

# Our Community Matters

November 2022  
Issue Ten



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



#catschools/#schoolscat

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### CAT Institute of Education Matters

Centre for professional  
development and school  
improvement

EDUCATION IS FOR IMPROVING LIVES AND FOR  
LEAVING YOUR COMMUNITY AND WORLD BETTER  
THAN YOU FOUND IT.

CELEBRATING

10  
YEARS



COMMUNITY  
ACADEMIES TRUST

A fortuitous event that this is the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the OCM just as we enter our 10<sup>th</sup> year of becoming The Community Academies Trust. A landmark event, and something to celebrate I'm sure you'll agree.

So much has happened in 10 years! For those of us who have been around and witnessed the changes, it seems like a blink of an eye looking back. I still have my commemorative pen and pencil set to remind me of when Polesworth academized. We started with 3 schools and now we're 18! A huge growth in such a short time. We've dealt with teaching in a global pandemic, getting to grips with new technologies, we've evolved our ways of working to meet the needs of a constantly changing world.

In this issue we find out more about two of our founding schools, The Polesworth School and Birchwood Primary School and we discover more about our founding trustees, Philip and Ed.

But 10 years is not just about looking back, cocooned in the blissful warmth of nostalgia; it's about looking forward to what's coming in the future. I'm excited to see what the next 10 years will bring. Wish I had a crystal ball.....

As ever, enjoy this issue and I look forward to seeing you all again when we're back from our festive celebrations.

Michelle, Editor  
Our Community Matters



## Message from Philip Hamilton OBE, CEO



It was the year Queen Elizabeth II celebrated 60 years on the throne and the year we all shared in the collective pride for the UK's successes in the home Olympics and Paralympics. It was also the year Barack Obama was president of the US, the UK was a member of the European Union with David Cameron as prime minister leading a coalition government. He was the youngest PM for centuries aged 43, now recently beaten by Rishi Sunak who is 42.....

It was also the year - on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2012, that Community Academies Trust became an established multi academy trust with the founding schools; The Polesworth School where I was Headteacher at the time, Birchwood Primary School where Ed May was Headteacher and our first sponsored academy - Dordon Primary School where Moira Cross (now Executive Headteacher of Dordon and Wood End Primary Schools) was Deputy Head.

The 10 years have flashed by and our trust has been through several distinct phases - including rapid growth through sponsoring schools in challenging circumstances and welcoming other schools who wished to join us. At one stage we were growing at 3 schools every year. We then entered a phase of bespoke school improvement, where sponsored schools improved and changed the profile of our trust considerably. We are now a mature, settled and secure trust of 18 schools ready for the challenges that are to come.



Some of you may remember this image I have used in several of my staff presentations. Pupils from Dordon Primary School back in 2012. These pupils are now in Y10, and we believe all but one of them are still in a Trust school. They are having a high-quality community school based state education that is replicated across all our schools, and I am hugely proud of this every day.

We will not be resting on our laurels. The trust strategy that I am talking to colleagues about in my staff meetings this term, will result in material changes and improvements across all our schools and will make our trust an even better place to learn and work. I have been hugely appreciative of the contributions colleagues have made in these staff meetings and these will influence the innovation to come.

The trust's achievements are of course our collective achievements. Every member of staff and all the volunteers who work in, support and govern our schools have had and continue to have a crucial role creating positive life chances for the children and young adults in our care. None of it is possible without our people. My personal thanks as ever to you all.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Philip'.

Philip Hamilton OBE, CEO

# Head Space

Schools in the Spotlight:

## Birchwood Primary School

by Headteacher Neil Coleman



*A school built on "Consideration and Respect"*

**10 years ago in November 2012 Birchwood Primary, along with The Polesworth School and Dordon Primary, converted to academy status and the Community Academies Trust was born.** 10 years on, CAT now comprises 18 schools who all value being part of the Trust and working alongside and collaborating with other likeminded schools. Our schools are all at different points along their journey, but we all have so much to offer and so much to learn from each other. Part of our Trust values are that staff all see themselves as learners who are empowered to make decisions, be creative and lead. I believe that this is what makes our Trust unique and why I am proud that Birchwood is a founding member of the Community Academies Trust.

