

**Ten Years of
Creative Education**
Alumni tell the story

10



Zane Foloronso

Left **The Bulwell Academy** (Nottingham) in 2020 with an unconditional offer from **Leeds Beckett University** to study **Sports Business**.

Zane moved to Nottingham as a child and spent his teenage years in Basford (next door to Bulwell), where he describes “quite a lot of negativity around – you weren’t expected to do well.” That prevailing culture motivated him “to be different, a positive spark.”

Zane remembers the arrival of Creative Education Trust, just when he was transitioning into the Bulwell sixth form, as a signifier of “new, unique stuff, and the opportunity to use your mind in ways you haven’t used it at school before.” He was a memorable finalist in the 2017 Creative Education Trust sixth form public speaking competition, where he responded to the proposition ‘Spoilt for Choice’ with a vehement argument against the waste and exploitation of the global garment industry. “I was trying to make the most out of the sixth form – the new experiences on offer and the chance to put myself out of my comfort zone.”

He re-appeared the following year (‘People, Get Ready’), drawing praise a second time for the charisma and urgency of his message about the potential of local community action to mitigate global warming. “Once I’d done the competition”, he says, “I wanted to see if I could do better”. In retrospect, the competition has given him “a certain confidence” on which he draws today when standing up and presenting his work, and he expects “it will really help me pitch to clients.”

“I remember the arrival of Creative Education Trust – new, unique stuff; and opportunities to use your mind in ways you haven’t used it at school before.”

A keen footballer at school, Zane came across the Leeds Beckett course during GCSE prep. “My ambition is to be an agent”, he discloses three years later, “spotting talented athletes, helping them develop their careers and getting them good deals that make the best of their skills.” Pursuing his dreams as a football agent will likely take him to a bigger city than Nottingham, but he retains a keen sense of the importance of helping the next generation find their self-motivation, as he did back home.

Marc Jordan

Chief Executive
Creative Education Trust

It’s more than ten years ago that I conceived the idea for what became, in 2011, Creative Education Trust. Although my career hadn’t been in education – rather in publishing and the creative industries – I knew the value of education as an enabler of social mobility from the experience of my own family. I wanted to work with children in communities that had had a raw deal, and try to improve schools that just weren’t offering the start in life that young people deserved.

The academies movement offered the opportunity for me to roll up my sleeves and get involved, using my experience in helping to reinvent underperforming businesses. I knew that creativity – inventive thinking that can connect apparently disparate areas of knowledge in productive ways – would be at an increasing premium in a digital world. So, from the outset, I wanted creativity baked into our approach to education.

A good deal of hard work and a certain amount of luck got the venture off the ground, and I was able to persuade some influential people and organisations to back my vision. These included the current Chair and Deputy-Chair of our Board of Directors, the then minister for academies, and several eminent educationalists who generously gave their time and advice. We were fortunate to attract philanthropic funding from the Conran Foundation, the Happold Trust and the Garfield Weston Foundation, which enabled us to move the venture from my kitchen table to a small London office and to start recruiting experienced professionals to work with our growing band of schools.

Ten years on, the organisation we’ve built is unrecognisable in the scale and sophistication of what it offers back to the schools. As an organisation, we’ve learned. Success has bred success, and in addition to what the central team provides, we now have extraordinary capacity in the schools across a range of professional disciplines, which is being shared in a variety of networked forums.



The job isn’t finished. I know that everyone throughout Creative Education Trust shares my ambition to become one of the leading providers of state-funded education nationally. This is the purpose of our strategic plan. The measure of our success will be the impact of what we are doing on the life chances and achievements of our alumni in their communities and beyond. Here’s to our next decade!

Olivia Taylor

Left **Abbeyfield School** (Northampton) in 2018 to start a degree in Psychological and Behavioural Sciences at Clare College, Cambridge.



Sixth form was the defining time for Olivia at school. When she was 16, the Creative Education Trust public speaking competition “felt like the first opportunity to make people listen to me.” In response to the proposition “You make your own luck”, she spoke about income inequality and how important it is for people who have resources to increase the amount of good fortune for others. She thinks back to that speech frequently, as a process that oriented her moral compass.

“In that speech I really found my own potential and my moral purpose. To my great surprise, I also won!”

A Creative Education Trust Director approached Olivia after the competition and suggested she apply to Oxbridge. “I found it funny. I’d got seven As and two Bs in my GCSEs, and my family weren’t academic. My mum had me at 17, and I’d grown up on Free School Meals.” Never having imagined Cambridge was for her, she visited Clare College with a group of students from the other schools. Six months later, she got an interview and then an offer, and now she’s in her final year.

Olivia’s degree is a combination of psychology and other social sciences. She “fell in love” with biological anthropology in her second year. “I’ve had so many incredible opportunities here, including

brain dissection in my first year and an osteobiography last year, in which I determined the age, gender, cause of death, and so on, of a bronze-age skeleton.”

Arriving at Cambridge from a low-income background, Olivia felt serious “imposter syndrome”, but she knows all the work she did with others in the sixth form built “so much resilience – with studies, a part-time job, and everything going on at home – and all for very little recognition”. After getting a 2:2 in her first year, she was encouraged to be screened for learning difficulties. “When I was diagnosed with dyslexia in my first year of university, it made so much sense: I could express myself in public speaking in a way I wouldn’t on paper. Once I’d got the technology and support, I was getting awards for my grades.”

Olivia was awarded a Vice Chancellor’s Award in 2021 for her relentless volunteering efforts with vulnerable children, isolated people, and Cambridge communities in need. She has also been invited to the House of Lords as a nominee for two awards in student social mobility. After graduation, she has an offer on the generalist fast stream with the Civil Service, and she’s waiting to hear back about her Cambridge Masters application. “I’m so happy with both options! Cambridge has opened so many doors for me; it’s been an incredible three years.”



Siona Robson Principal, Abbeyfield School

Like many staff, I’m drawn to the word ‘creativity in job advertisements. In my school, it’s empowering students and staff to expand their talents and problem-solving skills by challenging themselves with the unfamiliar. We’ve aligned curriculum plans across the eleven Creative Education Trust secondary schools; now, we need to join up the subject knowledge. The potential gains in progress, relevance, literacy, making connections, and ‘ownership’ of learning are huge, and when we embed this practice consistently, our curriculum provision will be outstanding.

Twin sixth form prizes in public speaking and essay writing were introduced in 2013 to complement Creative Education Trust’s work in raising the academic aspirations of its sixth-formers towards universities in the Russell Group. Contenders give a ten-minute speech on the motion set for that year and respond to questions from the panel. Guest panellists have included journalists and broadcasters, barristers, and other specialists from the communication sector.

Tranai Todd

Left Ellis Guilford Academy (Basford, Nottingham) in 2020 and is a Sports Development Officer for The Pythian Club in Nottingham.



Tranai's prevailing image of his school is its outstanding diversity, "with a lot of support for our learning needs, especially after it joined Creative Education Trust." For him, this support extended to "a lot of good opportunities on the rugby side", such as being encouraged to join a rugby club, where he became captain and participated in national tournaments. He did well in his GCSEs but "wasn't the best behaved". "Things changed," he said, "when I got involved in boxing with a local organisation towards the end of year 9." This move "opened up quite a few doors, as well as making me more motivated, focused and determined." As a community organisation, The Pythian Club presented plenty of role models, and Tranai began supporting Pythian sessions while still a schoolboy himself. In this way, he progressed early into the role of a young leader.

Tranai is a Sports Development Officer at Pythian, a Community Interest Company focused on empowering young people to end youth violence by finding them

"I want to open others up to the kinds of opportunities they can access as alternatives to violence."

opportunities for employment and training in sports, drama and the arts. "I've seen friends and peers go down the wrong path," Tranai explains, "and I want to open others up to the kinds of opportunities they can access as an alternative." Nottingham's Violence Reduction Unit, part of a network funded by the Home Office, involves Tranai regularly on discussions at a national level with stakeholders in the mitigation of youth violence.

