

Our Community Matters

April 2022
Issue Seven



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



#catschools

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CAT Institute of Education Matters

Centre for professional
development and school
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So ,Spring has finally sprung! Going to school of a morning, I love to see the newly born lambs, frolicking about so full of life with their little tails twitching in sheer delight at simply being lambs (at this point, I choose not to think too hard about what will probably be sitting on my table come Easter Sunday). Spring mornings always bring with them the promise of warm summer days to come, and it really soothes your soul simply to take a moment and breathe. As I write this, the [Government's new White Paper](#) for Schools and the [SEND Review](#) have just been published. I've added links for anyone who would like a look for themselves.

So, apart from frolicking lambs and Govt Papers, what does this edition bring to you? It's been another great half term watching what you've all been up to in the Twitterverse and a selection of twitter extracts can be found in their customary place at the end of this issue. The children at the top of this page are from Woodlands Primary School, in Tamworth, the feature of this half term's Headspace, and I'm looking forward to reading more about Jon Baker's school and his fantastic team.

We also meet Karen Smith, who works in the central team supporting our schools with their finances and budgets and we follow Grange Park Primary School on their big adventure to Buckingham Palace.

Also, we've just started to dip our toe into Instagram. I'm still learning, so bear with me. If you have an Instagram account - as with Twitter, you can find us on @SchoolsCAT- please follow, share and tag us into your shenanigans. Thank you to all who have sent in articles, pictures or simply tagged us on #catschools on twitter. If you haven't booked for the unconference yet - [you can do so here!](#)

Michelle, Editor
Our Community Matters



Message from Philip Hamilton OBE, CEO



A warm welcome back to the summer term.

Our Trustees have agreed our new trust strategy for the next 5 years.

This strategy is about going further to fulfil our **High Ambitions** and **Excellence Outcomes**. Our trust exists to advance education for the public benefit it is there to serve the families who live and work in the communities our schools provide for. We strive to ensure excellence in everything we do. We want world-class achievement for the young people in our care and the staff who work across our schools.

Our **High Ambitions** for our young people - achievement in three main areas:

Social: They have developed and sustained excellent friendships and an ability to build mutual respect with others. They know how to behave and conduct themselves so that they are ready for the next stage in their lives.

Academic: They have developed intelligence and a broad range of knowledge and skills that equip them for the next stage in their lives.

Personal: They have personal attributes and talents that have been nurtured at school often beyond the day to day planned curriculum. They have pride and confidence in who they are and what they can achieve. They have developed essential character virtues and a crucial sense of possibility.

..and our **High Ambitions** for our staff:

All members of our staff community see themselves as learners. They are empowered to make decisions, be creative and to lead. Mutual respect pervades all relationships, working together to enhance professional growth and the consequent achievements of the young people in our care. All staff have clarity and certainty about the direction our school and trust are taking and be working on only a few initiatives at any one time with a sense of how their work is contributing to that vision. Staff co-operate with each other and are not in competition with each other - they are part of a team that ensures our schools are among the best in the country.

We are passionate community orientated educators and have determined a range of **Excellence Outcomes** for our schools. Schools that are anchor institutions for their local communities. Schools who know their communities well and have a local identity that excels at meeting local need. Those excellence outcomes are described in the document "Ensuring Excellence" that I used as a basis for my meetings with you in the autumn term. To go further in achieving these high ambitions and excellence outcomes we will innovate in 5 broad areas:

[CAT Strategic Priority 1 - Expert Governance](#)

[CAT Strategic Priority 2 - Quality of Education](#)

[CAT Strategic Priority 3 - Workforce Resilience and Well Being](#)

[CAT Strategic Priority 4 - Efficiency and Effectiveness of Operational Structures](#)

[CAT Strategic Priority 5 - Public Benefit/Civic Duty](#)

As this term progresses, we will be turning our vision for each of these priorities into actions to be implemented going forwards from September, working with Heads, governors and other colleagues and stakeholders to put our collective values into practice and move our trust from good to great.

Philip Hamilton OBE, CEO



HEADSPACE by Headteacher Jon Baker

Woodlands Community Primary School - Learning, enjoying and growing together

In the Woodlands community we believe in our motto of Learning, Enjoying and Growing Together- and are often seen as a large family, all working together. Growth is not by chance- all elements working together, regardless of role, growth happens. Creating opportunities to learn and develop RESPECT values intertwined into the primary curriculum.

