A-levels and has gone on to study History at Aberystwyth University.

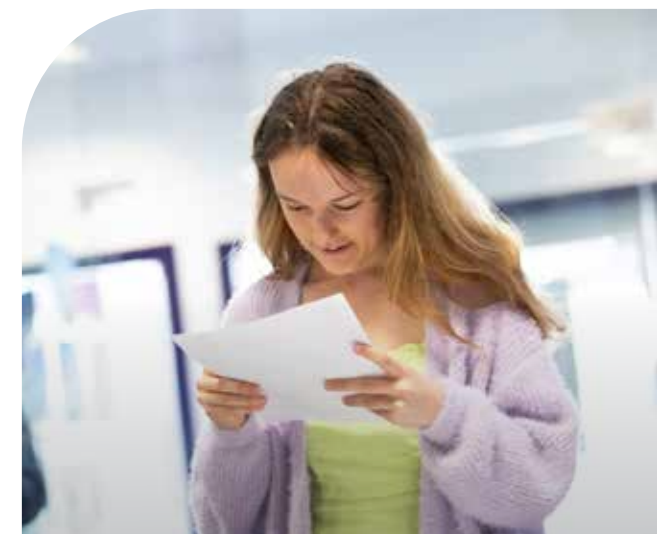


“One of the biggest challenges for me was balancing academics and extra-curricular activities. However, once I'd got into the routine it was a crucial part of preparation for GCSEs: because having music and theatre lessons out of school to focus on helped me to take a break and made me a lot happier.”

Charlotte Gray also achieved all grade 9s at Lynn Grove and is heading to Tring Park School for the Performing Arts to pursue A-levels and a career as a singer-songwriter.



Ryan Karibwami of Ash Green, will read Computer Science at University of Manchester after achieving A*, A*, A in Further Maths, Maths and Physics.



“We all got given knowledge organisers: it was a new thing. We also had two after school revision sessions that were personalised to us every week. I thought those were really helpful. I found out that revising little and often works because you're building up your knowledge throughout the year. It pays off.”

Emma Bowers (pictured above) left Thistley Hough with a string of 8s and 9s and wants to be a forensic scientist or a human biologist.

Breaking the Fourth Wall

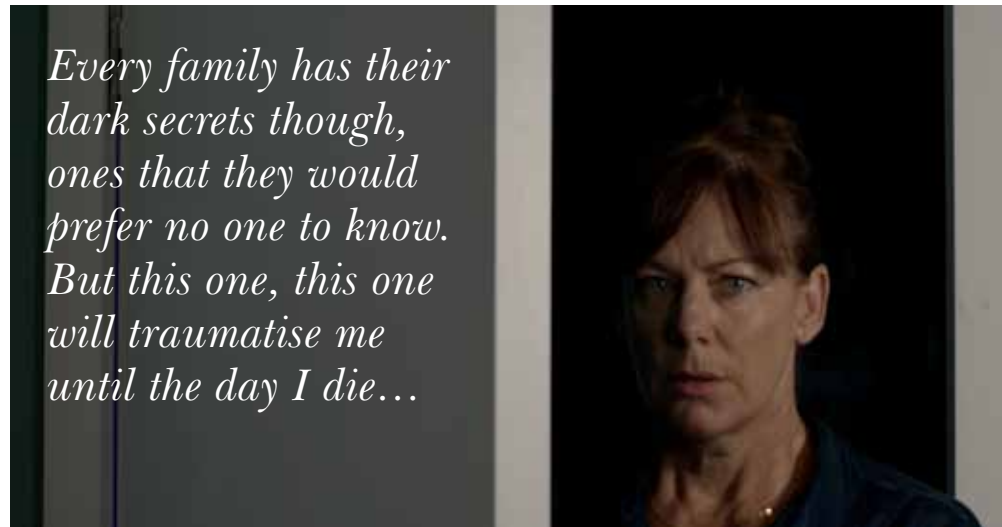
The annual Creative Education Trust Year 8 Creative Writing Competition has become a staple fixture in the English teaching calendar, and has always culminated in an all-day workshop to develop finalists' understanding of film and television writing. This year, in the thick of lockdown, students and teachers enthusiastically took to Microsoft Teams for a condensed version of the workshop led by children's author and television screenwriter Harry Oulton, and to find out about the 2020 brief.