As well as working 20 hours a week for Pythian, he is studying for a Level 3 qualification in Sports Business and has set up his own business in personal training and sports nutrition. He manages three staff, including a personal trainer, a youth worker, and a digital marketing officer to take care of web administration and social media. Alongside delivering fitness and boxing programmes to the community and wider county, he's learned quickly about managing workload, tax returns, sponsorship and developing local partnerships. He is confident that supporting grassroots organisations will be the focus of any further academic study he might undertake.



Chris Keen
Principal,
Ellis Guilford

The Chief Executive once called me 'resourceful', which sums up my view of creativity – thinking broadly either to solve problems or to avoid them in the first place. It requires a degree of autonomy: in the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils in the local context; in how we staff the schools and embed our expectations among colleagues; and in how we define and establish what good leadership is. Academically, it's clear now that the performing arts and explicitly 'creative' subjects are only part of the story – in this trust, we embrace the widest sense of what creativity means with essay competitions, STEM opportunities, community work and plenty more. For the pupils, creativity is being distilled across the curriculum so that pupils see the Knowledge Connected concepts as transferable skills, both from subject to subject and beyond lessons to life outside.

Celebrity guests at the annual Creative Education Trust **Day of Sports** have told inspiring stories of their lives as athletes and international competitors, from George Chuter, former Hooker for the Leicester Tigers RFC, Catherine Spencer, former captain of the England Women's rugby team, and Steve Brown, former captain of the Team GB Paralympic squad for wheelchair rugby.

Ash Green did a lot for me. I was thinking of leaving after GCSEs, but the Head of Art said they'd give me art and photography as well as English to keep me on." Sarah won the Creative Education Trust photography competition in its first year, with "a close-up of brick and tree bark, all black and white." She remembers the renowned landscape photographer Steve Macleod giving a talk to students and her one-to-one tutorial over the pictures she'd produced. She came back for the competition a second year because it supported her more abstract A-level photography.

At the end of her A-levels, Sarah wasn't sure what to do. She didn't get into the photography course she wanted and, knowing that she "didn't want to work on my own writing essays", wasn't drawn to university. She applied for a competitive, Level 4 Civil Service fast-track position with nationwide recruitment and a tough half a day of assessments. Five years later, she works in digital communications at the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.

As an 18-year-old who hadn't been to university, Sarah initially found it hard to adapt to a Civil Service environment in which most people had a degree. Once she moved into communications she found that people listened more because she had

ideas and wanted to have a say. "Comms is a good department for someone with my creative skills. English and art help with the content creation and design, and I'm involved in lots of videography." The highlights have been meeting ministers and working on the DfE's COVID response. She kept busy prepping the DfE's social and media accounts in advance of the 2019 General Election and filmed Secretary of State Gavin Williamson on a tour of Plymouth, Exeter, Liverpool and "all over the place!"

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Sarah advises other school leavers to think of an industry – even an organisation – they might like and see if they offer an apprenticeship. "More and more employers are scrapping graduate schemes and making them into apprenticeships – you can do engineering, HR, all sorts. You might find something as a journalist for the BBC, and you'll be three years ahead of everyone else!"

The Michael Dickson Photography Prize is named for a founding trustee of Creative Education Trust, the eminent structural engineer Michael Dickson CBE, who was Chairman of Buro Happold and the Happold Trust. The competition brief, conceived with Steve Macleod, Creative Director of Metro Imaging, is renewed annually and launched by a professional photographer in each secondary school, who offers a one-to-one tutorial to every student who enters.



Umbar Sharif
Principal, Ash Green School

In my career, I've been grateful that the British education system has distributed its attention holistically to vocational-technical-practical education alongside the academic subjects. But we've reached a tension point where the high-performing conservatoires are reporting a steep decline in applications, and fewer than 1% of students taking music at A-level. Faced with a narrowed focus on Ebacc and science, school leaders have a moral choice to make about the type of young people we want to supply to the global community of the 21st century. What do we know about the workforce we'll need in ten years? That adults won't have the same job in the same place for 30 years; that they'll need to be enterprising; and that they'll have to guard their well-being carefully. Success will come to those whose invisible toolkit of resilience and creativity helps them look above, beyond and through the immediate situation – or the algorithm – armed with the confidence, rhetoric and human congeniality to see things in a different frame.



Sarah Mahoney

Left Ash Green School (Bedworth, Coventry) after A-levels in 2016 to take up a Civil Service Apprenticeship with the Department for Education.

After year 11, Rosa transferred from Bulwell to a local college but was back within weeks. He returned to study with a tiny “hardcore” class of five, “similar, with our short attention spans, but teachers got to know us and pushed us a lot.” They knew, he now recognises, that the more attention you give to young people – the more you allow them to be their own character rather than fitting a mould – the more you encourage them to think on their own. “They showed us the right way rather than punishing our errors, so we could find the answer out for ourselves. It wasn’t just about grades; it was about our futures.” Braced with structure and routine, his triple distinction BTEC Level 3 in Business got him into university, and all five classmates did very well.

Rosa remembers “really happy weeks” as a sixth form volunteer, buddying up with younger pupils and looking out for them, giving them targets to reach. “Having someone to look up to as a mentor beats struggling on your own,” he explains, an attitude he transferred to his first weeks at university, in spite of his natural reserve: “We’re all learning new things, and working as a little group on the same project, even though you’re meant to do it individually, we get the work done quicker. In any case, everyone’s looking for friends, and there’s no harm in saying ‘hello’ – you might be the person someone’s looking forward to seeing.”

In 2019, Rosa and three classmates entered the Trust’s Creative Collaboration prize offered in partnership with the London

College of Communication. The experience stays with him as “something I’d never had before – so free, the chance to do anything we wanted.” He remembers not being sure what they were doing at first, “whereas the girls were very on it”, but in the last few weeks starting to take it seriously and finding their ‘issue’ in men’s mental health. They felt a short film would be the best way to get it talked about, and fortunately, two teammates knew how to record and

“As a team we each had what makes us, us; and together, we did very well in whatever we did.”

edit. “We each had what makes us, us, and together, we did very well in whatever we did.” In this instance, they “literally used a week to really get this film done.” They won.

Rosa moved from Ghana to a Suffolk village at the age of eight, and later to Nottingham. He describes his father as “a big believer in education” who raised his children to think of university as yielding endless possibilities. Rosa’s ambition today is a mixture of his business and people interests. “I want to start apprenticeships that bring education and work together, so that young people in the low-income areas of Ghana can earn money as they learn.” Busy for now with finance and accounting and – his new favourite – marketing, with lots of practice in research, Rosa sums up his outlook with gusto: “I’m just looking forward to everything.”

The sixth form **prize for Creative Collaboration** is among several challenges issued to students in Creative Education Trust’s early years to work in creative teams addressing a social issue or need. In the latest of these, as school communities re-open after the global pandemic, the Board is distributing funds to support social action in the community.