My own journey at Birchwood started when I was appointed Deputy Head in 2009. After 8 years of teaching, I was ready for a new challenge. Despite a distinct lack of experience compared to other candidates being interviewed for the post, I managed to make just enough of a good first impression to be offered the job. Allan Ravenscroft was on the panel that day, so you all now know who to blame!



Birchwood certainly was a challenge! As many of the other North Warwickshire schools similarly experienced at that time, Birchwood felt forgotten, alone and disconnected. Local schools were in competition, only working together when forced to. It seems unthinkable now, but Mrs Cross and I were appointed as new Deputy Head Teachers on the same day at Dordon and Birchwood (schools just 2 minutes apart) but we didn't speak for 3 years until the two schools joined the Trust.

I was excited to start my new role at Birchwood, but the promise of coming in as a fresh pair of eyes to support new ideas and ways of thinking, was far from the reality I encountered and I was faced with a school that was not ready or willing to consider change.

Roll on 13 years and Birchwood feels a very different place. As the school has grown and matured, so too have we as a staff group. For a school that once had a resistance to change, we are now a school that never sits still, always looking to innovate and improve, striving for the very best for each and every one of our 450 children. And it is the children and staff at Birchwood that make it such a fantastic place to be. There is no secret ingredient or magic spell, it is simply that we are very fortunate to have brilliant, dedicated staff who all go above and beyond for our children, and in return we have a group of children who all try their best, love school and are excited to learn.

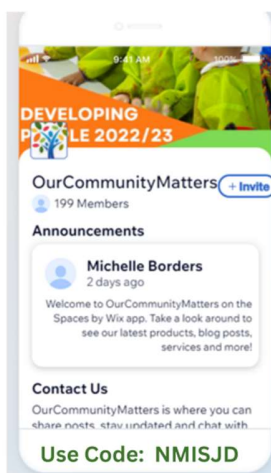
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Our school is built on 'Consideration and Respect' and that ethos and expectation flows through our school. We have had many visitors who report that they can feel the 'positivity' as they walk through the door. This is something that we have worked hard together to achieve and something that we never take for granted.

Children are at the heart of all we do. Our children benefit from the 'Rich Opportunities and Memorable Experiences' that our bespoke, broad and balanced school curriculum and wider curriculum provide. We want our children to grow into confident, independent young adults who are ready and able to successfully take the next steps in their education and make a positive contribution to society. A member of staff from The Polesworth School once shared with me 'whether in lessons or just on site, without asking, you can tell which Year 7 children have come from Birchwood'. (I am hoping this was meant in a positive way!)



I am extremely proud to be the Headteacher of Birchwood Primary School and feel privileged to be able to do this job every day. I am always keen to celebrate our school achievements amongst our school community but take a reserved approach to talking up our practice in a wider context, preferring to keep our heads down and get on with what we believe is right for our school and children. Even writing this article is something that I feel uncomfortable doing and will worry about other's perceptions. That does not mean however, that we are a closed book and are not willing to show and share the work that we do. We are keen to collaborate with others and our doors are always open. We very much encourage and welcome everyone to come and spend some time in our school, talking to staff and children, joining in with our learning and hopefully feeling that 'positivity'.



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# Head Space

Schools in the Spotlight:

## The Polesworth School

by Headteacher Maura Favell



**In 2012 the headteachers of The Polesworth School and Birchwood Primary Schools got together and decided to form The Community Academies Trust.** Ten years on and the Trust has gone from three schools (Polesworth, Birchwood and Dordon) to eighteen consisting of 5 secondary schools and 13 primary schools. This unity of like-minded professionals has delivered collaboration, sharing of best practice and a shared moral purpose to deliver the best educational experience possible for the communities we serve.

Our core values of academic, social and personal achievement underpin every decision we make and drive our relentless desire to ensure and assure excellence.

I think it is fair to say that the last few years have tested the grit and determination of those working within schools. We adapted on what felt like a daily basis, we adopted new systems and approaches, we ensured that families within our communities had food, we offered support to key worker families and vulnerable students, we continued to teach and support students, we produced risk assessments and contingency plans galore and we looked after each other. But now, we have different and new challenges to face. We have now had to adapt to the impact of the pandemic on our individual communities by addressing issues to do with attendance and behaviour, an unprecedented number of



mental health concerns or perhaps a lack of engagement with online learning. And, at every turn, as a school, we sit at the heart of our communities and want the best for every student who comes through our doors.

