Our Community Matters

April 202! Issue 2!



The latest news, views, and announcements for the Community Academies Trust





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Welcome Back!

We hope everyone had a fantastic Easter break! As we gear up for the summer term and the nicer weather (we hope), we have lots of news and updates to share.

Firstly, can we just give a huge shoutout to everyone who took part in our World Book Day (WBD) and Science Quizzes and competitions. The entries were absolutely amazing, full of creativity and talent. From



stunning, imaginative book titles depicted inside boxes to the amazing displays of teamwork and knowledge from our English and Science boffins the pupils were fantastic ambassadors for their schools and went away with trophies and prizes galore.

We're also ramping up the arrangements for our first whole trust conference day, CATalsyt25, coming up soon Friday 27 June 2025. This event will focus on behaviour and will be led by the fantastic <u>Tracey Campbell</u>. (click to watch video). It's going to be a day packed with insightful discussions and workshops focusing on pupil behaviour. It will be exciting to see everyone in our trust together. Imagine what a sight that will be -everyone together in the same room (don't worry, it's a huge room).

This issue, we're putting the spotlight on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its role in education. Our Specialist Network Group on Assessment has been exploring AI this year, and we're thrilled to share their findings and the AI tools they've been looking at.

In our "Education Matters" section, we're featuring the No More Marking Blog and their research on whether Al can assess writing. Spoiler alert - it can! This exciting research could change how assessment and feedback might be approached in our schools.

We hope you enjoy this issue and find the articles of interest. As always, we love hearing your feedback and look forward to another great half term together.

Michelle Borders Editor



Message from Philip Hamilton OBE, CFO



We all come to work for a variety of reasons - you have chosen to work in a profession and a working environment that is focussed on the noblest of objectives - educating the next generation.

Education really does provide a master key to unlock positive and successful futures for the young people in our care. More than that, it enables social mobility and, in some cases, actually saves lives. Our work is challenging and occasionally the reasons we do what we do can get forgotten.

Many of you will have read A Catcher in the Rye by JD Salinger, the following extract is significant for me. The metaphor is literally one of saving lives which surely is what the best education actually does:

"Anyway, I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in this big field of rye and all. Thousands of little kids and nobody is around - nobody big I mean, except me. And I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What do I have to do? I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff. I mean if they're running, and they don't look where they are going I have to come out of somewhere and catch them. That's all I do all day. I'd just be the catcher in the rye and all. I know it's crazy but it's the only thing I'd really like to be"

Never underestimate the importance of your work - whatever role you have in our trust, you are making a huge difference.

My thanks and very best wishes for the term ahead.

Philip Hamilton OBE, CEO

Ensuring Excellence

Snapshots of what our schools have been up to this half term.

Wilnecote Head Teacher Whips Up a Storm in Culinary

Classroom by Carl Savage, The Wilnecote School

Students at The Wilnecote School enjoyed a hands-on culinary experience this week, as Headteacher Mr Foskett took to the cooking classroom to demonstrate his signature smoked pancetta cod dish.



The Year 8 class were excited for the lesson, where Headteacher Mr Foskett showcased his favourite recipe, complete with smashed sweet potato, lentils,

and prawns. He was ably assisted by two eager sous chefs, students Morgan C and Emily M, who helped bring the dish to life.

Within the school's dedicated cooking classroom, the air filled with the enticing scent of smoked pancetta and fresh seafood. Headteacher Mr Foskett guided the students through each stage of the recipe, explaining the intricacies of flavour combinations and the importance of fresh ingredients.



"It's always a pleasure to share my passion for cooking with the students," Mr Foskett said, "This session was a fantastic opportunity to encourage them to explore new tastes and techniques within our well-equipped cooking classroom." The Year 8 pupils actively participated in the tasting, offering enthusiastic feedback on the various elements of the dish. "I never thought I'd like lentils," said one Year 8 student, "but Mr Foskett made them taste amazing! It was really cool to see our headteacher cooking for us."