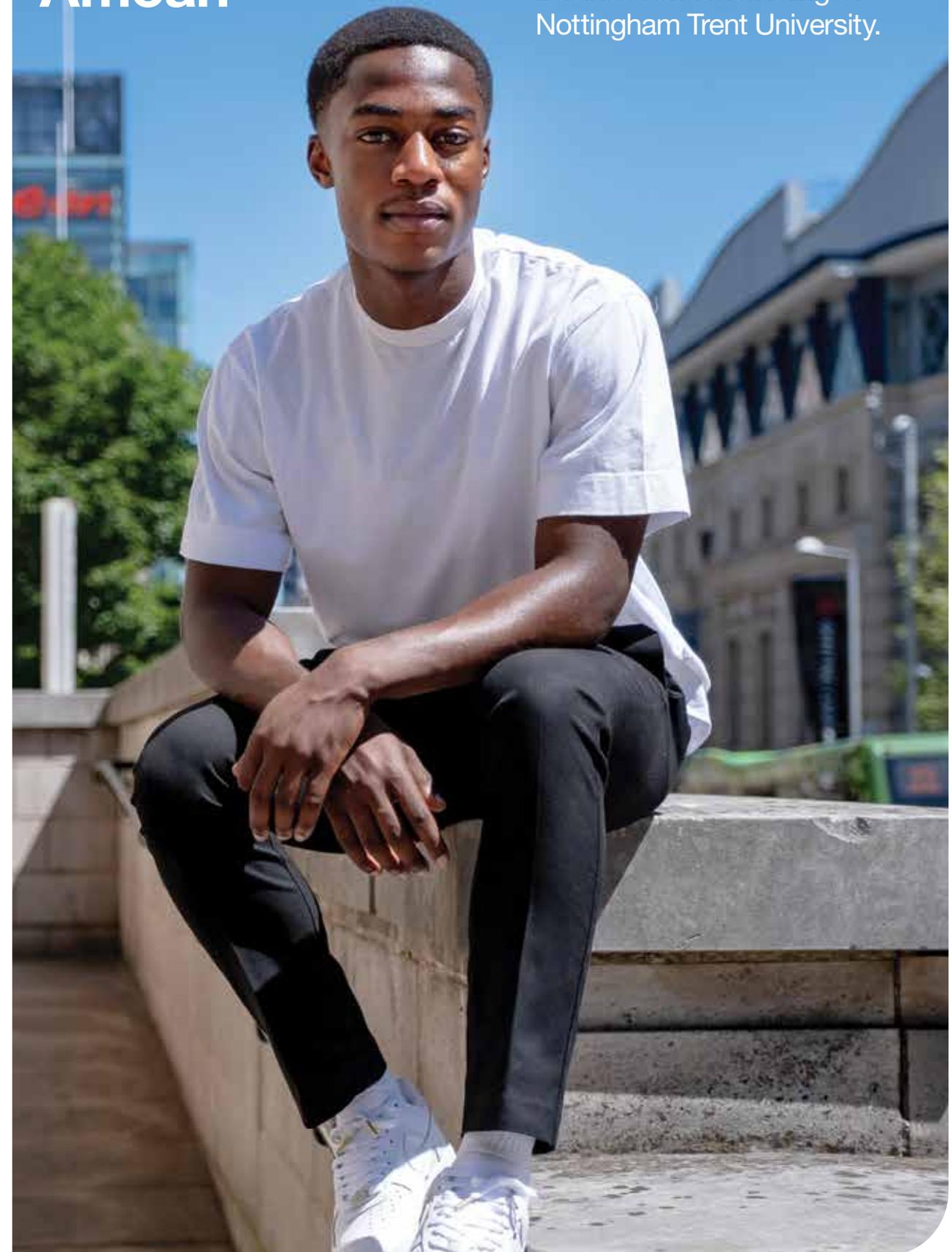


Michelle Strong
Principal, The Bulwell Academy

Creativity is everything I have to do, every day, to find solutions to a problem without any flight plan. It used to be thought of as the traditional subjects of art, music, drama and so on. Now people might go a bit further and think of creative writing. But the conventional definition still gets in the way of staff all getting involved – they feel removed from creativity if it’s not an explicit element of their job or subject. My Latin teacher could show me how languages fit together and where they came from. It was a lightbulb moment of creativity – my sudden sense of the freedom that structure can give because it’s what helps you put infinite sentences together.

Rosa Amoah

Left **The Bulwell Academy** (Nottingham) in 2020 to study Business and Marketing at Nottingham Trent University.



Zainab Fadhal

Joined **Thistley Hough Academy** in year 9. She works in peer support for the Nottingham NHS mental health crisis team, and begins her Medicine degree at Leeds University in 2021



With Zainab as Chair, the Thistley Hough student council hosted the first, wildly successful soup night in the school canteen with members of the community as invited guests. “Three students would pitch ideas, and there’d be three types of soup on offer. People would pay a bit for soup and vote on the ideas.” The amassed funds went to the winning project, including her own, which raised money to send educational supplies to girls in refugee camps. “It was great to get the wider community involved.”

Her early teenage years in Iraq, “a very troubled place,” made it difficult for Zainab to adjust to Britain. When the family returned, the political tensions in Baghdad were obvious, and they applied for asylum in the UK. “It was a time of real uncertainty”, she says, but they were granted refugee status, and greater stability came as her parents – veterinarians in Iraq – both got jobs. “When I came to England in 2014, my English was very basic, but the support from Thistley Hough was so good”.

Despite being from “quite a science family,” Zainab had left school thinking she would do fashion, influenced greatly by the creativity encouraged at her school, “big on freedom and discovery”. Her final GCSE product design, an accessory to be worn on top of the hijab, was inspired by patterns of traditional Korean culture. Also a runner-up in the Creative Education Trust young photographer award, for a picture capturing all the personalities in the classroom, Zainab remembers the London exhibition vividly and treasures the book she received as a prize.

During A-levels in Nottingham, Zainab worked part-time within the mental health crisis team for the city. This peer support role continued through her gap year and focused her career choice so that she could no longer see herself doing anything other than medicine. “I’ve never been invested in so many people’s lives. It’s truly amazing”. Her current interest is in psychiatry, and more particularly, the clinical professionals who “hold it together for every next person that needs them.”



Jayne Schofield Principal, Thistley Hough Academy

I would once have said creativity is everything I’m not. But it’s not just about taking a photo or painting a picture; it’s about being able to unpick whatever is in front of you through different lenses. That’s what the Knowledge Connected concepts are for. At school, I was made to feel that I wasn’t creative because I didn’t have the skills in art. But you wouldn’t tell a child they’re not academically gifted, would you? Creativity is like intelligence – people show it in different ways. The drive for a narrowly academic curriculum has put creativity at risk in education, but in Creative Education Trust schools, we don’t force every child into the mould. That doesn’t work for children, especially here – Stoke-on-Trent has always been a creative city. We have Knowledge Connected, the Ambition curriculum, all the creative extras, and we have groups of people coming together to think creatively about the next thing.

Thistley Hough was among the first Creative Education Trust schools to recruit a commercial marketing company to train **student ambassadors** (Zainab among them) in representing their school – to primary schools, parents and the community at large. Several similar squads of students – self-evidently the best embodiment of a school’s vision – have ‘workshopped’ their pitches and presentations with marketing consultants and designers.

Only a few years ago, Zainab was on the CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) register herself, and now, in the peer support team, “we’re individuals with lived experience of distress.” “It’s very natural”, she adds, “for people at the most vulnerable time of their life to think there’s no end to this.” She finds herself repeatedly promising one thing from personal experience; that things will get better. Meanwhile, she reminds her successor students in school, “Times are not always very glamorous or good, but there are still so many opportunities ahead.”

The Primaries



Isaac Haworth
Headteacher,
Queen Eleanor
Primary Academy,
Northampton

What hooked me was the six concepts of Knowledge Connected because I'd thought a lot about the commonalities of thinking between really intelligent people. Structure, pattern, and performance, in particular, overlapped with my own thoughts about high achievers. It's not so much a vocabulary for primary pupils but a way to inform the way we put the curriculum together by seeing something in a different way – as structure, or pattern or function (performance). In history, we integrate social or belief structures, or patterns, with the syllabus content. For example, when year 2 looks at Ordnance Survey maps, they see the distinct visual patterns of streets arising from the historical context: packed together in the Victorian period, different in the 1950s. We take photos and think about the historical reason for urban layouts. The history of transportation tells us why Victorian houses needed to be next to the canals.



Marvellous Chukwu (now year 8)

“I moved from Spain to Northampton when I was seven – I remember everyone asking me about the weather! Getting involved in lots of things was a way to get my English better. I had a great time doing the Day of Change competition – my team designed an all-terrain wheelchair, and we had to pitch it to the judges with a model and a poster.”