'In response to the the fact that children were being taught off-site, via screens, and away from their friends,' Harry explained, 'we decided to make this year about direct address. That is, the way that plays, films, television and the internet all reflect and involve the audience. We looked at Shakespearean soliloquies, Hollywood voice-overs, talking to the camera, YouTube and TikTok. In all these dramatic forms the audience plays an essential, and uniquely privileged role. We talked (appropriately enough, via Microsoft Teams) about Point of View, how to construct a narrative

*I looked into the tub... a baby.
A very much alive baby gasping
for air. Who would do this? At that
moment I made a transformative
decision. I picked her up.*

when you only have one protagonist, and how to manipulate and use the audience.' In other words, and in conventional theatre and film terminology, students investigated the 'fourth wall' – the imagined separation between audience and actor – and experimented with how it could be broken.

In previous years, finalists competed for the prize by writing a 5-minute screenplay in pairs, to be set and filmed in school. Remote learning in 2020 prompted an adaptation of the challenge: a 5-minute monologue that could be filmed to camera on location in London. 'When the scripts came in,' Harry said, 'we were blown away. Maybe it was the months spent doing remote learning, or perhaps it was the experience of having to react



to the world through the prism of a screen. Whatever it was, these five-minute monologues, written by year 8 students in their bedrooms, were excellent.'

Bulwell's Jessica Shilton took the prize with her captivating and chilling monologue, *Survivor*, written from the perspective of a hospital worker who rescues a baby from a waste container. Harry commented on Jessica's winning entry: "*Survivor* is particularly impressive in the way the emotional shifts constantly surprise the viewer. You never quite know where it's going to go next, or where your sympathy should lie. Although it is performed by a mother in her forties, the heart of the story is with a child who is never on-screen. It's mature, intelligent and very powerful."

Jessica's winning entry was professionally filmed during the summer holidays and stars Susan Vidler, television and film actress known for her appearance in, amongst other things, *Line of Duty*.

Watch [the full film here](#).



Stills from the winning monologue, *Survivor*, by Jessica Shilton (pictured left)



Bareera Faisal of Milton Keynes (pictured left) was highly commended highly commended for her spoken word poem, *All Life Matters*, written from the perspective of a student in the midst of a racist school attack. Harry said of Bareera's submission: "it is a piece of spoken word poetry, which is both mesmeric and devastating. It is more in the style of George the Poet or Benjamin Zephaniah, and, like the best examples of spoken word verse, it is written to be performed. Just one thing: if you're reading it yourself, read it aloud."

All life matters

*1833 was the year when the violation of civil liberties came to an end...
Prejudice and totalitarianism no longer exist?
Coloured people since then have a voice
They now are allowed to have a choice.
Yet I was still looked down upon in my small town that was polished.*

*Alone, scared and worried
In my "sophisticated" school I rushed across the halls, hurry,
The shouting echoed around me... teachers rushed to close the door
They didn't notice the timid student's feet hurriedly sliding across the floor.*

*A bony, pallid hand seized me,
My life flashing before my eyes, the vibrant, sorrowful, hilarious times
A crimson colour didn't make its way down my leg
I was prepared to beg.*

*Whispering, my saviour exclaimed "you better hush, this is not a game"
Her piercing tiffany eyes were glued open,
Sound of boots tapping against the spotless floor the jubilant whistle that was let
out by his filthy mouth
Abruptly, my eyes shut. the darkness was warm and welcoming.
Shrieking in horror a girl's voice engulfed the corridor that slowly came to an end
Her agonizing walls were heard but no one dared to move.*

*My saviour witnessed it all
The lifeless body was bleeding out onto the gleaming floor, which was showered
with an innocent human's blood.
That despicable creature cackled!?!
How I wish he was tied up in shackles*

*Minutes past until...
The spine-chilling police sirens brought a wave of relief over me
Sweating, my hero's palms were still clasping onto my arm
Her reassuring me that it's fine
It was the first act of kindness anyone in this hell hole you would call a school
had done for me.
Realization hit me like a train
Not every white person was to blame.
This feeling of safety didn't last as long as I wished it would
Panting, the immoral man had also been struck with epiphany
Those unsanitary hands were chopping the air as he ran
Armed forces promising to shoot quickly followed behind
Keeping that promise they made sure his blood was shown!*