The students were then given the enjoyable task of scoring Mr Foskett's culinary prowess, with the headteacher receiving high marks for both taste and presentation.

The lesson provided a practical and engaging learning experience, demonstrating how culinary skills can be both enjoyable and educational. The success of the session suggests that Mr Foskett's smoked pancetta cod could become a popular dish amongst Wilnecote families.





A Swing at Success: Polesworth Sixth Form Students Explore Careers at The Belfry



The Belfry Hotel and Resort recently visited The Polesworth School Sixth Form as part of an initiative to enhance teaching and learning about careers in golf and hospitality. The staff delivered an insightful presentation on various career paths available at the resort, including manufacturing, marketing, hospitality, horticulture, and events management.



The 32 Year 12 students, dressed to impress, were given a marketing task that challenged them to create an event within budget constraints and

propose a new initiative for the hotel and resort. They embraced this business and travel and tourism venture with

enthusiasm, presenting their innovative ideas to the group. Their creativity and ingenuity were rewarded with prizes, recognizing their hard work and dedication.



Our next adventure will take the students to the resort in May, where $% \left(1\right) =\left(1\right) \left(1$

success.

they will have the opportunity to meet professionals and learn about career opportunities firsthand. This visit will provide them with valuable insights into the day-to-day operations of the resort and the various roles that contribute to its



Finally, a select group of students will have the extraordinary opportunity to visit as VIP guests during The Masters in the summer holidays. This exclusive experience will allow them to observe workshops with professional golfers, interact with major media businesses such as Sky,

and see how VIP guests are accommodated. They will gain a behind-the-scenes look at how a prestigious event is managed, from logistics to guest services, providing them with a comprehensive understanding of the industry. This initiative not only broadens the students' horizons but also equips them with practical skills and knowledge that will be invaluable in their future careers. The partnership between The Belfry Hotel and Resort and The Polesworth School Sixth Form exemplifies the importance of real-world learning experiences in preparing students for the workforce.



Introducing....

Our Network Groups... This issue shines a light on the **Assessment Specialist Group**. By Paul Hewitt, Chair of Group, The Telford Langley School

How can AI tools be used to support teaching, learning and assessment?

The focus of the assessment group this year is the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools. The group is exploring several areas, including understanding what AI is, recognizing the value of different types of AI, understanding the basics of prompt engineering, ethical considerations of AI, understanding how AI can be used for student support, and reviewing various Al tools.



In the first session, the group examined using Chat GPT to develop a comprehensive ChatGPT scheme of learning, including lesson plans and resources from an initial course specification. The prompts required for this included research and planning, content creation, customization, assessment preparation, feedback integration, and continuous

improvement. You can find some of the best prompts for teachers using Chat GPT here.

The Department for Education (DFE) released guidance for schools around Al, recognizing opportunities such as creating educational resources, lesson and curriculum planning, tailored feedback and revision activities, administrative tasks, and supporting personalized learning. They noted that generative AI has the potential to reduce workload across the education sector and free up teachers' time, allowing them to focus on delivering excellent teaching. However, they also identified challenges, emphasizing that AI should be used safely and effectively.



The DFE has funded Oak National Academy to develop AI tools for teachers, including Aila, an AI-



powered lesson assistant. In the second session, Grange Park shared their experiences using TeachMateAl, which is designed to save teachers and leaders hours of work per week, enhancing personalized learning and focusing teaching on individual needs. TeachMateAl features include comprehension generators, differentiated text, WAGOLL generator, model text generator, and slideshow generator. More details can be found at TeachMateAl.

Neil Coleman shared Birchwood's work with Olex AI Primary, a tool built to harness generative AI for teaching, marking, and providing feedback on student writing. Olex. Al offers features such as Al handwriting recognition, individual and class feedback, EAL translation, AI lesson plans, Olex Analytics, the imaginator, imaginator storybooks, and Snap Snap for marking multiple essays simultaneously. More information is available at Olex Al Primary.







