

The Apprentices

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



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

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

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

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

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

97%

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