*I finally cried tears of happiness
My heart beating so fast it felt like it was going to come out of me
This horrific experience gave me a life lesson.*

*All life matters,
Your race, religion and colour do not determine you as a human being
It is your character that truly shows who you are as a person.*



Successes and special commendations

Students

To **Ritaneo Poleon-Henry**, year 13 at **Wrenn**, who qualified for the under-18s Jamaica UK rugby team, and was spotted by the East Midlands Rugby Squad playing for Wellingborough three seasons ago.



To **Dylan Morrison**, a.k.a. 'thinking silly' (**Weavers**, year 11), who devoted much of his lockdown to writing rap-, indie- and electronic-influenced songs and producing an album, *Dilemma*.



To **Olivia Wilson**, **Carmen Lee** and **Alex Turner** who all returned to teach in the design department at **Wrenn**. Olivia (left) teaches food and nutrition; and rediscovered her enthusiasm for the classroom after starting her own business and writing a children's book, Alex (middle) has been appointed to lead of the Technology, Art and Design faculty and started out at Wrenn as an NQT. Carmen (right) returns not only as a teacher, but as a former Wrenn teacher training student after her degrees in product design.

and staff



To **Lauren Taylor**, science teacher and teaching & learning coach at **Bulwell**, for launching the **Be Her Lead** programme and sustaining it throughout lockdown. This not-for-profit social enterprise trains and supports women in teaching to empower their female students, raise aspirations and embed long-term change in schools.

After attending the BHL conference, Lauren was inspired to launch a series of training events for Bulwell students. She galvanized colleagues to commit to raising the profile of gender-related issues in school and improving the confidence of female students.

After three workshops, a positive response from students and a special launch day in London for 38 of them, Covid-19 closed the school just as Lauren's programme was gaining momentum. Online interactions jeopardised newly-built relationships with students, and threatened a loss of engagement. Determined to see it through, Lauren instigated an online version that reached not only her original group but a wider community of girls who faced increased stress during lockdown. In a newsletter published via Bulwell's social media accounts, Lauren set her students weekly challenges to learn a new skill, care for the community and exercise mindfulness. Lauren and colleagues created online content to support each challenge and kept in touch with the students as much as possible.

Despite the disruption to school routines, Lauren was able to structure **Be Her Lead** remotely, with weekly drop-ins on Microsoft Teams, a wellbeing workbook for the summer holidays and regular coffee mornings for school staff. In many ways, the programme and Lauren's initiative came at the perfect moment – as communities grappled with a global crisis, bonds between staff and students were being made stronger. Read Lauren's [blog post here](#).



To all the **Weavers** 2020 Time Capsule competition entrants, who submitted photography, art, drawing and even musical compositions on the theme 'The Art of Being 2 Metres Apart'. Winners included year 7 **Lilac Henry-Wood's** mixed media impression of a masked girl and year 12, **Vonnie Tapster's** futuristic creative writing piece set in the world of 2040.

To Duke of Edinburgh award students at **Weavers** who completed their Bronze under coronavirus distancing rules:

Brandon Thacker, Harry Kelf, Max Starling, Ellis Samson, Anna Abruzzo, Ollie Abruzzo, Emily Holmes, Harriet Thacker, Lana Parris, Ellie Cox, Gracie Burton, Izzy Lloyd, Emma Roberts, Kayla Nutley, Ellie Grimes, and Chiana Sewell. And thanks to **Miss Reading, Mr Grantham** and **Mr Stredwick.**



To **Chloe Harding** and **Harvind Gill, Milton Keynes**, who represented the views of young people on their relations with the police to delegates at the Thames Valley Citizens inaugural assembly. Chloe and Harvind are developing their ideas with the local police, council and with other students at school.



To **Joe Lack**, year 13 at **Wrenn**, who just raised an astonishing £1285 in a sponsored skydive, donated to Great Ormond Street Hospital and the Make a Wish Foundation.

To staff and students at **Thistley Hough**, whose town of Penkhull flag has won the UK Flag Institute's World Series competition on Twitter. The flag was devised in 2018 through a community competition based on designs contributed by Thistley Hough students.