All sessions delivered by the assessment specialist group are recorded and saved in a shared folder. If you would like access to the shared folder to watch any recordings from previous sessions, please email paul.hewitt@taw.org.uk to be added to the distribution list.

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From Chalkboards to Chatbots: Al's Role in Modern Classrooms Ready reckoner for the tools referred to in Paul's article.

CHAT GPT

- **Research and Planning:** Identify key topics and themes for the curriculum. Use to gather information, generate ideas, and explore relevant educational content.
- **Content Creation:** create lesson plans, activities, and instructional materials. Input specific requirements and let the AI suggest detailed content including examples, explanations, and questions.
- **Customization:** Tailor the generated content to fit the specific needs of your class. Modify and adapt suggestions to align with learning objectives and students' abilities.
- **Assessment Preparation:** generate quizzes, tests, and discussion questions. Ensure that the assessments are designed to evaluate the comprehension and application of the curriculum content.
- **Feedback Integration:** Incorporate feedback from students and colleagues to refine the curriculum resources. Use to brainstorm improvements and adjustments based on the feedback received.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Regularly update and enhance curriculum resources. Use for ongoing support in introducing new topics, keeping content current, and maintaining engagement.

Introducing Aila

The DFE have funded Oak National Academy to develop AI tools for teachers that will help to speed up lesson planning and reduce workloads. Oak recently launched Aila, an AI-powered lesson assistant that creates lesson plans and resources.

TeachMate Al

Enhances Personalised learning and offers the opportunity to design the teaching to the individual child, school or local context.

- Comprehension Generator any topic (Love To Read / Chapters)
- Comprehension Generator based on a pasted text
- Differentiated Text (Adaptive Learning) make a piece of text more accessible
- WAGOLL Generator
- **Model Text Generator** (select key features you wish to include personalise the text)
- Slideshow Generator

Olex Al Primary

A new AI tool for educators, built to harness the incredible power of generative AI, offering a full suite of tools for teaching, marking, and providing feedback on student writing. Some of the features offered include:

- **Al Handwriting recognition -** Schools and year groups can use handwritten work by uploading photos.
- **Individual and class feedback** -Dramatically reduces marking time and provides rich individual feedback across Year 1 to Year 11 including GCSE and iGCSE.
- **EAL translation** Translates English writing feedback into students' native languages, improving academic outcomes for EAL students.
- Al lesson plans Addresses specific needs of students by analysing feedback.
- Olex Analytics allows progress in writing skills to be tracked over the year
- The Imaginator allows image creation linked to writing of both fiction and non-fiction
- **Imaginator Storybooks** allows books to be generated for an entire class pulling together each students own carefully crafted writing illustrated by the imaginator.
- **Snap Snap** Marks a whole class of 30 essays at the same time. Simply snap handwritten essays, and Olex.Al will convert the essays to text.



Training News....

The Community Academies Trust supports colleagues to develop professionally, creating a community of learners, striving to achieve excellence

Safeguarding in the Digital Age: Protecting Young Lives

Where: Birchwood Primary School

When: Tuesday 30 September 2025

Session 1: 10-11.30 Session 2: 1-2.30 Session 3: 3.30-5.00



Due to an OFSTED visit, this event will take place in the autumn term. If you have already booked onto this event, new details will be sent to you directly. If you would like to register your interest, then please email ioe@cateschools.uk

UPCOMING Safer Recruitment Training Sessions: Refresher Training: Tuesday 10 June 2025: Online 9am-1pm

Safer Recruitment Full Course: 1 July 2025 and 8 July 2025, IoE Training Centre, Dordon Primary School Face to Face 9am -1pm both days.



Why you need to make sure your Safer Recruitment Training is up to date.

Safer recruitment training is essential for anyone involved in recruitment within schools. Here's why:

Protecting Pupils: Ensures only suitable individuals are employed, preventing harm and abuse.

Heightened Vigilance: Equips staff to recognize warning signs and red flags, safeguarding students from potential threats.