At Woodlands we value RESPECT, Resilience, Empathy, Self-Awareness, Passion, Excellence, Communication and Teamwork and encourage the children to thrive, whether it be crossing a raging Amazon river, climbing a Himalayan mountain or merely starting a fire in our Forest School. The school's broad curriculum enables us to achieve our goal to help children enjoy growing through their learning journey. This is where their life adventure begins- what a privilege, to not only be along for the ride but also be a driver.

Each adult cares for the individual and works as part of the team to provide an opportunity for the children to engage in different aspects of learning and growth, preparing for the next part of their adventure and beyond.

Alongside the staff team and the SLT [Senior Leadership Team] we have an active JLT- Junior Leadership Team, made up of elected leaders. Each September we have a Democracy week where we learn about the democratic system and apply it in our school. Walls are plastered with promotional posters, assemblies

are filled with persuasive powerpoints as the children convince their peers that they should be a leader. Thursday is voting day, with whole school results shared in a WOW Assembly on the Friday. Each representative is acknowledged and the children learn that we cannot always win. The elected JLT receive badges and armbands and are celebrated for their achievement.

The JLT comprises the team leaders from our 4 teams- Ethelfleda, Offa, Peel and Grazier [Local historical figures]; and class leaders from each class across the school, helping lead the child-centred school in a way that includes the children's voice. The JLT also includes Eco leaders who lead the school in conservation and environmental issues; Play leaders who help exercise and model the RESPECT values at lunchtime with their peers.

On our Forest Days or Missions - Opportunities are provided to develop character traits and build on the children's RESPECT values. With a



“Growth is never by mere chance; it is the result of forces working together.” - James Cash Penney

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key RESPECT value at the forefront of each activity day, the children apply their curriculum learning in an exciting, adventurous context where they must work together as community citizens and learn skills that will help them when they have left school, all in a fun and engaging way. Learning skills such as how to communicate, share, lead as well as follow and practical skills of fire starting, sawing, survival and conservation.



Here at The Woodlands, success in school is celebrated alongside success out of school. They are children not just pupils. Their individual characters and skills are celebrated, whatever their achievement in and out of school on the 'Proud Crowd' - a large display as you enter the main hall. What have you done to make yourself feel proud?

As well as ongoing self-review for learning the children reflect regularly on their week and personal development- 'Reflection Friday' is an opportunity for looking back at the week and discovering what went well or not so well and what they could do differently next week to make it even better. Each child asks themselves 'What could I do differently?' This

weekly reflection enables personal growth and time to slow down and think.



It is a privilege to be able to work in a MAT where each child is an individual and treated as such, where we can share ideas and resources with like-minded heads from both primary and secondary schools. Each child has worth and we can all make a difference.

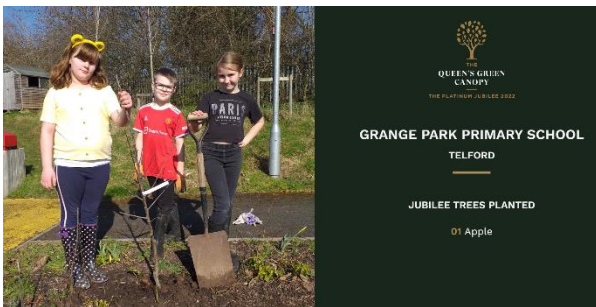


Ensuring Excellence

Grange Park Primary School, A Royal Day Out

Richard Thorpe, Headteacher at Grange Park Primary School in Telford was extremely excited to tell us that a group of six Year 4 children and three members of staff had been invited to visit Buckingham Palace.

This is as part of *The Queen's Green Canopy* (QGC), a unique tree planting initiative created to mark Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee this summer, which invites people from across the United Kingdom to **"Plant a Tree for the Jubilee."** *Click the link in the pic below to hear from the excited children.*



Grange Park Primary School got involved with this project through the Woodland Trust's Free Trees for Schools and Communities Scheme. We've met our friends at Grange Park's gardening club a number of times through previous editions of this newsletter and are familiar with how much they love their gardening.



Said Headteacher, Richard Thorpe, *"We will be the only group in attendance, which makes it even more special! Grange Park was selected because we are one of the first schools in the country to complete the Junior Forester Award. This is an award linked to The Queen's Green Canopy and part of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations!"* www.queensgreencanopy.org Watch the children planting their tree with [Sophie here.....](#)



The children met the Countess of Wessex who appeared to be enjoying the experience as much as the children. In addition to planting Tree No 1 on 'The Queen's Green Canopy' website, the group from Grange Park had a tour of the gardens, followed by hugs all round when they were presented with their commemorative Jubilee 50p coins. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity for the children and staff involved and we are so proud that Grange Park has been chosen to take part in this amazing event!