Richard Penn-Bourton
Headteacher, Three Peaks
Primary Academy

Everyone used to talk about creativity in education with a very limited view – just allowing children to express themselves more and explore art and technology. Now I see it as a view of life as a lot of opportunities to look in a new way, without boundaries. We used to start creative projects getting pupils to work on a physical, hands-on thing. Now we start by asking them what different ways they could approach a problem, and we ask the teachers what different ways we can deliver the learning. It's moving from the pure facts of maths to a question about how you explain operations. For us, creativity is a rich vocabulary of skills, ideas and attitudes that shape what you're doing as meaningful to you, not just to those assessing your progress. I think of it as enlightenment – the right to stop and think without a preconceived ceiling on what course of action you might take because the ambition could be higher. And a toolkit at your disposal for doing so. So, we slip the vocabulary of Knowledge Connected in: from a child's point of view the times tables are a pattern; writing a sentence is creating meaning.

James Dickie
(now year 11)

“It was a new thing to play touch rugby with the other Creative Education schools, and I liked seeing how each school played differently. We had coaching from Wasps and a trip to their stadium.”



Ciar Jennings (now year 10)

“We pitched an interactive doorbell for security. All the teams in the Change competition had the same basic materials to make the model and had to use them up. It was experimental, figuring out how to put our solution together. One of us was really good at design, but all our little ideas and additions had equal input.”



Evan Howell
(now year 10)

“Primary school certainly helped shape who I am now. Through coding and using Scratch software, I discovered IT, and it's what I'm still interested in today. I've based

my options around it, and it's what I'm planning to do as a career. It was really fun with the equipment around me at the recording studio for the poetry competition.”

Harlee Wicks (now year 10 and a nationally ranked artistic roller skater, alongside his sister Fraia)

“I ran a cross-country club at Woodlands, learning how to deal with different people like a teacher does. I still use the skills when

I coach skating now. It helped me to lead and organise others. I remember a big sports day in year 5 with other Trust schools. It was great to compete against people we didn't know before, like in a proper competition.”



Vicky Platten
Headteacher,
Woodlands Primary Academy

I liked the suggestion in 'creative' that each individual school should run itself for the children they have, and then share ideas around the network. We have an amazing outside space, including a garden we're building ourselves and a sensory courtyard now in development. We took the children to the garden centre to choose the plants for the garden. We examined the soil, followed the life cycles of nature in science, and linked fitness and food to everything we could see happening outside. We have an orchard of 27 apple, pear and cherry trees. We dug a pond and introduced fish. A bushcraft expert comes to teach us how to survive in the woods, how to build shelters and fires and forage for food, all wrapped in an envelope of calming talk. For our children, life needs to be in there. Staff used to talk about the risk of being creative – the fear that you might not cover all the objectives or have the 'right' answers. But they're gradually realising that engagement is high, and an engrossed attitude is spilling out of the classroom.



The Primaries

Emilia Wildman (now year 10)

“I really enjoyed going to London, especially the recording studio. It was a really cool experience – and not something you expect at school – to record our performances and find out how a studio works. I still remember some lines from *The Listeners* now. At the final recital I met the actor who played Hermione Granger’s dad and that was brilliant because Harry Potter was a favourite of mine at the time”.



Sachin Rajeev (now year 8)

“We had a lot of say. When we did our own assemblies, the teachers took in every idea and implemented it. We were never bored because the teachers would give the topic a twist or make it competitive. My friends say their primary schools were just work, work, work, and I think we had a lot more fun. But we also had algebra and things in year 6 that not all my secondary classmates had done yet.”



Darcey Bagshawe (now year 9)

“I remember primary school changing a lot when it became part of this Trust – before, it was more old-style and traditional. My strongest memory is my year 6 teacher, who made me feel safe and able to enjoy my whole time. Now I’m at Lynn Grove, it’s obviously more academic, but we still have the Knowledge Connected concept days and projects that give you the freedom to be creative.”



Isaac Easter (now year 8)

“In year 5 I went to Northampton for the Day of Change. The idea we pitched was about helping people to spend money carefully. It was an amazing experience, getting to travel and meet other schools. It was probably my primary school highlight.”



Jemma Adlington Headteacher, Harpfield Primary Academy

Over the years, creativity has developed into a real strength at the heart and in the vision of the schools individually, enhanced by what we do together. The pandemic has shown how easily we can work as a national network with the help of technology. I’m passionate about the fulness of the Creative Education Trust model, which isn’t just about academic knowledge but looks at all the skills children need to grow. Knowledge Connected, for example, runs through the whole of a child’s experience even though they don’t yet name the six concepts. We’re a very creative school, where drama and music are enrichments that have no substitutes because they are so adaptable to the modern life that’s going on around us and which children know from experience. A day out in London for the finalists in the poetry competition is a really big thing.



Craig Avieson & Jo Snelling, Headteachers, Wroughton Primary Academy

Dr Avieson: It’s wrong to think of knowledge and creativity as a dichotomy. Creativity is a good route into knowledge and vice versa. All we’re doing with Knowledge Connected is crystallising what is implicit in knowledge and making it explicit. It was clear to me from my first encounter how they accommodated a teacher of archaeology, for example, as much as a teacher of maths or PE. Some see creativity as the opposite of rigour but interpreted this way; it has the potential to reinforce it.

Ms Snelling: The Trust’s creative vision complemented my own approach, and it’s reassuring to have creativity as a background, rather than a regime every school has to follow. Because we use it as a tool to shape the knowledge, the events and the enrichment, we deflect the idea that creativity is something you make up as you go along. The creative and performance opportunities appeal to parents and staff, and the cross-Trust element gives them a big purpose and resonance.

When Sam started at Lynn Grove, he wanted to become a surgeon, but he soon got interested in physics. In year 9, he conceived an idea for a solution to the Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen paradox in quantum physics, which hinders us from understanding how two particles separated by distance can interact. He originally intended it as a paper in a journal, but because he was 14 and couldn't carry out the full research, he published it as a book instead. His interest in quantum physics has never slowed.

Before Sam started university, he did a Nuffield research placement with the astrophysics team at the University of East Anglia. He worked on their pulsar project, coding, writing and analysing data from an observatory in Puerto Rico. "A pulsar is a type of small star that emits regular pulses as it spins, and which are detectable from earth – it's like an interstellar beacon." Sam's interest remains in cosmology, but particularly the possibility of a theory of everything. He explains: "Everything we have is made of atoms and more fundamental particles called quarks and electrons. Quantum field theory (QFT) describes all the particles and force carriers, except gravity. The theory of general relativity (GR) describes gravity – it's an example of how QFT and GR only work independently of each other. A theory of everything would explain the entirety of the

universe in a neat, mathematical way, without necessarily using QFT or GR." He hopes to study for a doctorate in the United States when he finishes at Cambridge; "Caltech is at the top of my list, but MIT, Stanford and Princeton are on it too."

"I remember excellent teachers, from whom I could always get an answer, and the best physics teacher I ever had."