Legal Compliance: Ensures staff understand and follow legal safeguarding protocols, protecting the school from legal issues.

Cultivating a Safety Culture: Fosters a culture of safety, reassuring parents and the community of the school's commitment to student protection.

Enhanced Recruitment Processes: Provides tools for thorough recruitment, making informed hiring decisions

Building Trust and Confidence: Demonstrates the school's dedication to safeguarding, strengthening trust and confidence among stakeholders.

Contact <u>ioe@catschools.uk</u> to book your place.

Education Matters

If you would like to submit an article, we would love to hear from you. Email: communications@catschools.uk



Spotlight on Al

So, can Al assess writing? From their <u>No More Marking Blog</u>, here are the results of Daisy Christodoulou and Chris Wheadon's large scale Al enhanced comparative judgement trial.



At the end of January, the CJ Lightning Al assessment project was launched to evaluate student writing using Al. The project involved 5,251 Year 7 students from 44 secondary schools, who wrote responses about improving the environment. Teachers uploaded these writings, and both humans and Al judged them using Comparative Judgement (CJ), where judges compare two pieces of writing and choose the better one. This method has been used since 2017 with high reliability.

The AI made 81% of the same decisions as human judges, who typically agree 87% of the time. Most disagreements were due to human errors, not AI mistakes, with AI highlighting human biases and errors. The AI's scores correlated well with previous assessments, showing it judges similarly to humans. CJ allows direct comparison of work to maintain standards, and AI provided stable results with minimal deviation.

Unlike traditional AI grading, CJ AI makes comparative judgments, aligns with valued writing aspects, and integrates into a statistical model to minimize errors. Combining human and AI judgments ensures reliability, with a recommended split of 10% human and 90% AI. One teacher validated AI decisions for 269 students in 1 hour 12 minutes, while shared workload among teachers took 5-10 minutes each. The project included direct AI feedback and AI-enhanced human feedback. **The findings determined that AI is very good at judging student writing and is a viable and time-saving alternative for many forms of school assessment that could revolutionize assessment and significantly reduce workload.**

To read the full article and to explore their blog further, click on the link in the introduction.

COMMUNITY ACADEMIES TRUST Institute of Education

CAT Institute of Education Matters

A spotlight on the trust's Centre for Teacher Training,
Professional Development and school improvement by Alexis Rickus, Director of Institute of Education

As we gear up for CATalyst25, the excitement for this event is building.

This year's event promises to be a transformative experience, focusing on the crucial aspect of behaviour in our schools. The whole trust training day, hosted by Tracey Campbell, is set to be a highlight.

Tracey, a renowned behaviour consultant, trainer, and author, will be delivering the keynote address as well as leading the workshops throughout the day. Her insights into why it's so impactful that everyone who works in a school and has contact with our pupils should attend this whole trust day. Click on the poster to hear Tracey tell you herself why you should attend this conference.

In other news, we have been working with the Leadership and Coaching Specialist Group to put together a **Leadership Toolkit**. This comprehensive resource is designed around the new OFSTED framework to empower school leaders with the skills and strategies needed to foster positive behaviour and create a supportive learning atmosphere. The toolkit is a testament to our commitment to continuous improvement and excellence across the schools in our trust and should be ready for September.



We are also excited to share our YouTube video focused on checking for understanding, which has been distributed to our curriculum network groups for dissemination. This video is an invaluable resource for teachers, providing practical strategies to ensure that students are grasping key concepts. Checking for understanding is a critical component of effective teaching, as it helps identify areas where students may need additional support and ensures that learning objectives are being met.

Our recent celebrations for World Book Day and the science competition showcased the incredible talent and creativity of our pupils. The entries were nothing short of excellent, reflecting the dedication and enthusiasm of both pupils and teachers. These enrichment events not only highlight achievements but also makes our young people feel that they are part of something bigger than just their own school community.

Alexis Rickus

Director of the CAT Institute of Education



Banish that FOMO! Click on the flyer to listen to Tracy tell you why this conference matters!