This was the day that kept giving for Grange Park as they also came away with the prize for the Best School Green Project in the Telford Community Pride Awards, sponsored by Telford Business Services.

The entertainment for the event was provided by students from The Telford Priory School, congratulations to everyone involved.



Woodloes Primary School "Kissing it Better"

The staff and children at Woodloes Primary School have been making the lives of patients and staff at their local Warwick and Leamington Hospitals a little brighter with gifts of artwork, cards, toiletries, hampers and activity packs.

The Kissing it Better campaign works to end the isolation of old age by bringing the generations together.

It aims to connect young people and older people through various inter generational projects; to improve young people's confidence, communication skills and self esteem; to help the young and old alike feel valued and valuable and to end the isolation and indignities of old age by bringing the generations together.



Woodloes Primary School has been supporting KiB since March 2020. Before Christmas the organisation launched a children's art project to help Warwick hospital patients to feel connected to the outside world during their stay. Research shows that there is growing evidence that having access to inspirational art can support the mental and physical wellbeing of older patients. Said Andy Mitchell, Headteacher at Woodloes Primary *"It's great that the children are thinking about the older people in our community and want to do something special to help them. We became involved with Kissing it Better during the pandemic, and the artwork the children have produced for the hospital wards truly does make a difference. The children love knowing that their artwork is in the hospitals cheering up the elderly residents"*.

15 February 2022

Mr Andy Mitchell
Woodloes Primary School
Deansway
Woodloes Park
Warwick
CV34 5DF

NHS
South Warwickshire
NHS Foundation Trust

Fiona Burton
Chief Nursing Officer
Warwick Hospital
Lakin Road
Warwick
CV34 5BW
Tel: 01926 495321
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Dear Mr Mitchell,

We are so pleased that you school volunteers with Kissing it Better and have continued to support our patients and staff during the pandemic.

I would like to say a huge thank on behalf of Warwick & Leamington Hospitals for the Artwork, Gift Bags, Cards, toiletries, handmade gifts, hampers, activity packs and decorations you have kindly donated to our patients since March 2020.

Most of our patients are elderly and may have a dementia (memory loss). The colourful artwork and crafts really brighten up their days and it shows how much you all care by the great effort you put in. We would also like to thank the teachers involved who help and inspire the pupils.

We look forward to working with you in the future and seeing what other innovative ideas you come up with to bring cheer to our staff and patients.

Thank you so much.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Burton
Chief Nursing Officer



World Book Day Celebrations

Around our Trust, schools undertook a myriad of activities to celebrate World Book Day. Below are just a few examples that might inspire you for next year...



As part of our World Book Day and National Careers Week celebrations, **The Telford Priory School** were delighted to invite prolific author, Ben Davis, into school for a day of celebration.

Ben, author of books such as "My Embarrassing Dad's Gone Viral" and "The Private Blog of Joe Cowley", started his visit with a presentation to all of Y7 and Y8 where students had the opportunity to ask questions and learn a little about Ben's inspiration for writing, his career so far and his hope for the future. Some even got to have a book signed by Ben!

The rest of the day was spent in small group workshops, where students were able to learn how a character for a story is developed, and what an antagonist and protagonist are. They created both characters, then outlined their own plot for a children's story. Some stand out characters included Gregory the superhero pet tortoise and Arnold Hatch, the Hawaiian t-shirt-wearing villain!

Many thanks go to Ben for working with our students. We were impressed by their excellent behaviour and engagement throughout the event."

The Wilnecote School celebrated 25 years of World Book Day in style. Many staff came to school dressed as a book character. Students were given a quiz sheet and set the task of working out the character, book title and author staff members were dressed up as. There was a great buzz around the school during the whole day as students searched and chatted, trying to figure out the different characters. It has been great to see such enthusiasm from both staff and students, whilst highlighting the World Book Day theme of "You are a Reader".



The Telford Priory School



Wood End Primary met author Lee Newbery



Stratford Upon Avon Primary School



Hazel Class at Birchwood Primary School made a massive effort!



The Telford Park School held a masked reader competition and decorated their classroom doors

Y11 Students from The Wilnecote School visit Oxford University



A group of 10 students from year 11 visited University College, one of the 38 colleges that make up Oxford University, on Tuesday 1st February. The University is aiming to increase the “outreach” work it does with state schools, to encourage talented students in these schools to apply to Oxford.

University College is the link college for schools in Staffordshire. The overall purpose of the visit was to give our students a flavour of Oxford University, and of university life in general, so as to inspire them to aim (or keep aiming) for high aspirations.