To staff and students at **Hart**, now enjoying their new all-weather leisure dome and colourful, informative wall art in the corridors.



The Apprentices

The government's campaign to propagate apprenticeships in all sectors of the UK economy has created employment and training opportunities across the Creative Education Trust network. A small but growing number of apprentices are standing in the front of classrooms, learning to administrate, welcoming visitors behind the reception desk, trouble-shooting ICT systems and providing valuable support to keep the schools running. Ian Harding, Head of Recruitment, introduces the programme for Connected, and Kate Ward speaks to four of our apprentices about their experience so far.



At Creative Education Trust, we believe that a rewarding educational experience and the highest possible qualifications are the best way to ensure social mobility for young people. This is mirrored by our drive to ensure that all staff, wherever possible, are supported in their development too.

Apprenticeships are an excellent way for us to further the skill set on offer at our schools and improve the level of support that we can provide to our students.

Apprenticeships are not just for school leavers, nor are they solely for 'new' employees. Apprenticeship standards and frameworks range from Level 2 to Master's, so there are a wide range of opportunities for our staff to continue their learning and professional development. We actively encourage staff to seek out these opportunities.

As an organisation we have access to around a quarter of a million pounds of apprenticeship funding each year. This money is available to support new apprentices but can also fund courses which will secure job-specific skills and knowledge for existing school staff.

We have links with colleges, universities and training providers nationwide and are

97%

97% of apprentices said that their ability to do their job had improved and 92% said that their career prospects had improved as a result of their apprenticeship. GOV.UK

keen to hear from anyone that is interested in an apprenticeship. If there is a course or qualification that interests you, or you would just like to start exploring the possibility of an apprenticeship, please approach your Headteacher or Principal to discuss how we can support you.

"We have links with colleges, universities and training providers nationwide. If there is a course or qualification that interests you, or you would just like to start exploring the possibility of an apprenticeship, please approach your Headteacher or Principal."

Shelley Bramley has spent most of her working life in factories or sales but grew to sense that the opportunities for progression were limited. She wanted a career, and administration offered one. She's now completing a Business Administration Level 3 qualification as part of the admin team at Bulwell.

Just a month into her 18-month apprenticeship, Shelley hasn't yet been into college, and is nervous that on the first day in November, she might discover she's the oldest in the room. But she believes her experience of life and the world of work give her a good grounding for the apprenticeship, not only the skills to be an effective administrator, but also the softer aptitudes associated with being part of a team: "I have experience of working alongside people – I know how to get on with the different personalities in a team".

So far Shelley's been sharing the workload of the admin team, lending a hand with HR, and also working on the school reception. She very much hopes to continue working in the schools sector once her apprenticeship is complete.



Tom Kent is an Apprentice IT Technician at Thistley Hough. After finishing college and a two-year Information Technology BTEC, Tom wasn't sure what to do. He wasn't certain that university would offer the sort of practical experience he was after, but neither was he sure he was ready to go straight into work.

Starting his apprenticeship just before lockdown did make some of the practical requirements of the training tricky, but he used the time to get some of the theory components of his course down until he was able to work in school.

Tom has discovered that he loves fixing problems of all sizes: from solving a faulty classroom projector, to setting up laptops and Chromebooks for remote learning, to stripping and rebuilding computers: no day in school is the same as the next. He also feels well supported by the team around him. "If I can't solve an issue, I know someone who can. And they'll teach me how to, so that I can do it myself next time".

Tom is getting experience in areas he did not anticipate. He's particularly keen to learn more about servers (which manage access the centralised computer network), which were new to him at Thistley Hough, and looks forward to getting his teeth stuck into more highly technical challenges as the apprenticeship progresses.



Laura Holland is an apprentice to the nursery class at Harpfield. She is also working as a lunch supervisor in school, the position she originally interviewed for. However, seeing that she already had a TA Level 3 qualification, the school urged her to go for the apprenticeship. Laura returned to the workplace as an apprentice after a ten-year career break to raise her family; but she has also been studying from home and volunteering with local organisations to support families who need it.

