

The magazine of Creative Education Trust schools

Issue no.17 March 2020

Connected

People, Get Ready

Prizewinning speeches
and essays

Knowledge Connected

An update from The Hart School
Our Town

Cultural capital in the neighbourhood

Shakespeare 11x11

Bigger and better



Contributors to this issue



Connected no.17 is pleased to introduce three new authors: Simon Harrison, Thistley Hough's teacher of history, on cultural capital in the post-industrial northwest; Charlotte Cowley, The Hart's lead teacher for Knowledge Connected; and

Rebecca James, Ash Green's champion for diversity. Alongside contributions from primary headteachers Richard Woollacott and Daniel Smith, Jessica Douthwaite interviews our two eloquent sixth-form prizewinners and Kate Ward put together the central pull-out section on the biggest-ever Shakespeare Days of Performance. Welcome to another big issue with plenty of voices.

Emily Campbell

Director of Programmes

NOT-A-TWEET

280 characters from the Chief Executive

I was a fortunate witness to the inaugural Day of Play for 77 instrumentalists from eleven schools who formed an orchestra under the baton of the indomitable Rachel Salton. Bravi tutti!



Cross-Trust events

- 3 March** Abbeyfield
Chorus CPD day 2
- 5 March** Ash Green
Heads of post-16 meeting
- 18 March** Milton Keynes
Day of Change (primaries)
- 20 March** Milton Keynes
Principals' and Headteachers' meeting
- 25 March** Abbeyfield
Instrumental Day of Play
- 31 March** BuroHappold, London
Michael Dickson Photography Prize
- 27 April – 1 May** All secondary schools
Knowledge Connected Year 7 Day (Meaning)
- 30 April** All secondary schools
Knowledge Connected Year 8 Day (Human Interaction)
- 7 May** London
Year 8 Screenwriting workshop
- 5 May** Clare College, Cambridge
Joint sixth-forms visit
- 15 May** Milton Keynes
Secondary Principals' meeting
- 20 May** Queen Eleanor
Primary Headteachers' meeting
- 4 June** Venue TBC
Singing Ambassadors workshop 3
- 26 June** Venue TBC
Knowledge Connected showcase
- 26 June** Foundling Museum, London
Day of Poetry (primaries)
- 29 June – 3 July** All secondary schools
Knowledge Connected Year 7 Day (Performance)
- 30 June** Woodlands
Primary Day of Sports East
- 30 June** Three Peaks
Primary Day of Sports West
- 2 July** Wroughton
Primary Headteachers' meeting
- 8 July** Wrenn
Secondary Day of Sports
- 9 July** Swedenborg House
Secondary Principals' meeting
- 9 July** London venue TBC
Songfest (choral performance by all secondary schools)

Ask the Users

Congratulations to Daniel Smith, Headteacher of Queen Eleanor, who completed his master's degree in School Improvement and Educational Leadership at the University of Birmingham in December. Here, Daniel writes about his research on pupils' own perceptions of progress.

"No one has a bigger stake in teaching effectiveness than pupils. Nor are there any better experts on how teaching is experienced by its intended beneficiaries."

With this theory from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in mind, I set out to explore what Creative Education Trust's key stage 2 pupils think about their learning – specifically the conditions and factors that they believe facilitate the greatest progress. Embarking on a highly compelling tour from Great Yarmouth to Stoke-on-Trent via Tamworth and Northampton, I obtained the views of over 500 pupils – almost half of the Trust's key stage 2 population. Pupils rated 40 statements on a four-point scale, with a score of four representing an element that the pupils believed had a substantial impact on their progress. As is so often the case, the pupils' views were both insightful and thought-provoking.

"No one has a bigger stake in the effectiveness of teaching than pupils."

There were no significant differences between the views of boys and girls, though there were differences between the views of pupils across year groups. For example, year 6 pupils expressed the view, not shared by their year 3 counterparts, that easy work does not help them to make progress. Comfortably the highest-scoring factor, rated over 3.3 by all groups, was – unsurprisingly – enjoyment (3.48), while a quiet classroom and fun learning also made

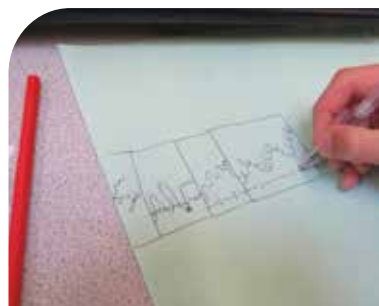
the top five. The crucial role of the teacher was acknowledged. "When the teacher helps me with the parts that I find difficult", was the second highest-scoring statement (3.39), while clear teacher explanations came close behind (3.38).

One particularly interesting finding was that pupils did not rate collaborative work. "When I work with others", was rated as only 2.73, with other statements about collaborative learning scoring similarly low. Perhaps one takeaway from this study is how we as a group of schools can help our pupils to understand the benefits of learning with peers and the impact that this can have on their progress.

Mr Smith has been appointed as Headteacher of Tickford Park Primary School in Newport Pagnell. We shall miss him.



Knowledge Connected is Creative Education Trust's integrated programme of creative education in primary and secondary schools, founded on six key concepts: structure, pattern, meaning, human interaction, performance and practice. **Charlotte Cowley**, appointed last year to lead Knowledge Connected at The Hart School, reflects on what has been achieved.



Commonwe of Knowledge

Our ability to make connections is essential to our capacity to be creative, so to develop and nurture the creative mind schools need to foster that ability. The six concepts of Knowledge Connected help students to understand the common features present in all the subjects they are taught. New knowledge alone is more impactful when we can make connections with what we already know, or perhaps know from another source. It is these links that help us to cross reference ideas from a wealth of disciplines, merging and recombining ideas to create new, innovative ones.