Polesworth has been in a privileged position over the last ten years in that we have witnessed every stage of growth and evolution of the Trust as a whole. Being a part of this journey has afforded opportunities to staff, has allowed for partnership and collaboration that could otherwise not have taken place and has

undoubtedly had a positive impact on the young people we work with on a daily basis.

In 2021 however, Polesworth reached its own milestone of celebrating 140 years of providing education. In 1881 approximately twelve students regularly attended Polesworth and paid 1p for the privilege of being taught to read and write. Today we stand at approximately 1560 students who have a truly broad curriculum to meet their individual needs and aspirations. Who knows how long our time capsule will remain undiscovered and, when it is, who knows what those who find it will make of it. To be a fly on the wall when that happens would be amazing! What will they make of our ties, our three Rs

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(Ready, Respectful & Responsible), my 'Dare to Be' educational philosophy, our pin badges, our poems, our stories and our memories. What will education be like in a further 140 years?

I was just beginning to look for a headship role when Philip and Ed made the decision to create the CAT so I was in a fortunate position to be able to apply for and gain the post at the right time in my career. However, nothing (and I mean nothing!!) prepares you for headship! No two days (or even hours!) are the same. Conversations can change from focusing on student progress to focusing on toilet roll supply within a matter of minutes. Every plate needs to keep spinning!! Having said that the key learning that I take from being a headteacher is that I am no longer a specialist but a generalist. This has been a hard lesson for me to learn given that I am a control freak and like to know everything, but I have learned over time that I set the tone, vision and direction of travel and then have to guide others so that we achieve it together. I have learned to trust in the skills, knowledge and expertise of others without stepping on too many toes. That said I am grateful to work with the people I do every day. I am very lucky to work with people who look after the students, look after each other and look after me!

The Polesworth culture and ethos is special. It is tangible! It is what made me determined to achieve the deputy head post in 2009 and it is what drives my vision now. It is borne out of trust, respect and warmth. Relationships have always been a key strength of the school and even though the road from 11 to 16/18 is not always smooth the students know that we will support them and help them to become the best person they can possible be. As with every school, our expectations and standards are high but our restorative approach helps students to overcome obstacles that may arise. And just like every headteacher out there I am proud of my school and the staff and students who work there. I am allowed to criticize or find fault but no one else is and I will not have a word said against my students!



Such is the life of a head - it is fantastic, rewarding, frustrating, exhausting, entertaining, overwhelming, exciting, glorious and different every day! When I embarked upon a career in teaching I never dreamed that I would be a headteacher one day. Now I cannot imagine not being a head. I absolutely love the cut and thrust of being in a school. I love the variety that being in a school brings and I love Polesworth!

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Supporting our students with memorable and enriching experiences, developing skills to ensure excellence

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**PUPIL EXPERIENCES**

Watch out for our #10thingstodo campaign

# Ensuring Excellence



## Word of Wisdom through the Generations - bringing communities together through poetry

By Anna Cowcher English Lead, Heathcote Primary School,

**Pupils from Heathcote Primary School were invited to join the residents of a local retirement home to take part in their 'words of wisdom' campaign.**

The campaign, initiated by Inspired Villages, highlights that older people should not be ignored but have lots of wisdom to share and that intergenerational interaction benefits everyone. Making links within the community and teaching our pupils the value of connecting with an older generation was an opportunity we weren't going to miss. And to top it off, the pupils would get to work with famous poet, Lemn Sissay.

Lemn Sissay OBE is a BAFTA-nominated, award-winning international writer and broadcaster. He has authored collections of poetry and plays. Sissay was the official poet of the 2012 London Olympics and has been chancellor of the University of Manchester since 2015.



Six pupils from Heathcote Primary School visited Austin Heath retirement home to take part in a poetry workshop led by Lemn Sissay. "Think of someone you love, or someone close to you", Lemn began..."capture those feelings and images by writing descriptions such as *you are the foundations to my house* or *you are the string to my kite*"... and so the crafting commenced. The children were partnered up with residents and given themes and structures to stimulate their ideas. Together the pupils and residents began work to create their very own piece of intergenerational poetry that they were to perform to camera. The poem themes included 'relationships', 'courage and bravery', 'isolation' and 'silver linings'. A poignant moment of the day was when Lemn asked the writing teams to use the starting line "*I remember when...*" The children and residents had to capture some of their earliest memories. The children sat in awe listening to some of the residents describing their memories of being evacuated during the war.