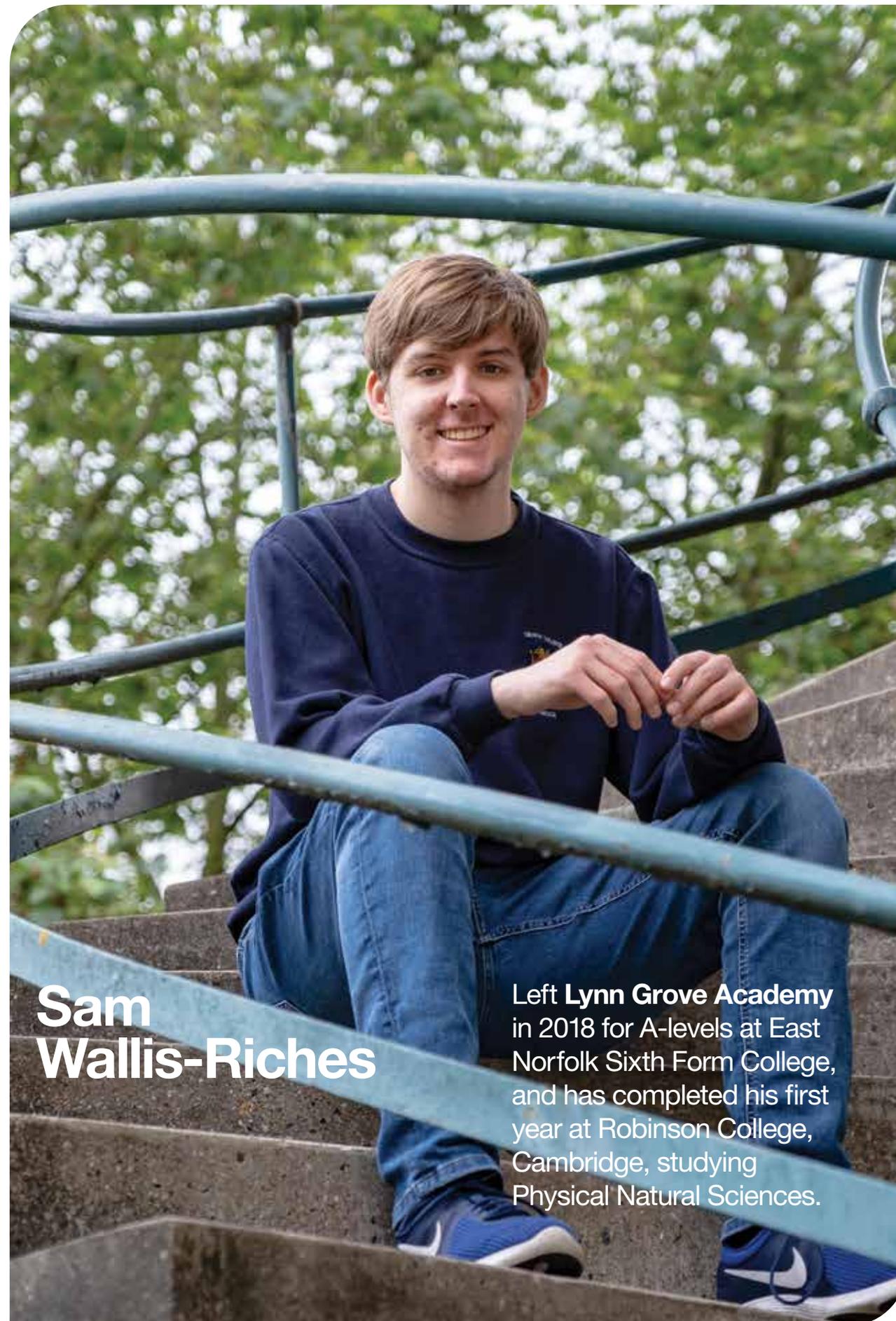
Lynn Grove has a signed copy of Sam's book in the school library. Looking back, he remembers excellent teachers "from whom I always knew I could get an answer," and an atmosphere without which "I couldn't have succeeded." He worked with younger students on improving their understanding of algebra, fractions and geometry. He calls his physics teacher there "the best I ever had". English was less intuitive, and Sam hated being required to make a speech about a film, "but by the time we had to do public speaking for our GCSEs, I'd grown in confidence and could do it with ease." Confidence, commitment, and resilience were the sum of his Lynn Grove years: "I learned that things would always get better."



Alison Mobbs
Principal, Lynn Grove Academy

When Ofsted switched to promoting the curriculum, we did all feel they'd caught up with us – we already had a way of pulling together, not just in systems but in ideas. The Knowledge Connected days have exposed students to a huge range of speakers – it's a remarkable experience that would never happen under normal circumstances, and I speak as someone who grew up here. I remember someone in my first year at university describing his work on propaganda buildings in the Roman Empire. It had never occurred to me that architecture could carry symbolic meaning. And we had an ambassador for meaning (the designer Lea Jagendorf) right here in our school! Having these concepts explained at an early age could really furnish you with alternative ways to look. You might not be aware that it's happening, but you'd be changed by the experience in ways you perhaps never realised.

Knowledge Connected is Creative Education Trust's framework of six big ideas that are important to consider in any undertaking – for academic study, in business and professional practice, or as a member of society. They are structure, pattern, meaning, performance, human interaction and practice. Because one or more of these concepts influences any situation, the framework gives us a way to connect or compare one situation with the next. This ability to spot or make connections is the essence of **creativity**. Creative Education Trust schools build the six concepts into the curriculum so that they become **creative habits of mind** for every pupil in our schools, and **tools for life**.



Sam Wallis-Riches

Left Lynn Grove Academy in 2018 for A-levels at East Norfolk Sixth Form College, and has completed his first year at Robinson College, Cambridge, studying Physical Natural Sciences.



Harvind Gill

Left The Milton Keynes Academy to begin a degree in Finance and Accounting at the University of Westminster in 2021.

Fresh from completing A-levels in English, economics, and maths, Harvind Gill has a strong sense of how they all fit together. “In English, you have to analyse and evaluate; go into the layers of meaning in things that are not always as they seem. Someone will perceive a word or metaphor in one way, another person will differently, and both will make me see it in a third way. That’s the thing about English – there’s no single right answer – whereas in maths, I enjoy the fact that the answer is definitive.” They come together in economics, he says, where you need facts, but your opinions too, and data to support them.

Continuing in the integrative vein, and asked what made his education ‘creative’, Harvind’s answer is “a really strong mixture of in-class and extra-curricular activity.” “The clubs helped me with skills and confidence I could transfer into class; the trips gave me a much wider understanding of the subjects I was studying.” His example is the performing arts visits to the opera and theatre in London – “We’d come back and talk about how they’d done the stagecraft, costume changes, lighting and everything – things we could use in our own performance.” The experience helped Harvind get a starred distinction in Level 2 musical theatre after several years of singing, acting and dancing on stage, including the lead in *Bugsy Malone* at 14.

By now an experienced performer, Harvind spoke to the theme “People, Get Ready” in the Creative Education Trust sixth form public speaking final, with a powerful conviction that women are going to lead the world, “We’re a very female-led family,” he explains, “really, it was my great-grandmother that sort of led everything. At home, there’s my mum and three sisters with me and my dad, so it’s majority females at every function.” His speech was inspired by Kamala Harris’s candidacy for the Vice Presidency of the United States during 2019, which he and his friends agreed was “a change that needed to happen”. His prevailing memory of the event, apart from the grandeur of the Northampton Guildhall, is “being taken so seriously by people from the Trust and on the panel whom I’d never met.”

The family background has also inspired Harvind’s business ambitions: older relatives have completed degrees in management and marketing and apprenticeships in accounting. “I was advised to aim high”, says Harvind, “and I’m glad I did.” Harvind is heading for university with an eye already on a third-year placement leading to employment upon graduation, as modelled by his older sister at an international bank. “I’d like to find something in a business that’s big enough to give me a range of experiences in all the different departments – marketing, HR, operations.” Business excites him because there’s “so much to do, so many people to interact with, and so much to make happen”.

MK Gordon Farquhar Principal, The Milton Keynes Academy

I remember as a child learning wonderful things from the books in W H Smith – books on castles, books on cowboys, books on space. I learned all about the atomic bomb, all about history as human interaction. Now they have books that tell you how to pass your next exams. Teachers really need to get their passion for their subject over so that it flicks the switch for the kids as well. They have to be creative; to get beyond prescribed ‘knowledge’ at what really makes the world go round. I didn’t get my passion for history from the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, but from the colour, passion, violence and occasional depravity associated with historical characters. You have to bring what enthused you into the classroom. Whatever your students’ starting point, they’ll pick up on it.