For once the M42 was kind, so we arrived early and were able to have a brief visit to Jesus College and see some of the town, including the Radcliffe Camera (part of the Bodleian library) before making our way to University College. The morning was spent touring the college with a second-year student and having an introductory talk about Oxford and what it can offer. We then had lunch in the hall before an afternoon session with 3 current students, who ran taster sessions on Physics (the origins of the universe), History (sources on Napoleon) and logical thinking (with a challenging logic puzzle).

Year 11 Emelia commented, *“I Really enjoyed the day,*

getting to experience the feeling of such a prestigious university and knowing it is within easy reach has inspired me to aim higher in my ambitions.”

After the visit, James S who sits his GCSE this year *said “Before visiting Oxford I had been considering the option of going for years. Now after having experienced both University college and the city itself the decision has only been reaffirmed as being one of the best I could ever make.”* he continued to say, *“The esteemed establishment has only motivated me to reach further.”*

Having exercised our brains, we then did a brief tour of the rest of the city, including a visit to Balliol college so that students could compare the similarities and differences between various colleges. There was then just time to grab a quick snack before an unexpectedly long wait for a Park and Ride bus and the journey home.

Mr Farrell, who organises the yearly trips and is also an ex-Oxford (Balliol College) student himself stated, *“I really enjoy organising these*



trips. Having been to a comprehensive school myself, it is really important to show our students that anything is possible and places like Oxford University are achievable for them all”.



As part of our ever-growing careers program, university visits will form a big part of the school ambition to raise the aspirations of our students. Mrs Ager who is the school's Careers Leader said *"We are really privileged to have many members of staff who attended Oxford University as students. They in turn inspire our students to aim higher and with the school having numerous alumni who have gone on to study at Oxford we are able to demonstrate that by setting student's ambitious goals, students can actually achieve anything they put their mind and energy into"*

DofE 12 Hour Challenge

Friday 11th February saw the first ever 12 hour DofE challenge take place at The Wilnecote School. Students started to filter in as early as 7:15pm and by 8pm everyone was ready to start. Whilst some groups settled into their bases, others began their first challenge – The Tower of Hanoi. A real test of teamwork, communication and logic. And this was the theme throughout. 3am arrived a lot quicker than most thought it would... what better time to start the "wet activities". The leaky pipe surely woke up some tired faces and raft building (with some very interesting designs), really made sure everyone was geared up for the remaining 5 hours of the challenge. Whether teams were completing the marble run, spaghetti towers, glow in the dark bowling, sneak a peek lego or celebrity, the enthusiasm, enjoyment and general team building was clear to see. Throughout the 12 hours, all students were fantastic. The staff also. It really was a great night, gearing us all up for the challenges the D of E bronze award will throw at us. Well done to everyone involved. I certainly cannot wait for the next event!!



Challenges galore as Wilnecote students complete activities working towards achieving their DofE Bronze Award



WOW! – what a return to Sports Hall Athletics for The Wilnecote Schoolgirls!

The Wilnecote School are the top of the town and have left their mark in Staffordshire as a team to be reckoned with.

Following their success in the district finals, the Year 7 girls Sports Hall Athletics team took to the track and field at Fenton Manor wearing the Tamworth District bib.

From the moment the girls walked into the arena, the atmosphere was tense but exciting with the high tempo music making our students feel energised and nervous as athletes from the 12 competing districts settled into their base for the afternoon.

Every member of the team prepared themselves physically for their individual events with focus and showed their experience by running through their routines with skill and precision.

A few last-minute changes to the team sheets were required asking them to draw from their training experiences to compete with confidence. It was evident that these girls meant business and the leadership from their Team Manager Charlie Ireland meant that every second of their warm-up was utilised to ensure they were ready for the first event.

It is a difficult competition to recognise how successful a district is performing as each year group competition is split into two competing pools with times and distances to decide the final position in each event.

From the trackside, teams scream and cheer support for their friends as they compete in their events. Several scares caused the audience to pause their noise when an athlete tripped or stumbled on an obstacle; two involving our own runners as they clipped the top of the speed bounce.

Fortunately, our runners recovered quickly and regained their composure and made up the places they had lost before the end of the race.

All the girls gave their maximum in every event of the competition, by the end, every girl and their manager had little energy left and even less voice after all their shouts and screams of support!

As the district teams gathered on the track, in front of the podium for the results, the tension was unbearable as no one knew exactly where they had placed.

Finally, The Wilnecote School girls received their results, a stunning 3rd place and each athlete was presented with a bronze medal, a particularly impressive achievement as this was only their second chance to compete in a full competition.

Amazingly, the top three teams in the year 7 girls competition were separated by just 2 points... just think what that extra centimetre or tenth of a second would have given us?