The six key concepts underpin the practical, personal and intellectual skills that adult and employed life require. As metacognitive skills, ideas such as structure, pattern and meaning predominate in every subject. The more our students can use these ideas to make connections across subject borders, the more they will be able to develop intellectual resourcefulness and creative innovation by spotting original connections that others have not made.

In nurturing our students to see the importance of connecting the dots, Knowledge Connected encompasses the key ingredients for long-term life skills as our young students approach the world of work. We hope that 'knowledge connected', as an attribute, will enable our young people to stand out and excel as creative thinkers who can not only see relationships between elements in the broader picture, but can create new combinations of knowledge.

As a Creative Education Trust Knowledge Connected Curriculum Lead for Performing Arts, it was my role to explore how the six concepts present themselves in two subjects – Drama and Dance. As the author of Knowledge Connected lessons for year 8, I was tasked to design one-off 'golden lessons' for each that would achieve learning outcomes in relation to structure, pattern and human interaction; and my lessons would be used across the Trust network. For example, in investigating how Pattern is relevant to Performing Arts, I had to help students not only spot patterns but understand how they are generated – and how to use repetition creatively and productively. I looked into methods for developing dance motifs, and how certain techniques come together to create a sequence. My lesson also explored how to break or disrupt patterns – almost as important in dance as creating patterns in the first place. From this starting point, I had to ensure that my lessons engaged and encouraged all kinds of learners to explore the concepts practically, creatively and ardently.

The first meeting of Curriculum Leads for the year 8 project allowed me to meet my counterparts from the other schools and discuss the concepts rigorously. It was an extremely thought-provoking experience to realise just how the six concepts really do embed themselves within our curriculum, not to mention our day-to-day lives. It really broadened my way of thinking to reconsider my own subject through the concepts, and to see how each concept naturally threaded through a wide range of other subject disciplines. It was fascinating to hear others talk so passionately about their teaching. Sharing that journey of development together was inspirational.

As Knowledge Connected Lead at The Hart School, it is my job to take that passion and inspiration and share and promote it with my colleagues. Success can only be ensured if all staff are fully briefed and prepared with the overall vision and energy of Knowledge Connected. It's been an exciting venture for us as an institution to embed the culture into school life. Students have bought into the importance of a curriculum in which subjects are connected, and it's always encouraging to see our staff share and spread the concepts, even embedding them within their own lesson plans moving forward.

With Knowledge Connected being implanted throughout subjects in years 7 and 8, and new projects starting up for year 9 in 2020, the potential of this project has real gravitas to give our students a stronger sense of how to think critically and creatively about the world. The impact is being measured in terms of teachers' buy-in to the proposition and delivery methods of Knowledge Connected, and students' retention of the scope of the concepts. For me, success would be measured in the students' creative output. Can they think outside the trammels of the syllabus? Can they explore possibilities by following links and finding new ones? Can they identify how a concept operates beyond single subjects and beyond school?

I look forward to seeing the project thrive as staff become protagonists in a more creative learning environment. It's been an excellent opportunity for me as a teacher to act upon Ofsted's prompts with respect to the curriculum. I've been able to explore multiple subjects and topics through the concepts, which furthers my own development by stretching my knowledge and creativity. If Knowledge Connected is a central pedagogical proposition, the success criterion by which I would measure myself is the ability to enlighten and ignite passion for knowledge in other people.

Health ge

Activities in music, drama, design and technology, and languages from Hart School's year 8 Structure day in October 2019.



Inspired by the Traveller artist Gabi Jiminez, year 5 children at Woodlands practised some of his graphic techniques and made guitars like those that feature in his artwork. They attempted to recreate traditional Roma music on instruments including their own guitars.

Our

“The children were so positive about the diversity we have in school. Our special focus on the Traveller community gave our Traveller children a real sense of belonging.”

Vicky Simmons, Acting Head, Woodlands





Richard Woollacott, Headteacher of Harpfield, introduces the second year of a Creative Education Trust project to garner and express cultural capital in the primary schools, under the Ofsted framework of curriculum intent, implementation and impact.

Intent

Half of the primaries' training day in September was devoted to the *Our Town* project week, steered by a clear focus on culture and diversity within the schools and the surrounding communities and towns. Each school brainstormed ideas and started to plan their week based on the different cultures within individual classes and the school as a whole. The overall intent was to reinforce children's feeling of belonging to their own town, including and particularly those children from non-British cultures or countries of birth.

Implementation

At Harpfield, each year group had a clear geographical focus for comparison with the culture of Hartshill and wider Stoke-on-Trent; either a culture represented within their own classroom or a non-British culture from elsewhere in the world. Early Years examined British culture; year 1 looked at Western Europe; year 2, Eastern Europe; year 3 learned about Asian culture; year 4 Africa; and children in years 5 and 6 made Middle Eastern Europe their focus. All these cultures were explored through art, design and technology, and music.

Teachers planned their weekly overview and their lessons on PowerPoint presentations or flipcharts. We started the week with a Brazilian dance company and ended with a showcase called *Eat to the Beat*. Children came dressed to represent their culture, and parents and carers were invited to the celebration of all we had learned: languages, dances and music, food, knowledge and the ways and practices of different countries.

Impact

The children's appreciation of the different cultures has grown and sparked an interest in some to continue to learn more about their peers. The opportunity to share their own personal culture with others has allowed many children to express pride and passion with new confidence and willingness to speak out. A pupil voice gave a real sense of enthusiasm from all year groups about cultural difference within our town.



Town

Where

You

From?



The term ‘cultural capital’, coined by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in the 1970s, has come back into circulation today, betraying widespread anxiety that the unequal distribution of essential knowledge among young people of school age places limits on their success in adult life.

Simon Harrison, teacher of history at Thistley Hough and native of Stoke-on-Trent, introduces a pilot, secondary version of *Our Town*, through the lens of ‘cultural capital’.