In the annual **Shakespeare festival**, eleven Creative Education Trust secondary schools perform abridged versions of Shakespeare’s comedies, tragedies and histories, back-to-back over two days. Minimal rehearsal time on-site forces the adrenaline of the actors and stage crews, reinforced by several weeks of rehearsal, with professional interventions on voice, text and stage design. It has become a treasured event in the calendar that animates the language, events and emotional registers of the past – whether historical or magnificently imagined.

Ellie Holloway

Left The Hart School (the cojoined former Fair Oak and Hagley Park Academies in Rugeley, Staffordshire) in 2018 to begin a Music degree at the University of Nottingham.

There was so much extra-curricular at school!" says Ellie Holloway, whose photo does indeed feature regularly in the albums of every cross-Trust project since Fair Oak Academy became one of the first member schools of Creative Education Trust in 2011. She remembers cross-Trust sports competitions in which she progressed to become sixth form leader, a French exchange and trips across the Channel, and "lots of singing things."

"It was definitely creative – all sorts of people coming from outside, and a big focus on design in the first years."

Ellie and her twin sister also achieved record-breaking success as charitable organisers, culminating in a national award recognising their fundraising for Children in Need in 2017. School was "definitely creative," she recalls, "with all sorts of people coming in from outside; and a big focus on design in the first few years – all day on Tuesdays!"

Many of Ellie's high points happened on stage as a participant in multiple joint performances of Creative Education Trust schools. "For the Benjamin Britten centenary in 2013, lots of schools joined together and sang his pieces; not only that, but we had the chance to compose and perform a folk

song of our own – really cool." Later, as the Hart School's first Singing Ambassadors, Ellie and her sister worked with a vocal tutor from the Voices Foundation on arias by Bach and Handel: "It was so great to work with someone who actually performs in the industry and has such energy."

Studying music, sport, French and maths in sixth form left Ellie unsure of her university direction but, encouraged by the Head of Sixth to do music, she was accepted at Nottingham. She felt slightly out of place there at first, coming from Rugeley, which her classmates tended to disparage as insignificant. She couldn't help but notice how many people from grammar schools, private schools or girls' schools there were on the music course. "They'd had private lessons in several different instruments, whereas mine were all provided through school." Supportive tutors convinced her she was just as capable and caught her up on what BTEC music had not covered. "I wouldn't change a thing in retrospect", she says now, "apart from worrying about it less!"

"It's been amazing; so nice being at a top university learning new things and learning a lot about yourself too." She lists conducting and opera modules among the surprises that awaited her, including a unique memory of performing with professional opera singers. For her final degree performance she sang Mozart's Exultate, Jubilate.



Rachael Sandham Principal, The Hart School

As a D&T teacher, I was asked to shortlist the 'pitches' from academy trusts ten years ago, and I remember putting this one forward because of what it seemed to offer the young people of Rugeley. At the first 'creative' inset, two then separate Rugeley schools (Fair Oak and Hagley Park Academies), each with two separate departments (Art and D&T), came together with senior leaders to define our approach to teaching design. Not only did this yield the six concepts that later became Knowledge Connected, but it really moved us forward as collaborating faculties. Creativity can't flourish in isolation, and I see now that our regular meetings in the early days foreshadowed today's extensive cross-Trust network of Academic Communities. Meanwhile, Knowledge Connected became the golden thread of creativity enhancing the curriculum – not just our special 'Key Concept' days, but the opportunity for the students to take a lateral approach to each subject.

In 2013, Creative Education Trust commissioned HMDT Music to devise a schools' project to celebrate the centenary of the birth of the great English composer **Benjamin Britten**. Five secondary schools worked with professional writers and composers to transform local lore into a new folk song. They performed their songs together under the banner 'New Folk in Town' at Abbeyfield School, along with some of Britten's beloved *Friday Afternoon* songs. In the years since, HMDT Music has produced an annual two-day **Shakespeare festival**, now presenting eleven productions; while **Chorus**, a programme developed for us by the Voices Foundation, continues to develop our choral ensembles and solo singers.

The chance to add an extra GCSE in Resistant Materials, as a practical addition to Engineering, was a highlight of Adam's secondary school years. He remains grateful to the teacher who committed the extra time and fuelled his interest in design. "She's a good example of how dedicated all the teachers were to the subject they taught. I came out of Caister with a really good education. There were great creative departments, workshops and equipment: I learnt so much about making and designing. The creative subjects were valued as strongly as the straight academic ones."



Ben Driver
Principal,
Caister Academy

'Creative education' is a very good selling point to colleagues considering a job with us. The name of the Trust isn't generic or honorific, and we find that candidates really buy into the idea. Teachers especially feel quite strongly about education linking everything together – which is how we describe creativity – and it also gets across the idea that we're about more than grades. I think of the creativity very much in terms of the values being in the right place – not just focused on academic performance, but on where our students finish up after several years with us. If we get that focus sharp, then the performance comes naturally. The best example is attendance – if we make school awesome for the students, they'll show up every day.

Creative Education Trust schools teach **Art** and **D&T** with six concepts to the fore: **structure, pattern, meaning, performance, human interaction** and **practice**. A rich bank of exemplar teaching resources was developed by the early member schools in collaboration with professional designers and colleagues from the central Programmes team. Later framed as our unique creative education programme, Knowledge Connected, these now furnish eleven secondary schools with the means to connect what is learned in practical, creative subjects with the rest of the curriculum.

Continuing his education at East Norfolk Sixth Form College, Adam took 3D Design, Photography and Biology, thinking of a career as a radiologist. Recognising that he thrived "doing something creative", he switched his attention to design courses. Plymouth stood out not only for its facilities but because it was next to the sea and reminded him of home. He's made the most of "all of the natural surroundings that Devon has to offer" as a member of the mountain biking and paddle boarding societies.

Caister prepared him well for university; "I was ready to work with lots of different materials, it's just on a bigger scale here". Among other live projects as an undergraduate, Adam worked with the RNLI (the lifeboats charity) on a wearable device to raise awareness of cold-water shock, which is a key factor in deaths by drowning. His graduation project – casting

"I hadn't seen anything like it before, which is why I took it on. And bringing Norfolk reed to Devon was close to my heart."

Norfolk reed into ceramics to create designs for lighting – integrated the skills he acquired as a teenage roof thatcher in Norfolk. "I hadn't seen anything like it before, which is why I took it on. And bringing Norfolk reed to Devon was close to my heart." Items associated with his final collection have been commissioned by the contemporary ceramics gallery, Thrown.

Adam's own experience commits him personally to the widening participation agenda: "I wasn't an A* student at school, but I was still able to go to university and follow my dreams. I want students in school to know that. And if you're worried about money, there are so many awards and scholarships that it shouldn't be a barrier either."

Adam Southgate

Left **Caister Academy** (Great Yarmouth) in 2016 and graduated in 2021 with a degree in 3D Design from Plymouth University.





Vikram Kumar Khosla

Left **Weavers Academy** in 2018 and graduated in 2021 from the University of Warwick with a degree in Philosophy, Politics and Economics.

So many memories!” Vikram glows in response to a question about what school was like. “The young Teach Firsters, especially, straight out of university,” epitomised the push to aim high. He was put forward for Realising Opportunities and other schemes that helped him make contact and visit universities, and “got involved in a lot of Creative Education Trust activities. I remember meeting the directors around school because they used to ask me how I was doing.”

Vikram took history, geography and maths at Weavers’ sixth form, which, being small, didn’t offer economics and politics. But it meant small classes and good conversation with teachers, which, along with good colour added to his UCAS application from all the extra-curricular activities, got him into a very competitive undergraduate course. At Warwick, he has zealously pursued career openings, both through university and off his own bat. He’s had internships with major financial service providers and was picked from thousands of applicants to do a 6-week stint at the Bank of England in 2019 – “so hands-on and practical; delivering presentations, researching, organising data and offering recommendations.”