It is a huge achievement to represent your town – not many people have the honour to do so.

We are rightly very proud of the team for what they achieved individually, as a sports hall athletics team and for the manner in which they conducted themselves throughout the day, they were an absolute pleasure to watch and to be with.

Thank you for making Tamworth stand out above the rest.

Staffordshire knows that students from The Wilnecote School are top quality when it comes to sport!



Chadsmead Primary Art Attack!

Peter Thorpe Inspired Rockets

Whilst the Year 6 visited Whitemoor Lakes for their residential visit this year, Year 5 came together as a whole group of 40 pupils and learnt about the images and techniques used by Peter Thorpe, an American artist, to create his abstract space rocket inspired art work to enhance our theme of Stargazers.

After learning about who Peter Thorpe was, writing information texts and analysing his art work, children experimented themselves, mark making with chalk, paint and black sharpie, developing their ideas to create rocket inspired art work.



Children learnt how to merge earth based chalks to create light and dark as well as and mix paints from a limited primary colour palette to create their inspired works. They created a backgrounds, middle grounds and foregrounds and layered each to create their final designs during the week.

Children took time to evaluate their own and others' art work; to say what they liked and felt could be improved upon using the vocabulary from the week. All the children, thoroughly loved their finished pieces and their sketch books were amazing too, so much so that I felt compelled to email the artist himself to share our final display and a few of the children's individual pieces:

Dear Peter

Year 5 at Chadsmead Primary Academy just wanted to say a huge thank you for providing the inspiration for our art work this term. They have really loved producing backgrounds, middle grounds and foregrounds inspired by your abstract designs. So much so, that they wanted me to show you, so please find attached our recent display of over 30 pieces of wonderful art and a few of the children's favourite designs. Kind regards and many thanks, Helen Cadman.





I was therefore amazed and really touched when Peter emailed back, almost straight away, including the latest piece of his own art work:

Helen,
Thank you so much for sending these wonderful photos.
Amazing work by your students! I am honoured to have been the inspiration for their artwork. I am currently on a trip across the southwest with my girlfriend, Susan Duhi, who did the below collage of me and some of my rockets. She loves your students' work too and has suggested I post the photos on my Facebook page, which I will do later.
Thanks again!
Peter

We are so proud of our Year 5's this week and the work they produced.
We hope you like it too. Here are a few of our favourite pieces...



Introducing..... Karen Smith, Schools Support Manager for the CAT Central Team.

Many of you will already know Karen as she dates back to the time before our Trust was created and has worked with many of the schools within our community. You think you know someone, until you ask them to write one of these.....



Hello, I'm Karen Smith, Schools Support Manager in the central team.

My current role focuses on supporting all our schools with various aspects of the 'business side' of running our schools. This is mainly related to the school budgets and how they are allocated and overlaps into working closely with my Finance, HR and Payroll, Procurement, Estates and Institute of Education colleagues, who are the specialist teams. Essentially, if there isn't a named team, it falls under my remit and if it doesn't, I'm the one who needs to find out who can help! Currently, my team are working hard on forecasting what our budgets will look like in the future to ensure schools are able to make accurate plans.

When I left school, my career began at Barclays Bank, where during my 10 years with them I moved around the area from Birmingham City Centre to Tamworth, Lichfield, Chase Terrace and Atherstone. I soon found my role moving into training and although based at Tamworth branch I found myself being sent to various branches to support them when issues arose. Maybe the writing was on the wall already that I would end up in education! During a career break to have

children, where I worked part time in Specsavers and then Morrisons, I began part time courses learning office skills, typing, word processing and what was known back then as CLAIT and IBT, which is essentially how to use 'Office' software. These eventually led to a part time role as a lecturer at North Warwickshire and Hinkley College following the completion of my Certificate in Adult Education. It was a fantastic and rewarding role seeing students progress and achieve. It was not only college based but took me out into the community working with all sorts of people, including a group who suffered with dementia. I never made it back to the bank.

My journey in schools began way back when my eldest enrolled at Birchwood in the year 2000. As a naive new parent, I attended the AGM of the PTA, expecting almost everyone to be there but found that I was the only non-committee member, so was 'encouraged' to join them. I spent 8 years as Chair of the PTA which got me involved in all sorts of activities in and around school to fund raise for those things that the budget could not fully support. This led to me being asked to cover a Teaching Assistant's absence for a week. Eventually, six months later I had to leave that post for the imminent birth of my fourth child. When he was six months old, another opportunity arose, this time as a filing clerk for 10 hours a week in the office. From there I progressed to increased hours and eventually it became a full time post. I decided this was the role for me and began to take the exams in School Business Management and was the first person in the area to achieve the Certificate in School Business Management. A year later I undertook the Diploma, supported by colleagues at Birchwood to complete the endless tasks in subjects I'd never tackled before, and was eventually appointed Business Manager.