A single parent with three children and a new puppy at home, Laura found the first couple of weeks physically draining, but it's become much easier and more rewarding. She's grateful to Harpfield for the opportunity, and her children are proud. "Lots of people went up for this role, but all my studying and volunteering have paid off. I'm showing my children that you should take every good opportunity and experience that is open to you."

Laura hopes to continue learning the specialist skills for working in primary education, and sees a future in which she can turn her hand to supporting whichever age group she is presented with.

Caroline O'Neill has been working as a Teaching Assistant at Harpfield since 2004, but for the last four years has been studying at university to get the qualifications she needs to become a teacher. She achieved it with style: a first-class BA (hons) in Early Childhood Studies, and Richard Woollacott, Headteacher of Harpfield, helped her to find her apprenticeship. The support of the school, Mr Woollacott, and her mentor Jemma Adlington prompt her to declare "I couldn't wish for a better place to be developing my career."

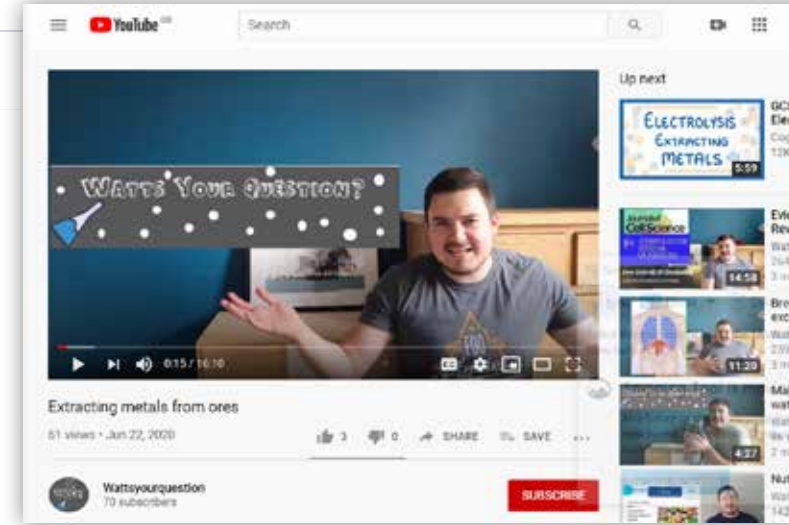
Caroline spends one day a week at university and the other four days with Year 2. The pandemic meant that Caroline had to hit the ground running on the daunting prospect of creating lessons and learning opportunities for pupils that are also safe and protective.

Teaching apprenticeships fully equip teachers for their NQT year, and many of those who go into teaching straight from university will only have had a four-week placement in the school environment. As an apprentice, Caroline will have a wealth of practical experience on which to draw: "I'd urge anyone to do it this way".

Caroline O'Neill (left) and Laura Holland, Harpfield



Blended & Remote



The last six months have presented unprecedented challenges in remote learning and, as some students have headed back into school and others have continued learning from home, the 'blended' learning model has forced teachers to adapt further. We asked Joanna Grant, Assistant Principal for Teaching and Learning at Abbeyfield and a member of the EduTech Group (See Still Connected No. 3) to tell Connected some of the ways students get the most from online lessons and resources.

Joanna Grant, Abbeyfield

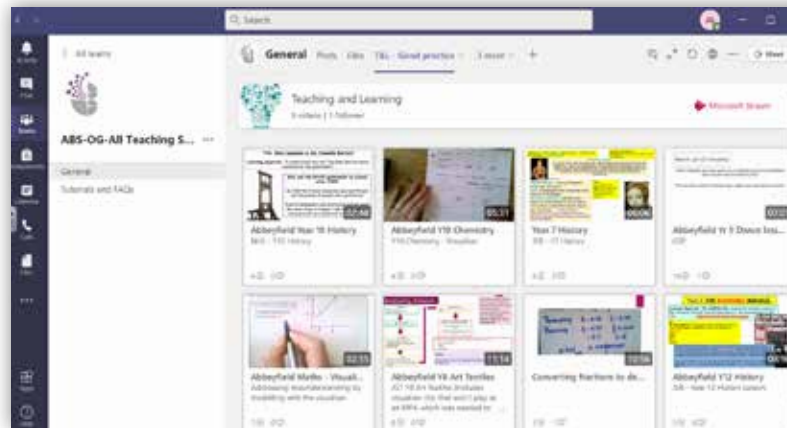
Before lockdown, we had been working continuously to improve the pace and challenge of lessons – pedagogical support in '15-minute forums', planning sessions in subject faculties, and individual coaching – and we were starting to see the fruits of our labour. Then, in March 2020, we were thrown into lockdown and our teaching and learning priorities changed overnight. How would we ensure high quality teachers and students nowhere near the school?