When Vikram graduated from the school parliament and school senate to Head Boy, the sixth form leadership team were charged with improving the learning environment for their younger peers. They set up and organised a mentoring scheme – using skills that are so important – and in retrospect, he credits the resilience and independence he learned at school with underpinning his academic and practical success at university. In a similar vein, he mentored as an undergraduate ambassador for First Gens, supporting students who are the first in their families to go to university.

He is also an alumni advisor for Sutton Trust, with an intimate understanding of the obstacles students face, bereft of the structures and the constant feedback loop of school. “It’s not easy to get into

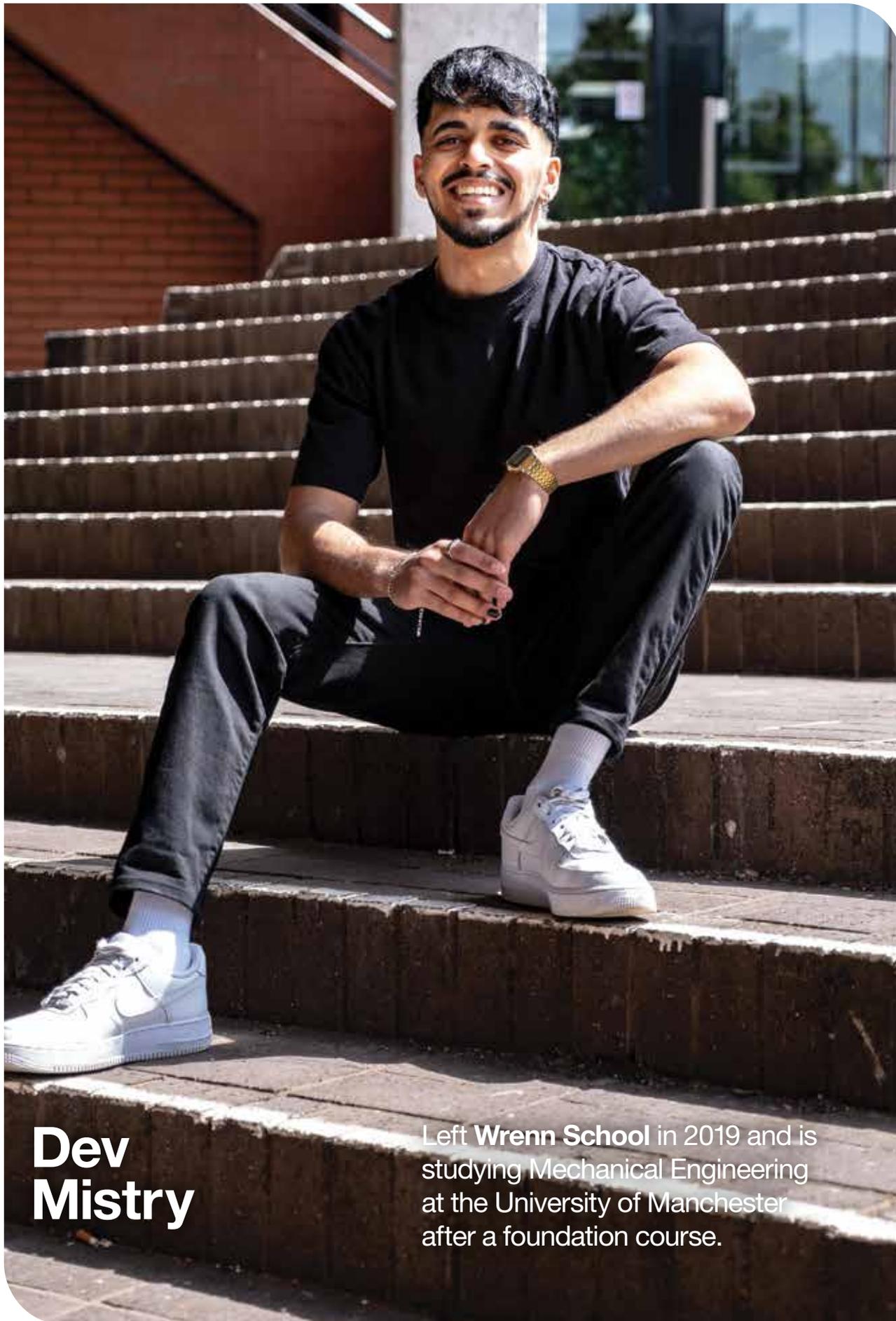


Vivien Swaida Principal, Weavers Academy

I started my career as a jobbing orchestral player on the regional circuit. I’d always loved teaching and took to my first posts in tough, inner-city schools like a duck to water. As Head of Creative Arts at a school in North London, I put on *West Side Story*. The tough story and dancing were close to the marginalised and disengaged students, who can get led in the wrong direction if they don’t have a good outlet for their creativity. These students excelled in the show. The friction between their backgrounds eased as the rehearsals went on; and it continued beyond the life of the musical. The attitude of the staff towards them changed too. Weavers was close to ‘Special Measures’ when I arrived, but the Trust put my innate creative skills to use. It wasn’t about imposing a paradigm but helping leaders develop a strong set of skills and moulding them towards a certain direction of practice – much as I had done with my students. It was pointed out that, as a musician, I would never tick boxes but explore how the creativity of those around me could be used. I was encouraged to sit in the middle so I could see the faces of the class – to look and listen, as I would when improvising in an ensemble.

Creative Education Trust’s tenth anniversary is a platform for the launch of an alumni network with several objectives: to integrate the voice of former students into our narratives of school improvement and creative education; to support our alumni in the early stage of their careers; to develop individual schools’ alumni networks; to collate information on alumni destinations methodically; and to support current students considering their options after school.

university,” he points out. “It’s not only that you need inspiration and motivation, but also that you might not know people in your town who’ve done it. But don’t assume you can’t, and don’t let your context hold you back.” Vikram brims with ideas for how the Creative Education Trust alumni project might be taken forward.



**Dev
Mistry**

Left Wrenn School in 2019 and is studying Mechanical Engineering at the University of Manchester after a foundation course.

Dev was conscious of being a leader at school, taking on offices of a form rep and then prefect, which trained his networking and group project skills, as well as making him “better at reaching out to others” to get them involved in activities planned by the team. Already a budding engineer, he applied himself to several extracurricular activities on the menu at Wrenn, which included Lego Mindstorms, basic robotics, and computer coding.

In sixth form, Dev studied maths, physics, RE and law. In a tight-knit year of fewer than 60 students, there were a lot of discussions and debates, and plenty of independence

“Being a form rep and prefect made me better at reaching out to other people to get them involved in what we’d planned.”

under the guidance of close and responsive teachers who “never saw us as numbers, but as individuals.” Although disappointed not to get the grades he expected, he did a foundation year at the University of Manchester before starting his degree. “I really like Manchester because of the layout and that it was based in the city,

rather than on campus. I’m also a big Manchester United fan with a season ticket for Old Trafford next year.”

“Always quite nerdy about things,” Dev thought mechanical engineering would open a lot of possibilities. “I was into Lego and building things from a young age, and I enjoyed creating something from scratch; things that got progressively more technical.” Marvel films were a related enthusiasm, especially the science and design behind the Iron Man series, and this led him naturally to engineering at university. “Uni has been tough with all the labs shut down during the pandemic,” he reports, “but the maths modules have been especially rewarding even from home.” He looks forward to joining more societies as the campus re-opens and has signed up to be a peer mentor for first-year students.

The highlight of his two Manchester years has been “the personal growth I’ve experienced, moving away from home, doing everything for myself and becoming my own motivator.”

Creative Education Trust is now in a strong position to launch its first **Einstein prizes** for science. Students will compete with peers from the other member schools on a variety of challenges – to include recognising the diverse origins of scientific discovery over the centuries, acknowledging science’s contribution to new product development in pursuit of greater utility, efficiency and sustainability, and a regular series of quizzes using the technology in which we have all become so much more fluent during the Covid pandemic.