In 2012, when Birchwood was one of the founding schools of the Trust, I worked closely with the team at Polesworth to make the formation of the Trust a success and relocated to a Trust role as Primaries Business Manager soon after, assisting with the conversion of schools joining our family of schools. It is a privilege to work with such a great team across the trust and ensure that our schools are able to provide excellent education and experiences to the pupils in a wide range of demographics.

I'm a strong believer in education for the whole person and not just academia. In my opinion, education should allow the individual to fulfil their talents, encourage them, and be open to everyone, as the old saying goes, 'every day is a school day' and learning can be a lifelong thing. It's one of the reasons I like working for our Trust, as this is at the heart of its ethos.

Outside of work, my interests mainly focus on the family and spending time with my husband and four mostly grown up children, the eldest is 26 and the youngest about to turn 17. Over the years we have supported them all through school, college and university as well as the scouting movement, from Beavers to Explorers plus football, cricket, swimming and by no means least, dancing. Not an easy task when four children must be in different places at the same time, so I'm an expert in logistics! Our eldest

daughter now runs her own dance school, ably supported by her sister. All four of them have attended Birchwood and Polesworth Schools, so I know from a parent's point of view what our schools do for their pupils. One has successfully completed his PGCE and another is an Administration colleague in one of our primary schools and my husband has recently become a Teaching Assistant in another, so the Trust is becoming a real family affair for us.

Two of our children are still at home and two have fled the nest already, one living locally and another in Wales, so time spent all together is very special though not as often as we would like.

Last summer we managed a family holiday in Northumberland with all four children and two partners for a whole week, which was wonderful. We love a walk in the country or along the beach, usually followed by a cup of coffee and a slice of cake in a nice café or a bag of chips on the sea front. Now things are settling we are hoping to travel further afield and maybe sit by a pool reading a book. I'm a Musical theatre buff and love a trip to a show and have been a water baby since I was a small child, I was even captain of the swimming team, so swimming and aquacise are the perfect fitness sessions for me to get a bit of time to myself and unwind.



Congratulations to Heathcote Primary School on their first OFSTED inspection. Heathcote was recognized as being GOOD in all areas.

Their strong pastoral support was recognised and that pupils are happy, positive and confident.

https://www.heathcoteprimaryschool.co.uk/website/school_performance_and_ofsted/381383

Education Matters



Spotlight on Expert Groups

Early Reading, Literacy and Numeracy (Early Years & Primary) Expert Group led by Mark Gibbons

Exploring 'Pre-Teaching' and 'Assigning Competence' in an Expert Group

By Mark Gibbons, headteacher at Windmill Primary School and chair of the Expert Group for Early Reading, Literacy and Numeracy and Lydia Purdy, senior teacher and Mathematics lead at Birchwood Primary School

Being part of an 'Expert Group' has felt slightly weird, because none of us in the Early Reading, Literacy and Numeracy group has considered themselves to be an 'expert'. From the outset though, there has been a willingness from each of us to collaborate and to contribute.

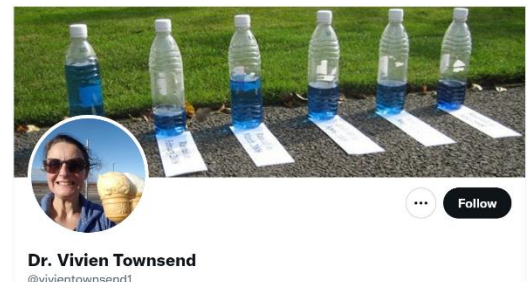
Our principal aim in being part of this group is to give children in our schools the best chance of achieving what they should be achieving, but an important secondary aim for us is to trial new things in our schools and to share the outcomes trust-wide, for the benefit of as many children as possible.

We started by inviting some 'proper experts' to advise us:



Ruth Baker-Leask, who is an author, a teacher, a director of Minerva Learning Limited and chair of the National Association of Advisers in English (NAAE) @RuthBakerLeask

And Dr Vivien Townsend, who is an experienced primary school teacher, a member of the Mathematical Association (MA), the Association of Teachers of Mathematics (ATM), and the National Association of Mathematics Advisers (NAMA) www.vivientownsend.co.uk @vivientownsend1



Ruth pointed us in the direction of 'Building Communities of Readers' (research that focuses on establishing a love of reading) and 'Bringing Words To Life' (strategies for teaching vocabulary in a more direct way).