CATalyst25

Ensuring Excellence through Networks

INSPIRING EXCELLENCE; SHAPING A STRONG, POSITIVE CULTURE

FRIDAY 27TH JUNE 2025. EASTSIDE ROOMS, BIRMINGHAM

Post-COVID classrooms need a radical, relational and restorative approach to behaviour to reestablish cooperation between students and staff.

Come and spend a whole day, looking at whole school behaviour...

Will you be the One? Keynote:

Touching the hearts of staff, changing the lives of students

Will you be the One? Workshop:

A balanced approach to whole school behaviour

Behaviour Leadership: Workshop:

Managing students, mobilising staff

Breakout Groups:

A clear plan for improved practice

Conference Facilitator: Tracey Campbell

Keynote Speaker | Behaviour Consultant | Trainer | Author

Tracey is a captivating speaker and trainer with a clear message to adults working in schools: Will you be the one

to choose to cherish your students in their challenging moments?







Network News. Update by Director Network Groups, Neil Coleman

The opportunity to be part of our Professional Networks can be a significant advantage for both schools and staff.

In addition to the benefits of collaborating with like-minded colleagues from other schools, sharing and discussing good practices at meetings and in between, these networks also provide a source of continuous professional development and training opportunities.

During Birchwood's recent inspection, the advantages of active participation in the Professional Networks were highlighted repeatedly. Inspectors commented on the high levels of subject knowledge among staff and the access they had to shared materials and other professionals through their work with local primary and secondary schools.

They acknowledged the strong training programmes and CPD offerings available to all staff. Furthermore, they praised the school's commitment to developing staff and leadership, as well as the opportunities for career progression.

This validation of the collective efforts and impact of the Institute of Education's Professional Network is a testament to the valuable contributions made by our Network leads and the staff who participate in our network groups.

"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success."
- Henry Ford.

Enrichment Events: Dates for your diaries.....



We are excited to announce the CAT Geography Competition

We are thrilled to announce the upcoming Geography competition, organized by the Geography Network Group! There are fantastic prizes up for grabs, so don't miss out on this opportunity for your pupils to shine. Here, you'll find all the details about the competition. If you attended the last network group meeting, you might already have this information. Schools have the flexibility to run the competition in their own way. For

example, Birchwood is hosting it as a 'House competition'. Key dates:

- Wednesday, 7th May: Deadline for schools to submit entries.
- **Tuesday, 13th May:** Schools select their top three entries and submit them to Katherine Davis, Chair of the Geography Network Group, at davis.k1@welearn365.com.
- **Wednesday, 21st May:** Final judging at the network meeting.

Additionally, schools can nominate their favourite entry for a special prize!

We hope you and your pupils will participate and make this competition a great success.



Stitching Together: Creating a Masterpiece of Unity

Join us for an exciting and creative adventure!

On 31st June and 2nd July, pupils from across our trust will come together to contribute to a fantastic textile art project.

We'll be creating a collaborative wall-hanging on the inspiring theme of 'Unity'.

This project will be led by the talented Mary Taylor of Crazy Mary Crafts. Mary is an experienced primary school teacher and craft tutor who brings art projects to life for schools and community groups. You can check out her amazing work on her website

https://www.crazymarycrafts.co.uk/ and the schools' gallery page of her blog. https://crazymarycrafts.wordpress.com/gallery/.

31st June at Budbrooke Primary School 2nd July at Dordon Primary School

Don't miss this chance to be part of something special! For more information, please contact Art Curriculum Network Chair, Laura Aston <u>aston.l@welearn365.com</u>

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The Big CAT Science Quiz: A brilliant display of teamwork and

enthusiasm By Emma Haynes and Becks Wilkinson, Chairs of Primary and Secondary Science





On Tuesday 11th March, 12 primary schools from the Community Academies Trust came together to compete in the exciting annual Big CAT Science Quiz, held during British Science Week. This year's event took place at The Polesworth High School, where the atmosphere was charged with excitement and focus, reminiscent of a *Mastermind* guiz show.