It became clear that our immediate priority was training rather than development. We all, leaders included, had to learn how to use the technology that would get us through the next few months, and fast! It became hugely apparent, that two (or ten) heads were better than one and we needed to share good practice. We relaunched the 15-minute forums as remote events, and staff from across the school offered sessions on pre-recording lessons, MS Forms, recording verbal feedback, using Immersive Reader and One Note – things that most of us hadn't heard of a few weeks earlier. The willingness of colleagues to share undoubtedly pushed remote teaching and

learning on. With the help of Microsoft Stream, we were able to share pre-recorded and asynchronous lessons.

As staff became more confident with the technology, we were able to start considering how pedagogy fits into remote learning. As the weeks went on, we were able to gather feedback via a questionnaire on which aspects of remote learning were working for students, and which weren't. Heads of faculties continually reviewed any online tools they were using to ensure we used only the diagnostic tools that worked. We set some initial clear parameters to ensure pedagogy was still a driving force behind our lessons:

- **Share the learning objectives so the students are clear about what they should have achieved by the end of the activity**
- **Deliver theory in an accessible way – e.g. GCSE POD, YouTube clips, modelling using videos made via your visualiser**
- **Have short AFL activities to ensure that students have engaged with any resource you have given them**
- **Use consolidation activities to embed the learning they have just undertaken**
- **Review their understanding in a way that will make it stick, e.g. quizzes through Teams or Kahoot; exam questions for GCSE / A-Level groups; exit ticket activities**



Sharing best practice in teaching and learning through MS Teams

'Watts you question', a Youtube channel created by Mr Watts, science teacher at Abbeyfield

Get the most out of technology

Top tips for remote learning by the staff of Abbeyfield

Give clear accessible guidance on what is expected of the students during self-isolation – including instructions on how to access and use the technology required.

Support low ability students remotely by offering step by step task plans/tick sheets – breaking the learning down into small, manageable chunks.

Build independence by setting short term goals.

Teach students to manage their time efficiently – give students some guidance on how long they should spend on different sections of the lesson.

Be as explicit as possible in your instructions.

Front load (and dual code) vocabulary required for the lesson.

Drip feed your content – if you give students too much content at once they may get confused, which can lead them to become unmotivated.

Enhance your presentations with visual tools – most online students will learn best from strong visual content. Avoid black text on a white screen without imagery.

Back in school we are facing new challenges: classes made up of some students online remotely and some in the room in front of us, or teachers at home remotely teaching a class which could itself be made up of some students in school and some at home. Teachers are working hard to deliver 'blended' learning, planning their in-school lessons in ways that could be accessed by students without the teacher in front of them if necessary. We are asking staff to 'plan well; plan once', to ensure the same quality we offer in school is provided at home, and to minimise the workload implications of blended learning. Some are making the most out of 'low-stakes' assessment such as MS Forms to monitor progress.

"Thank you for today's live lessons, I find them super helpful and it feels like we're all still part of the class!"

An email from a year 11 student, currently self-isolating, to her English teacher

We've used MS Teams to streamline how teachers receive work and give feedback, with the intention that eventually all homework will be done in this way. We've created video tutorials for students and parents and are training them in the remote learning systems in preparation for their child possibly having to self-isolate. We've deployed 'learning mentors' to do welfare checks and to provide targeted support for students identified from gap analysis and engagement data collected over lockdown.

Over the last six months it's become clear that we don't know what's around the corner. Our goal is to normalise blended learning so that if we face again what we faced in March, the transition is seamless and progress is uninterrupted. This is the reason we're seeing blended learning in action every day!

Abbeyfield students have quickly adapted to using technology in their classroom and at home.

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Cover image

Milton Keynes Academy adapted to comply with social distancing guidance, photographed by Craig Lyman, Site Supervisor.