[Building Communities of Readers - UKLA; Teachers as Readers FINAL TO KH.pdf \(open.ac.uk\)](#)
[Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction: Amazon.co.uk: Beck, Isabel L., McKeown, Margaret G., Kucan, Linda, Pikulski, John J, Silverman, Rebecca D.: 8601405872920: Books](#)

Viv recommended we focus on '**pre-teaching**' and '**assigning competence**' in Maths.

https://www.babcockldp.co.uk/babcock_ldp/Mathematics/Research/Supporting-children-to-actively-participate.pdf

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We were not unfamiliar with the idea and the practice of **pre-teaching**, but many of us have experienced the challenge of fitting this into the school day.

The phrase '**assigning competence**' was new to some of us though. Viv explained that it isn't always about increasing knowledge; it can be increasing confidence, awareness or exposure, for example.

Lydia wanted to explore how vulnerable children at Birchwood could be supported to be active and influential participants in maths lessons, using **pre-teaching** in advance of maths lessons and **assigning competence** within maths lessons.

She set up weekly booster sessions before school, for children lacking in confidence or identified as having gaps in knowledge, focusing on the pre-teaching of concepts that will be taught within maths lessons that week. She has used Mathematics Mastery diagnostic tests to assess prior understanding and potential gaps.

To test the concept of '**assigning competence**', she has focused on daily 10-minute Maths Meetings to regularly rehearse and practise key skills. She has also used the talk task element of the daily Maths lesson to show a child that they have something valuable to contribute, which also builds the child's confidence.

Lydia is already seeing that targeted children are increasing in their confidence - barriers have been broken down and children have a better belief in themselves as learners. There is also better engagement from them at the start of maths lessons. They are more readily offering contributions during lessons and more willing to respond to questioning. They are showing greater independence in maths and a willingness to think mathematically and tackle challenges.

We are really pleased to be sharing plans and findings from our trials (and tribulations) between colleagues from 7 CAT primary schools that are part of our group, and we will share a report with all schools at the end of the academic year.

Have you booked your place on the CAT's very first Unconference?

The Community Academies Trust Expert Groups invite you to attend a virtual unconference. This is a free informal event where staff of varying experience can share ideas, passions and insights on our theme of 'Collaborate and thrive'.

It is an invaluable CPD and networking opportunity for all staff within our Trust and neighbouring schools to come together with the aim of building relationships across schools, and strengthening our own individual practices.

We very much look forward to welcoming you to this exciting event!

Monday 4 July 2022

3.45pm to 6.00 pm

**Spread the
Word!**

BOOK HERE!



For the latest blog articles, subscribe to [Our Community Matters Journal](#). The OCMJ Blog presents an opportunity for colleagues across our trust to share knowledge, expertise and experiences. A sample of the latest ones are below. Ctrl + Click to read more. You can also access our expert groups and take part in our discussion forums [here](#).

Thank you to all who have contributed so far.

Please Ctrl + Select on the article to read more.



 hollyrigby 
4 minutes ago · 4 min

A profession with a problem

 2  0 

Headteacher at the Telford Park School, Holly Rigby discusses how real the gender gap is out there and what we could be doing to address this problem in our profession.

*<https://www.theocmjournals.com/post/rethinking-cpd-evaluation>
What do you think?*

Join the debate - click on the picture to read more.



 Teacher Talk 
2 days ago · 2 min

Behaviour - useful heuristics

 11  0 

The Lead Practitioner Team at The Polesworth School have been looking at Behaviour and how to use heuristics to help keep routines at the forefront.

If you let them off, you let them down.... Have you got any of your own you would like to share?



 Beth G-G 
2 days ago · 7 min

Rethinking CPD Evaluation

 7  0 

Following a fantastic ResearchEd Brum at the weekend, this session on CPD was incredibly thought provoking. Her session was packed, and she has kindly allowed me to use the summary she produced and shared on Twitter.

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

One of the main activities of our new Institute is to nurture the connections we are creating across our expert and networking groups. One of the ways we can do that is to use the online forum. Have you investigated it yet? A Forum is an excellent way to reinforce our sense of community, particularly with a family of schools with such a wide geographical reach. If you have investigated the Our Community Matters Journal, you will discover that it’s more than a repository for pedagogical articles, there is an opportunity on there for you to share your thoughts and to invite others to join you in a genuine discourse on matters that are important to you. If you have an opinion and you want to start a discussion, then why not start a forum discussion? <https://www.theocmjournals.com/forum>

I’m also hoping to get out and about this half term to visit all of our CAT schools to discuss, amongst other things, training and development plans. These discussions will hopefully inform a more bespoke CAT CPD offer when we are putting together Developing People. I look forward to chatting with you soon.