The theme for this year's British Science Week was 'Change and Adapt' and it was evident throughout the event as students demonstrated how they can adapt to challenging topics and questions. The quiz was a wonderful opportunity for students to showcase their scientific knowledge and it was fantastic to see so many children participating both in person and online. In a true display of British Science Week spirit, one school even dressed in lab coats for the occasion!

The quiz featured six rounds covering all three key areas of science, with rounds titled *Forces*, *The Human Body*, and *Electricity*, among others. Children worked together as teams to answer challenging

questions, demonstrating impressive teamwork, enthusiasm, and problem-solving skills.

A huge congratulations to Birchwood Primary School, who were the winners of this year's quiz! Additionally, we had a thrilling three-way tie for second place, with Windmill Primary School, The Woodlands Community Primary School and Chadsmead Primary Academy all earning well-deserved recognition for their fantastic performances.

The dedication and energy from every participant were remarkable, and the teamwork shown was a joy to watch. We are extremely proud of all the teams involved in this year's quiz. Their curiosity and passion for science were truly inspiring, and we can't wait to see what next year's event will bring.

Primary Schools Compete in Exciting CAT World Book Day Quiz by Beth Currall, Curriculum Network Chair (Secondary)



This half term The Polesworth
School welcomed several teams
from primary schools across the
trust, both in-person and
virtually, to take part in a World
Book Day quiz! Miss Currall and a
team of Year 12 English Literature
students from Polesworth created
the quiz and hosted on Wednesday
5th March, with over 40 primary

pupils taking part from Birchwood, Dordon, Stoneydelph, Chadsmead, Millfield and Wood End schools. The quiz teams were all extremely enthusiastic and it was a very close race in the end, but the Chadsmead team just pipped Birchwood to the post to take home the trophy with a grand total of 26 points! Congratulations Chadsmead (pictured with their trophy) and well done to all of the students who took part.

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Creative Masterpieces Shine in World Book Day 'Book in a Box' Competition

By Ashleigh Chamberlaine, Joint Chair English Curriculum Network Group (Primary)

The recent World Book Day 'Book in a Box' competition showcased some truly brilliant creations, sent in on Friday. Judging the event was no easy task for our governor, Elaine, who had the challenging job of selecting the winners from a pool of exceptional entries.

Elaine shared her thoughts on the competition: "I've gone through the entries and was impressed with the ingenuity and creativity shown by all the children. It was a really tough choice between all these brilliant artworks."

After much deliberation, we are excited to announce the winners:





Maya Year 2 Stoneydelph

1st place - Red Riding Hood by Maya in Year 2 at Stoneydelph





2nd place - Mr Fox by Toby in Year 3 at Stratford





Archie Year 3 Chadsmeac

3rd place - Wonka's Chocolate Room by Archie in Year 3 at Chadsmead

A massive well done to all the children involved!

Thank you once again for your involvement in this creative World Book Day competition.

Jumping for Joy: More than 2,000 CAT Pupils Get Active on National Skipping Day by Tom Chape, Curriculum Network Chair (PE)

On Friday 28th March, primary schools across the CAT took part in National Skipping Day. Over 2000 CAT pupils took part in some form of skipping related activity on the day, from nursery pupils all the way to year 6! Schools were encouraged to support as many pupils as possible to engage with skipping on the day and were provided with funding to purchase ropes. Pupils took part in a variety of skipping related activities including skipping races, using longer jump ropes, French skipping and supporting peers to learn a new skill. Said Headteacher, Mrs Rowett, "Children at Heathcote LOVED skipping day! Children in Year 6 went out to help the children in Reception classes and they had quite a lot of success! Children across the school have been skipping at breaks and lunchtimes since and it will now become a regular part of our play and lunchtime offer!"



Our Half Term in Pictures



And finally.....

Hopefully you found us on Instagram https://www.instagram.com/schoolscat/ (#schoolscat) as well as on X @SchoolsCat (#catschools). Follow us and we'll follow you back.