Cultural capital has again come to the forefront of educational thought, not least because it’s been identified by the new Ofsted framework as a focal point for inspection. This has led to a fierce debate as to what the measure actually means for schools. Will it be “a crude, reductionist model of learning, both authoritarian and elitist”, as one Cambridge education professor put it, or simply just a remodified SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural development) curriculum with a renewed focus on society and students’ roles in it? At Thistley Hough we are embarking on a project which hopes to address some of the issues under scrutiny and be a platform for students to make major gains in developing elements of their cultural capital.

Bourdieu argued that – like economic capital – combined social skills, mannerisms, habits and credentials are a form of capital too: the more one has, the more powerful a position one occupies in social life. Bourdieu further argued that whatever particular set of cultural tastes and expectations people are exposed to comes to feel natural rather than artificial to them. Conversely, people who have not been exposed to the same particular opportunities would inevitably feel as though such tastes are not for them. Each group’s disaffection from the others’ tastes would, in turn, foster the ideas and habits that entrench our perceptions of social class. In short, this is why football is traditionally seen as a working-class sport while fencing is perceived as only practised by the elite.

What does this mean for schools? Should we ensure that music lessons cover Mozart not Madonna? Should we abandon basketball and teach ballet? Indeed, some schools have already pursued a policy of removing contemporary cultural markers in favour of stereotypical highbrow examples. For me, there is a real danger of missing the point: the true meaning of cultural capital is to be empowered with the confidence and knowledge to access these canonical markers. In layman’s terms, it is less important to teach students to recognise Monet’s *Water Lilies* than to equip students from underprivileged backgrounds with the self-belief and curiosity to walk into the Louvre.

I’m sure you’ll agree that this is a much more difficult challenge for schools, but it truly resonates with me because I’m a product of such a philosophy. I come from a very traditional family



Continued on page 13 ►

SHAKESPEARE 11x11

For the sixth year of our festival 340 students brought Shakespeare to life with ingenious design and spellbinding dramatic command.

Background:

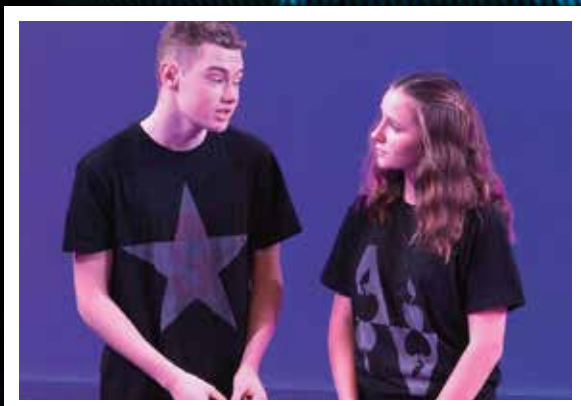
Lily Leatherland and **Kayla Leonardi** as *Romeo and Juliet*, **Bulwell**

Inset below left:

Ben Bayes and **Amelia Lavin** as *Romeo* and the Nurse. *Romeo and Juliet*, **Wrenn**

Inset below right:

Lena Mansouri, **Katelyn Lewis** and **Abi Hunter** in *King Lear*, **Abbeyfield**



In a bumper edition of the Days of Performance, eleven schools performed eleven Shakespeare plays in a tight schedule of back-to-back performances and rehearsals over two days. Hosted by Abbeyfield with impeccable technical support from Richard Walker-Glen and operational direction from Rachael Dedman, the event was an exciting opportunity for students to witness and discuss the creative work of the other schools.

Milton Keynes opened day one with an austere *Julius Caesar* enriched with movement and gesture. Thistley Hough's version of the political drama the following day was a showcase of outstanding acting talent and exemplary diction. In Bulwell's *Romeo and Juliet*, comedy set the star-crossed lovers' fateful end in stark relief; while Wrenn, appearing for the first time, performed the same play with elegance and clarity in graphic monochrome. Ellis Guilford, also on stage for the first time alongside other Creative Education Trust schools, treated us to a horrifying *Macbeth* with memorable scenes of marital strife as Lady Macbeth lost patience with her husband. Lynn Grove's Scottish play was fast-paced, tense storytelling in the classic mode, with very good vocal projection and resourceful use of a small number of original props. Abbeyfield, the home company, took on the grandest tragedy of all, in a heart-rending *King Lear*, uncovering the extraordinary talent of Brodie Evans, who played Edgar/Poor Tom. Hart School's *Hamlet* brought day one to a close with a grey, dystopian world laid waste; while in total contrast, Weavers' treatment of *Hamlet* teased the audience with cleverly interwoven classic drama and school rehearsal room commentary – in effect, a play within a play within another play. In Ash Green's *Taming of the Shrew*, we watched the rebel Kate laying down her spray can weaponry in apparent submission, but actually claiming the moral high ground over the abusive Petruchio. Caister's *Tempest* closed the festival in a warm atmosphere of comedy, philosophy and enchantment.

Background:

Renee Armstrong, Morgan Tinley and Raj Jhaar in *Macbeth*, **Ellis Guilford**

Inset below left:

Caitlyn Crossley and Michael Parker as Laertes and Hamlet, **Hart**

Inset below right:

Holly Milne as Brutus in *Julius Caesar*, **Thistley Hough**



Inset below top:
Ryan Wilson and
Ruby Walton, *Macbeth*
Lynn Grove

Inset below middle:
Khushi and **Ruth Ajibola**,
Julius Caesar, **Milton**
Keynes

Inset below bottom:
Emma Fairbrass and
Charlotte Walker in
Hamlet, **Weavers**

Inset below right top:
Malakai Higginson and
Sophie Dykes as Petruchio
and Katherina, *The Taming*
of the Shrew, **Ash Green**

Inset below right bottom:
The company of
The Tempest, **Caister**



Background:

Erin Palmer as *King Lear*,
Abbeyfield

Inset below top:

Esmee Khadim as *Macbeth*,
Ellis Guilford

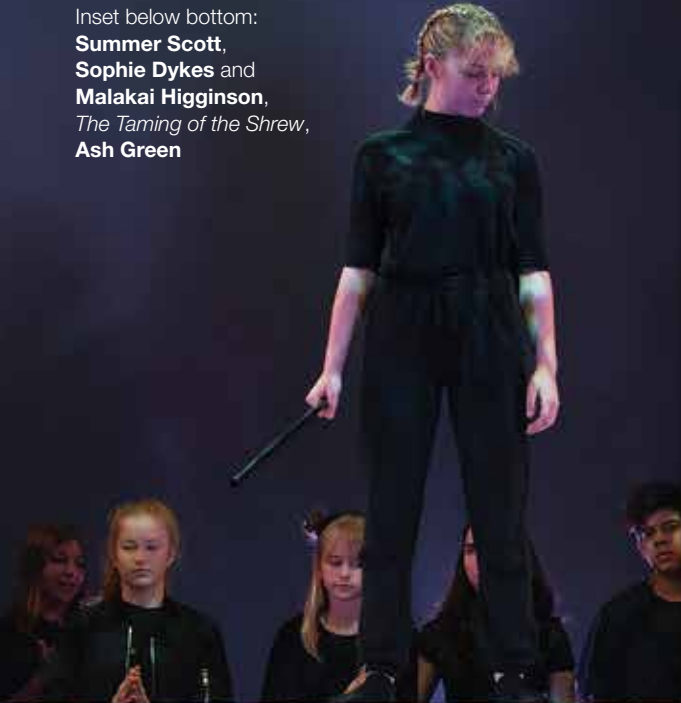
Inset below middle:

Michael Parker as *Hamlet*,
Hart

Inset below bottom:

Summer Scott,
Sophie Dykes and
Malakai Higginson,
The Taming of the Shrew,
Ash Green

First conceived for Creative Education Trust by HMDT Music in 2014, the annual Shakespeare festival has become a treasured feature of the calendar. Visiting artists recruited by HMDT Music work with each school's company on voice and text, and on production design. When asked to sum up the experience in a single word, four students offered "unique", "dramatic", "collaborative" and "stressful in a good way"! The growing number of member schools have nudged each other's productions ever upward: the 2019 festival has set expectations higher than ever before. Thank you to all our directors, performers, designers and production teams for a wonderful couple of days.



*“What does this mean for schools?
Should we ensure that music lessons
cover Mozart, not Madonna? Should we
abandon basketball and teach ballet?”*



background in Stoke – for generations they worked in the once-booming pottery industry. As a result my parents were both shocked and angry when they discovered that my inspirational geography teacher at sixth form had dared to suggest I go to university. “That’s my job, Mrs Harrison” was his retort when my mother quipped that he’d been putting ideas into her son’s head. This low-aspirational attitude still pervades the city and is a major negative factor in determining students’ thought processes when it comes to career choices and the roles they anticipate having in society.

I was fortunate enough to escape this mindset by going to university, and then further still by living and working closely with networks of people who Bourdieu would argue have cultural capital in great abundance. It is this later exposure that has been the biggest turning point in my outlook on life. To be immersed in an environment where experience and expertise generate a truly indefatigable ‘can-do’ spirit is inspiring. I believe it is these tangible experiences which need to be developed and promoted in schools if we are to genuinely raise our students’ stock of cultural capital.



One route into reinforcing students’ cultural capital is being piloted by the History Department this Spring. Working closely with Emily Campbell and her Programmes team, the aim of *Our Town* is not only to raise students’ awareness of their local cultural heritage and to help them articulate their place in it, but to foster the belief that culture and heritage belongs to all. We will launch it with our whole year 9 cohort as part of Thistley Hough’s *Widening Horizons* programme, and continue it in a weekly after-school club of volunteers, known as the Research Group. Students will discover significant elements of Stoke-on-Trent’s rich heritage, and identify their personal connections to it. The Research Group will participate in a series of workshops hosted by nationally recognised creative professionals (designers, historians, museum curators, anthropologists, writers, artists and more) in order to transform their findings into a creative display or exhibition that retells the story of *Our Town* and which, it is hoped, will be displayed at prominent locations locally. A successful pilot will yield potential for a national, cross-Trust showcase of the variegated cultural capital in Creative Education Trust schools.



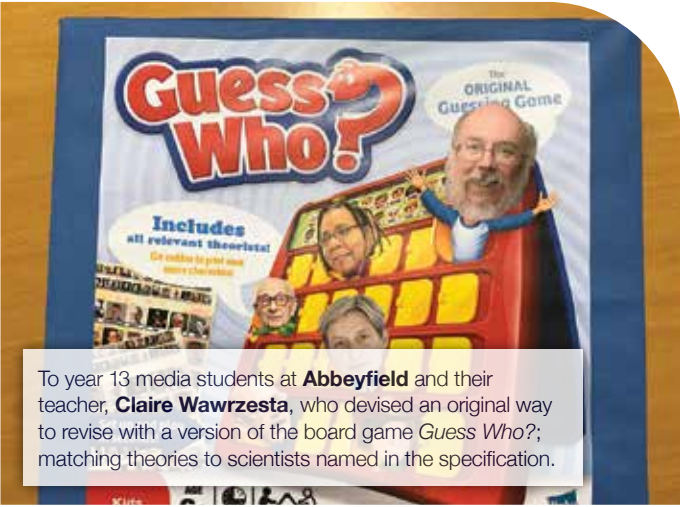
This pilot is not going to ensure that every Thistley Hough student is enraptured by ‘high’ culture and the industrial history of Stoke, nor will it create an entire generation of resilient go-getters. But it will begin to push against the obstacles they inherit. Local knowledge, personal insight and shoulder-to-shoulder exposure to real experts in their field will begin to ferment our students’ sense of the confidence, optimism and ambition so needed by many in our city.