Marianne Blake
Principal, Wrenn School

If we want education to function in an ever-evolving world, it should never be separated from creativity; from a solution-focused, problem-solving mind that asks, “Here’s one possible answer, but what about this other one? And what about this one?” In a student’s portfolio, creativity is their remit to brainstorm, analyse, and evaluate from every perspective – economic, ergonomic, semiotic, aesthetic – with a target in view. Design, architecture and engineering are full of science, and these creative subjects make you constantly transfer what you know to new contexts. Once they develop that way of thinking, they can apply it to any problem they come across. With Covid, look at all the evolving scenarios schools have examined to come up with the optimal solutions time after time. And we’ve achieved it in teams made up of different academic disciplines – history, science, maths and the rest – who certainly don’t think in the same way. The preoccupation with EBacc quotas prevents us from seeing what creative subjects could add, considering how much the wealth generated by the creative industries contributes to our socio-economic stability as a nation.

Emily Campbell

Director of Programmes
Creative Education Trust



In considering creativity, thinkers from Leonardo da Vinci to Ralph Waldo Emerson have stressed connection and combination over the conception of discrete and original things. A recent Headmaster of Eton College mourned the exam system that separated knowledge into different subjects as the enemy of 'nimble' and lateral insight. The late Steve Jobs put it straightforwardly in a 1990s interview: "Creativity is just connecting things."

To define creativity for ourselves in the early days of Creative Education Trust, we named six big ideas that are important to consider in any undertaking – for academic study, in business and professional practice, or as members of society. Because one or more of the six concepts influences any situation, the framework gives us a way to connect or compare one situation with the next. As our illustrious forebears observed, this ability to spot or make connections is the essence of creativity.

Creative Education Trust schools build the six concepts of Knowledge Connected into the curriculum so that they become creative habits of mind for every pupil in our schools, and tools for life. The first is Structure – the shape and scale of things,

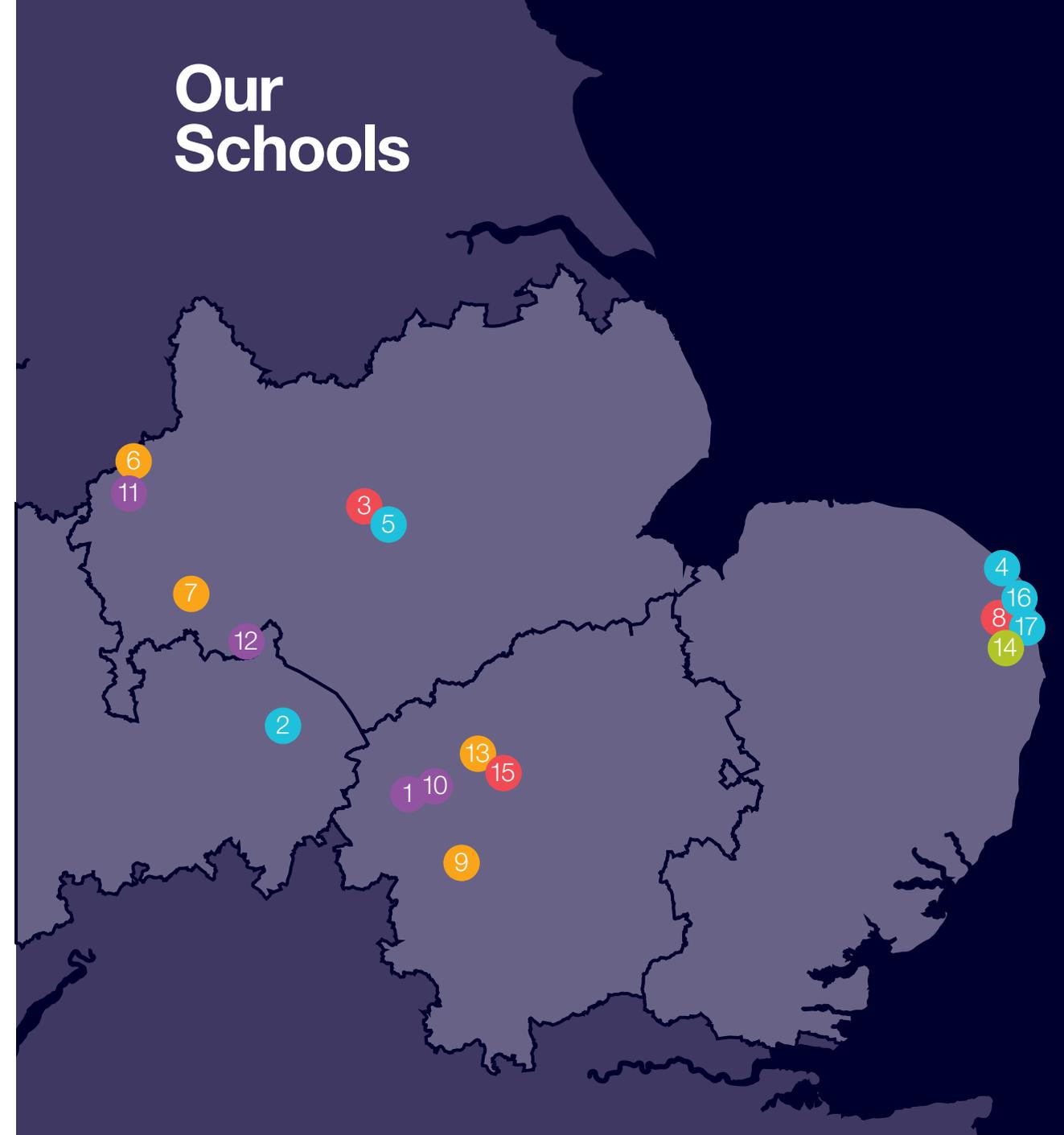
“As our illustrious forebears observed, this ability to spot or make connections is the essence of creativity.”

their order or sequence, and the way the parts fit together. Next comes Pattern – repetition or series, a set of common features, or a rule that controls variation. Meaning is the power of things to signify, symbolise, represent, or seem associated with other things; while Performance is how something works or why it doesn't. Human Interaction is understanding what others are like, how they behave, and the risk inherent in any enterprise that involves other people. Finally, Practice tells us that action counts: writing, making or doing something to prove, or 'materialise', what you know and share it.

In Creative Education Trust schools, you will see pupils engaged in cross-Trust challenges – a Shakespeare festival, vocal and instrumental ensembles, and prizes in photography, creative writing, poetry, public speaking, science, sport, debate and essay writing – in which hundreds of children across the country deepen their understanding of structure, pattern, meaning *et al* in practice. Year 7 and 8 pupils – sometimes over a thousand on the same day – spend whole days immersed in a single concept such as pattern, meaning or human interaction, interpreted through every subject in the curriculum.

The language and vocabulary of the six concepts of this creative vision, Knowledge Connected, enliven the hallways and classrooms of the schools as reminders of how fundamentally they frame our lives and work. Our twelve alumni are walking ambassadors.

Our Schools



- | | | | |
|---|---|----|--|
| 1 | Abbeyfield School, Northampton | 10 | Queen Eleanor Primary Academy, Northampton |
| 2 | Ash Green School, Coventry | 11 | Thistley Hough Academy, Stoke-on-Trent |
| 3 | The Bulwell Academy Nottingham | 12 | Three Peaks Primary Academy, Tamworth |
| 4 | Caister Academy, Great Yarmouth | 13 | Weavers Academy, Wellingborough |
| 5 | Ellis Guilford Academy, Nottingham | 14 | Woodlands Primary Academy, Great Yarmouth |
| 6 | Harpfield Primary Academy, Stoke-on-Trent | 15 | Wrenn School, Wellingborough |
| 7 | The Hart School, Rugeley | 16 | Wroughton Infant Academy, Great Yarmouth |
| 8 | Lynn Grove Academy, Great Yarmouth | 17 | Wroughton Junior Academy, Great Yarmouth |
| 9 | The Milton Keynes Academy, Milton Keynes | | |



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