Applications for the Autumn cohort of the NPQ suite will be opening shortly. They continue to be free and you can register your interest in any of the courses here <https://www.bestpracticenet.co.uk/npq>.

And finally, there is still time to book your place on our very first CAT Unconference Collaborate and Thrive. **You can book your place via Eventbrite [here](#).**

SAVE THE DATE

Developing People - Upcoming courses....[Book Here!](#)

Please click on the links for a full description of each course.

On demand	Growing Great People Coaching Workshop , available to schools across our trust by arrangement either by Teams or Face to Face.
Ongoing	A selection of apprenticeship qualifications designed specifically with school support staff in mind.
	NPQs delivered through Best Practice Network, register for Autumn and Spring cohorts through the Best Practice website. Delivered by CAT Facilitators.
12 May 2022	Using Pupil Premium Funds effectively (for primary SLT/Headteachers)
10 June 2022	OTAP - five half day sessions.
4 July 2022	Collaborate and Thrive CAT Unconference



And finally.....

If you're still not following us on Twitter, here's a flavour of what you've been missing. The Telford Langley ICT team are bonding, The Telford Priory students have designed a sporting activity day, Telford Park's performed Beauty and the Beast and if you click on Birchwood's picture you can listen to Elm1 performing.

Our Half Term in Pictures

Sarahsecret @sarahinroyal · 20h
Ahead of the Queen's Green Canopy (QGC) initiative to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, The Countess of Wessex embraces year four schoolchildren from Grange Park Primary School in Shropshire after presenting them with commemorative Jubilee fifty pence coins.



Telford & Wrekin SSP @TWSSP · 2h
Our Year 3 @EnergizeSTW engagement event has now started at Telford Tennis Centre. The children are participating in 10 excellent activities planned & delivered by the hardworking @telfordpriory students. Thanks to participating schools. @YourSchoolGames @HealthyTF @SchoolsCat



Telford Langley School @TelfordLangley · Mar 25
Absolutely brilliant turnout to @TelfordLangley KS4 Pathway Evening yesterday! It was so good to see parents and pupils finally back in school for such an exciting event! @SchoolsCat



You Retweeted
Birchwood Primary @BirchwoodPrim · 16h
Elm 1 had great fun tapping out the beat whilst singing 'Professor Brain's amazing machine'.



Telford Langley Read @readatLangley · Mar 2
Every day is book day @readatLangley. Love the Librarians display "never judge a book by its cover" @SchoolsCat @WorldBookDayUK



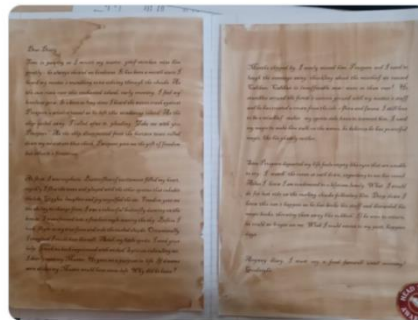
Jordan Young @JordanYoung999 · Mar 10
As a head of service your only ever as strong as the team around you and yet again I had the privilege of spending tonight with a team of dedicated people starting night one of a UPS upgrade project across @TelfordLangley to ensure our operational IT services. @SchoolsCat



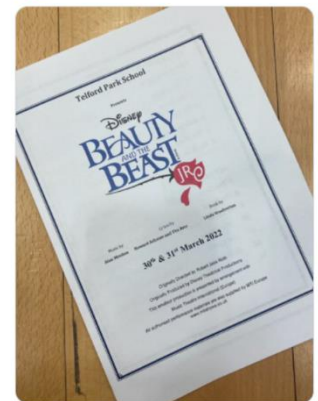
Chadsmead Primary Academy @Chadsmeadschool
#WorldBookDay is happening at Chadsmead today - the children are off to parade their outfits - the staff have already proudly done theirs....then it's time for the Masked Reader!



You Retweeted
Stratford-Upon-Avon Primary School @StratfordPrim · Mar 29
Following on from Shakespeare week, the children have been writing diary entries based on The Tempest play. Check out Joseph's Incredible writing... #catschools



Holly Rigby @HollyRigby1 · Mar 30
Fantastic opening night @telfordprksch So proud of the cast and crew



Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this issue and made this edition possible. This publication will drop into your inbox at the start of each half term. Don't forget to subscribe to the OCM Journal Please email any articles, news to communications@catschools.uk.

Our Community Matters