Successes and special commendations

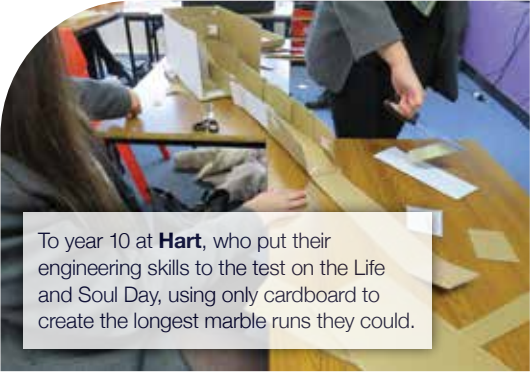
Students,



To **Wrenn** sixth form and year 10 students, who achieved powerful performances in their creative drama techniques workshop with Paper Birds.



To year 13 media students at **Abbeyfield** and their teacher, **Claire Wawrzesta**, who devised an original way to revise with a version of the board game *Guess Who?*; matching theories to scientists named in the specification.



To year 10 at **Hart**, who put their engineering skills to the test on the Life and Soul Day, using only cardboard to create the longest marble runs they could.

To **Jay Birmingham**, year 5 teacher at **Three Peaks**, shortlisted once again for the British Photography Awards under two categories, 'Birdlife' and 'Macro', for his photographs of a damselfly and of cormorants fishing at the base of Niagara Falls.



To **Lucy Mason**, **Pete Hoare** and **Ange Pickering** at **Three Peaks** for completing their Ambition School Leaders Programme.

To **Dawid Koscielniak**, **Wrenn**, offered one of a very limited number of places to study Geography at St Johns College, Oxford.



To **Hart's** performing arts students from years 7 to 13, who travelled to Luxembourg to showcase their dance and drama talent on a series of public open-air stages in three towns.





To **Rudey Ratcliffe, Caister** year 10, who won 'E-Life' gold and bronze awards representing Great Britain in South Korea at the Global IT Challenge for young people to create a better future.



To **Harry Smith**, year 8 artist at **Lynn Grove**, who built an impressive sculpture, *Through the Portal*, supported by a wooden frame, painted with a palette knife, filled with packaging and modelled in layers of Sellotape.

To **Hannah Jones** and her pupils at **Wrenn**, who will pitch their shortlisted entry (a school shoe that grows with its wearer to save money and resources) to judges of the V&A Innovate Competition.



To the sixth-form students at **Bulwell** who raised £1,200 in a fundraising day for Children in Need, and amassed a significant stock of donations for the local Bestwood & Bulwell Foodbank: demonstrations of how important community issues are for the school.



To year 9 students at **Bulwell**, who spent a day with senior commanders from the 'Desert Rats' (7th Infantry Brigade) using geography skills to solve hypothetical military aid problems in Africa.



To **Lynn Grove** students who participated in a workshop at the James Paget University Hospital Health Academy, set up to introduce the range of careers in the NHS.

and staff

To **Fraser Tubby, Lynn Grove** year 10, who started training for the silver Duke of Edinburgh Award immediately after gaining bronze and has been nominated to be a DoE Award Ambassador in recognition of his outstanding dedication.



To all the students at **Bulwell** and **Lynn Grove** who have completed their Duke of Edinburgh Awards at bronze level.



To **Rhys Timmis**, year 8, who maintained the **Hart's** sporting achievements in karate by winning silver in a national GKR Karate competition.



To **Cassie Firth, Lynn Grove** year 7, who joined the Lowestoft and Oulton Broad Swim Squad in March 2019 and has shown incredible perseverance, training in the pool six times a week, on land in her spare time and competing in swim galas. All the best for the Regional Squad trials!



To **Lynn Grove's** year 9 students who took a trip to the University of East Anglia under the Brilliant Club Scholars Programme. They toured the campus, met the Professor of Literature, visited the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts and examined world-class document collections in the archives.



To young musicians at **Lynn Grove** who successfully auditioned before the Gorleston Rotary Club for bursaries to further their musical education.



To the Great Yarmouth schools for another carol service, reviewed for *Connected* by Emma Ingham, Assistant Principal at Caister.

The Norfolk academies of Creative Education Trust joined together for a glorious Carol Concert at Great Yarmouth Minster. The ancient church is a focal point of the town and provides an elegant and traditional setting for the Christmas celebration, now in its third consecutive year and eagerly anticipated by staff, pupils, parents and the broader community alike. What makes the event so special is that it brings together all stakeholders within the family of the Trust, at a time when togetherness is more important than ever.

The evening was a great success for all of those involved and demonstrated a range of talents. Adults and pupils passionately conveyed the significance of the first Christmas from the pulpit, through the biblical passages in the grand and stirring 1611 'King James' version. The message was supported and enriched by the broad array of musical performances from very accomplished individuals.

By candlelight, after the procession of Principals, Headteachers and Directors in academic robes, the service opened with Faith Dyball – from **Caister** – beautifully singing *Once in Royal David's City*. She really set the bar for the exceptional standard of the evening. Jamie Harrison from **Lynn Grove** skilfully played the Minster organ as the entire congregation sang *O Come, All Ye Faithful*. The youngest members of our community – from **Wroughton** and **Woodlands** – warmed all listeners with their fantastic singing. Reverend Simon Ward ended the service with a message that resonated with us all about community and everyone's worth in society.

We look forward to extending this tradition far, far into the future.



To staff at **Harpfield** for their commitment to professional development, garnering multiple new certificates in Paediatric First Aid, Mental Health and Food Safety.

To the **Lynn Grove** students privileged to visit the Institute of Astronomy at the University of Cambridge for a stargazing session in the observatory.



To **Alex Barton**, year 3 teacher at **Three Peaks**, who in his second year of teaching has set up a Twitter feed to support practitioners with Guided Reading. He reaches over 14,000 followers, posting book reviews, posing questions, sharing ideas and resources and issuing book-related quizzes and competitions. Follow @MrB_Y3.



People, get ready: The Power of Lan

Seven sixth-form students competed for the annual Creative Education Trust Public-Speaking Prize in the auspicious surroundings of the Northampton Guildhall, while in the audience, 10 further sixth-formers awaited the results of the counterpart Essay Prize.

The sixth forms launch both three-month competitions in September with professional interventions and practical resources to build oration and literacy skills. In non-fiction writing workshops students developed essay themes and questions based on their own interests. Simultaneously, others began drafting responses to the 2019 Public-Speaking Prize prompt, "People, get ready."

At the final in November, a panel of three experts interrogated and encouraged each speaker after their 10-minute oration. Kirsty Dias, Managing Director of the industrial design company PriestmanGoode (and a member of Creative Education Trust's Education Advisory Group) and Nicole McCartney, Director of School Improvement and Secondary Education, were joined by our guest panellist Jim Carroll. With years of senior experience in one of Britain's world-leading advertising agencies, BBH, Jim delivered his own thoughts on public speaking in four carefully chosen examples from his personal life and professional experience. He spoke of distilling strong feelings into words and phrases as a curative process in his teenage years; of a young colleague who needed to learn that persuading others was as important as being right; of making yourself the centre of attention by understanding your audience; and of his advice on leadership: "Establish what you're good at, and do it in a bigger, bolder way."

The essay competition, likewise, is a rare chance for writers to collect individualised attention and detailed feedback from a writing tutor and a panel of expert judges in a highly structured process: lecturer in classics Dr Jonathan Katz, science writer and curator Hugh Aldersey-Williams, and Kate Bassett, literary adviser to the Chichester Festival Theatre. Paige Atherton's essay on storytelling in Celtic culture was praised for the range and depth of knowledge it displayed, and her firm grasp of the conventions of academic writing. Alfie Mulligan's essay about anticipating the near death of a loved one stood out as an engaging and self-reflective piece of creative writing. The 2019 prize was awarded to Matt Tobutt for his alluringly titled piece *The Journey of a Broken Brain*, an eloquent and affecting investigation of clinical depression.



As the judges deliberated the strengths of each speaker. Zane Foloronso (Bulwell) drew praise for his charisma, urgent language and fantastic engagement of the audience, and Eddie Jenkins (Hart School) for the near perfect structure, clever associative jokes and light-handed elegance of his speech. Both were appearing for the second year in the competition, as was our 2019 winner, Amy Stafford (Ash Green), with a speech urging her generation not simply to vote, but to get ready to vote by forswearing, at least for some of the time, the constant distraction of celebrity gossip and the seductive simplicity of political polarisation.

The convivial atmosphere of the final illustrated students' and teachers' appreciation for the opportunity to investigate and debate topics beyond the classroom and A-level syllabus. Contenders spoke and wrote imaginatively on social unity, knife crime, climate change, bereavement, the empowerment of women, the loss of childhood, the dystopian threat of artificial intelligence and the responsible exercise of democratic rights.

Language



Clockwise from above left:
Public-speaking finalists with the panel
on the steps of Northampton Guildhall,
Zane Folorunso (Bulwell), **Jim Carroll**
and **Kirsty Dias**, **Eddie Jenkins (Hart)**,
classmates in the audience.

2020 Winners

Here, the winners Amy Stafford and Matt Tobutt discuss their experiences of the competitions and the power of language with Jessica Douthwaite.

Amy Stafford

Public-speaking winner

Amy won the public-speaking prize with an eloquent argument against apathy in young voters and captivated her audience with inter-generational reasons to engage with electoral politics.

“A vote certainly isn’t the most we can get ready for, but it is the very least.”

Why did you choose the youth vote as the topic for your speech?

I entered the public-speaking prize last year with a speech that was interesting but not personal enough to stand out, so the second time around I knew that I wanted to talk about something I was passionate about. It was hard to come up with an idea that would make me different from other entrants, be straightforward to research, and energising to me and the audience. I realised that everything I was brainstorming for the speech (from climate change to knife crime) came back to politics. I’ve always been really motivated by thinking about politics. Voting and electoral politics are so important to our society that as soon as I came up with the idea, I knew it had to be my topic.

Do you think you could have made the same impact about the youth vote in an essay?

An essay is intended for one type of readership, but the audience of a speech might contain a range of people, so it needs to be applicable, diverse and relatable. I wanted to grab the attention of other sixth-formers as well as teachers and guests, so I had to make sure I used engaging vocabulary and examples that were relevant to everyone’s lives. In an essay, I may not have had the same chance to use emphasis and unpredictable language.

What was the biggest challenge in writing the speech?

I tried to include examples and references in the speech to suit everyone, from *I’m a Celebrity ... Get Me Out of Here!* to the philosopher Adam Smith. But, once I’d done that, one of the hardest things to do was ensure that there was a common thread linking my ideas. I kept reminding myself to connect topics, repeat themes and remember to include the prompt ‘get ready’ in my speech. After entering the competition in 2018, I also learned that I needed to change the tone and rhythm of my voice to help the audience follow me.

“If I had a pound for every time I heard, ‘Brexit’, I would single-handedly be able to end austerity.”

The way you performed the speech and made it relevant to our lives was very memorable indeed. What else do you think made the speech so effective?

Another thing I learned from entering the competition in 2018, was to write short paragraphs on key topics and clearly link each one to an overall structure. I think that was really important to the performance of my speech. I also used metaphors to simplify my message and bring ideas to life and inserted a section at the end of the speech that was interactive. I made the audience stand up and sit down in answer to a series of questions, it was a really good way to interest audience members and close my argument firmly.

How has entering this competition helped you academically and personally?

During the speech-writing process, I had to balance competition deadlines with coursework schedules, my schoolwork and daily life. I haven’t had many opportunities to speak to an audience in school so writing a speech really boosted my confidence. My long-term career ambition is to go into politics, and I want to study law and politics at university, so writing about the speech in my UCAS statement will certainly enhance my application. Even last year, when I was a runner-up, the atmosphere of the contest was welcoming and positive. Speaking aloud in that environment and, this time, winning the competition, has given me so much motivation to continue my political aspirations.

What advice would you give to a student who is thinking of entering the Public-Speaking Prize in autumn 2020?

You need to choose a topic and use language in a way that lets your personality show. Make sure you don’t adapt yourself or adopt unusual characteristics – the speech needs to ‘fit’ you. Write something you’re passionate about – you’ll need to read around the subject, so it helps if your research is enjoyable. In fact, one of the best things about taking part in the competition is that it has encouraged me to read for pleasure which has benefitted my vocabulary and motivated me to read beyond the texts included in my A levels.



Matt Tobutt

Essay prizewinner

Matt, winner of the Essay Prize, wrote movingly about the various stages of experience encountered by a sufferer of depression, from its symptoms to recovery, in his essay *The Journey of a Broken Brain*.

“The things that make us ourselves can become sinisterly intertwined with our negative thoughts and cause a downward spiral of guilt that seems so out of one’s control.”

The essay prize gives writers the chance to choose their own topic. Why did you choose to write about depression?

Originally, I'd chosen something else. I was drafting an essay that explored the meaning of home, but I realised that it wasn't flowing. It felt hard to keep writing. I decided to change my topic to an experience I was going through at the time in therapy. Starting again was a way of trying to understand what was happening by writing it down with structure, form and an argument. Once I had started the new essay it felt much more natural; the choice of a personal and significant topic meant that I had found my writing voice again. It was the first time I've had the freedom to explore a topic in whatever way I like. I found it useful to reflect on depression, therapy, the brain and emotions without even knowing how my journey, and the essay, would end.

Do you think your essay would have had the same impact in the form of a speech?

I don't think I could have used the writing process to discover more about my condition in the same way through a speech. Although I could have spoken about the topic of depression,

writing for a visible audience instead of an anonymous reader would have altered my tone, choice of vocabulary and punctuation. The form and structure of an essay suited my purpose of figuring out what I wanted to say and exploring it in my own words.

What did you find hardest to do during the writing process?

My topic was clearly personal, but an essay has to inform and universalise experiences for the readers' engagement and understanding. The hardest thing was to strike the right balance between research and factual evidence and an honest account of my journey. These two aspects seemed to clash to me, but I found a way to weave between them via evidence, paragraph structure and linking sentences.

All three judges emphasised how affecting and powerful your essay was. What was it about your essay that produced such a strong impact on its readers?

Until writing the essay, I hadn't really thought about how widely my thoughts and feelings might be felt collectively across society – while being unique to me and every other individual sufferer. Many of the points I make in the essay are about ordinary feelings that are invisible, feelings that are not always obvious but are widely experienced. I think the impact derived from the way I wrote honestly about very relevant and relatable experiences.

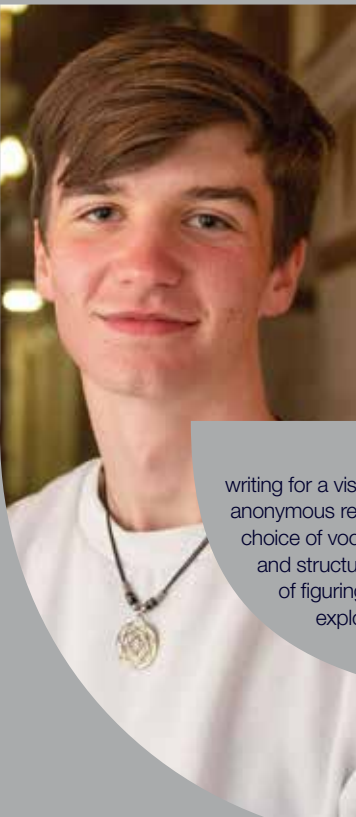
How do you think the chance to improve your essay writing beyond the content of your exams has helped you academically and personally?

Before going to the essay-writing workshop I hadn't considered the fact that an essay has the potential to be more than academic. Now, I'm trying to apply some aspects I learned writing *The Journey of a Broken Brain* to the essays I write for my A-level subjects, especially inserting more of myself into my answers and including my voice in the opinions I express. Although I knew that technically the structure of the essay was good, finding out that judges had engaged positively with the subject of depression, and chosen my essay as the competition winner really reinforced the sense that I'd made a good choice when I decided to write a subjective piece.

What advice would you give to someone entering the Creative Education Trust essay-writing competition in 2020?

I think the most important thing is not to pick a subject based on what you assume other people are interested in, but to choose something you care about and to which you can contribute substantiated, accrued and personal knowledge.

“The world has moved from weighing on your shoulders, to sitting in your palm; and although it may still throw some hardships in your direction, you will know how to handle them.”





Last Word

Rebecca James, Ash Green's Lead Practitioner for Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education and Sex and Relationship Education (SRE), urges all schools to challenge discrimination in the community, in an article first published in the journal of the Ambition Institute.

As we draw closer to LGBT+ History Month 2020, it is wonderful to reflect on how far things have come in the UK since the days when homosexuality was illegal. When I think of Oscar Wilde, the literary genius jailed for 'acts of gross indecency' in 1885, and what he endured, I am humbled that even then his sense of love and compassion caused him to focus on the suffering of others – namely, children as young as 14 subjected to the horrific conditions of adult prisons.

I think about Section 28 and the constraints on educators in their teaching, arising from fear and misconceptions around information as some sort of poisoned chalice to corrupt and influence young minds. I rejoice in its revocation in 2003. Likewise, in the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act of 2013 that gave people freedom to celebrate their love in public and have it recognised as traditional couples do. But I am also conscious of the reality that there is still so much work to be done.

A zero-tolerance approach to prejudice has changed the lives of many young people at Ash Green and we gladly make February – LGBT+ History Month – a focus of our culture and attitude.

I am enrolled in the Expert Middle Leaders programme (formerly Teaching Leaders) with Ambition, which supports me in designing and implementing a school improvement

project. I am surrounded by incredible practitioners with amazing ideas for improving the results of pupil premium students. While they drive changes in attendance and engage young people in different styles of learning, my heart goes straight to equality and diversity. I decided to focus on changing and improving the educational experience of LGBT+ young people in my school and, dare I say it, in my community.

It was clear to me that the personal development and lived experience of these young people could be changed significantly by allowing them to be who they are, freely, safely and happily. More than that, if we could change the culture of the school community for them, then we might make other young people, whoever they are, feel safe to be themselves in school too.

We started by exploring how language was used around school, drawing on the amazing resources of groups like Stonewall and The Proud Trust to address concepts such as the Bystander Approach (the idea that bystanders have a role to play in the prevention of abuse). A series of assemblies, discussion groups and student voice enquired how LGBT+ young people were feeling in their school community. We educated all year groups about what Homophobic, Biphobic and Transphobic (HBT) mean, and the impact of using these words. We challenged our students to challenge it themselves; they did and they do!

We accentuated diversity by marking key dates of the LGBT+ calendar such as Bi Visibility Day, Transgender Day of Remembrance, LGBT+ History Month, National Coming Out Day, and Pride. We celebrated with market stalls, craft days and parades around school, and we embedded LGBT+ History



and Black History Month into the curriculum. Resources from Just Like Us enabled every subject to run lessons dedicated to showcasing the achievements and accolades of key LGBT+ people in their subject areas from around the world.

Since January 2018, Ash Green has become a Stonewall Champion and trained its staff, teachers, students and community in how to tackle HBT bullying. We've engaged with our local community by supporting local schools in their journey to equality and diversity. In 2020 we look forward to welcoming Warwickshire Pride to run its first youth group from the school premises, and we launch our LGBT+ parent support group. I also look forward to supporting local primary schools in their efforts to deliver inclusive support to different families and to celebrate equality and diversity in their own way.

“Ash Green is glad to make LGBT+ History Month the focus of our culture and attitude”

LGBT+ History month is an important part of a whole shift in culture. Reflecting on the past and how far we have come is key to giving young people the perspective and the courage to challenge discrimination. While a change in legislation makes SRE mandatory in state education from September 2020, I urge schools to remember that challenging discrimination will achieve something far beyond the expectations of a curriculum. For young people and their families, it will be life-changing.

Singing Ambassadors

A new office of Singing Ambassador has been introduced in Creative Education Trust secondary schools as an opportunity for talented singers to develop their technique, expand their knowledge of vocal music, perform to a high standard and contribute to the promotion and growth of vocal music in their school. Music teachers across the Trust devised the role to combine both benefits and responsibilities.

Singing Ambassadors receive:

- **One-to-one tuition from a top vocal coach on their singing technique and performance**
- **Group coaching as part of an advanced choir made up of Singing Ambassadors from the eleven Creative Education Trust secondary schools**
- **Insights into classical repertoire (broadly defined and including folk songs and musical theatre standards)**
- **Solo and ensemble performance opportunities before an audience drawn from all the schools and the Trust**
- **At least one inspirational visit per year to a professional vocal performance**
- **A special lapel button identifying them as a Creative Education Trust Singing Ambassador**

Singing Ambassadors undertake to:

- **Learn the music specified by the Trust's vocal and choral coaches in advance of any workshop or coaching session**
- **Attend all cross-Trust training and workshop events**
- **Perform as a soloist in their own school a minimum of once per year**
- **Participate in choral promotion activities organised by the school's music staff**
- **Sing in the school choir and any other appropriate ensembles, with a minimum rehearsal attendance requirement of 85%**
- **Encourage, by whatever means appropriate, the junior singing ambassador(s) to pursue the role**

The first workshop took place in the beautiful St Anne and St Agnes Church in the City of London, designed by Sir Christopher Wren in 1680. Tutors Charles MacDougall and Emily Dickens drew a fantastic sound from 33 Singing Ambassadors and their deputies. Giovanna Leadbitter, Singing Ambassador for Caister, is pictured here during her coaching session.

Creative Education Trust is a growing multi-academy trust educating over 13,000 children in England.

Creative Education Trust inspires and enables young people to build successful lives on foundations of learning, resilience and employability.

Creative Education Trust schools are transformed by integrating a knowledge-rich curriculum with skills and creativity.

Cover image

Finalists in the 2019 essay and public-speaking competitions.

Back row, left to right:

Aaron Howard (Weavers); Alfie Mulligan (Abbeyfield); Eddie Jenkins (Hart); Jim Carroll; Zane Folorunso (Bulwell); Kirsty Dias; Nicole McCartney; Emily Campbell; Agnese Baltmane (Abbeyfield)

Middle row, left to right:

Harry Elliot (Ash Green); Paige Atherton (Ash Green); Megan Emery (Hart); Benjamin Griffiths (Hart); Harvind Gill (Milton Keynes); Matt Tobutt (Abbeyfield)

Front row, left to right:

Amy Stafford (Ash Green); Georgia Foran (Weavers); Anya Tregar (Hart); Bipasha Ganatra (Wrenn); Ben Knight (Abbeyfield)

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