The children and residents worked tirelessly all day. A camera crew and

photographer snapped away surreptitiously throughout the day, ensuring the 'words of wisdom' campaign had been captured in action. After a busy morning of crafting poems the children then had to read their poems to camera. They got to experience what it's like to be on a set surrounded by lights and cameras. It was an amazing and truly inspirational day. The poems and footage are being released to media in mid-July so we wait with anticipation to see the final product...watch this space!



## The Wilnecote School Beads for Ukraine

By Carl Savage,  
Communications Manager, The  
Wilnecote School



### In the beginning and the start of an idea .....

Impromptu bead craft sessions in the library soon developed into chats about how much we are enjoying working with beads and making bead geckos. At the same time, we were discussing important topics of the day, and this led to thoughts about how to raise funds for Ukraine. Hence, we came together as a team with two ideas:

- **after school, bead craft sessions: Bead Craft Club in the Library**
- **fundraiser for the children of Ukraine. : make and sell bead geckos**

It was agreed that we would go into Assembly and talk to the school about our plans. The response to our assembly piece was amazing and the demand for bead geckos and bead sunflowers was so great that we sold out on the first day! Rapid response was needed, so every lunch and break, the team were gecko making. The school library soon became the lunchtime production and sales area. Joshua was our top salesman, his enthusiasm and determination to beat the fund raising target was relentless, hence we soon smashed the initial £50 target.



It soon became apparent that word was spreading, requests came in for bead frogs, bracelets and even a musical note for Mr Hyden. Oliwia had the great idea to set up an order system and wow were we busy. Pola and Nela were diligent in keeping our sales board up to date and in order. Sales continued at a pace after the Easter break. Agata had the brilliant idea of creating geckos using tiny jewellery beads. These were amazing and helped push us towards our target. Our display board also plotted the progress of sales with the gradual completion of a large sunflower,

when it was finished we knew we had raised over £100. The petals were formed with beads of our house colours and one in the colours of the Ukrainian flag.

As the half term drew to a close, Mrs Glover counted all the monies. We were all amazed at the total. With gift aid, we had smashed our £50 target nine times over – we donated £450 to Unicef on 26th May.



### **Bead Craft Club**

Students really enjoyed learning to make bead geckos. For those new to beading, this simple bead craft was soon mastered and with practice and focus on skills, design and tension there was a real sense of achievement in producing a quality product. Each week we made different bead items e.g. kites, flowers, penguins, frogs, bracelets, flags and key chains.



So, we now have an understanding of thinking about our design, choosing suitable threads and selecting bead with care and the importance of finishing off our product. Phoebe said, "I really like bead craft club because it gives me the opportunity to be creative and away from the distraction of my phone".

The bead craft club is not so much about expertise in bead craft but more about enjoyment, sharing ideas and coming together as a team. Some of us were very skilled, most of us totally amazed at Agata's delicate intricate beading of tiny bead geckos. Others were just enjoying making their first bead item and for some, it brought back memories of years gone by, perhaps beading with their nan.

Mrs Taylor commented "It was fantastic to work with this team, they were so focussed on what they wanted and worked hard to make things happen, the fundraising aspect of the project was just awesome. The team want to find a way of continuing with the after-school club, so they are looking at resources needed and ways to access funds.

It is evident that even our students recognise how beneficial it is to have such after-school groups where they can meet, have fun and enjoy an activity without pressure. Becoming part of a team and achieving is such a boost for our mental health. Being able to complete a task and share it with others is joyful. Watching students pass on their bead craft knowledge and skills was very rewarding. A safe place like the library offers so much as well as being a place of refuge and our lunchtime sessions were very popular."

The creative freestyle session was popular, it was great to have a look into the huge tub of thousands of beads and make our own selection. This was a really fun, chilled session and much laughter too. Some chaos and endless picking up of beads off the floor became a regular thing, but Mrs Glover said it was ok because it was all in the name of fun, creativity, enjoyment and achievement. As a team, we all contributed to making a number of products such as hats/headbands with flower decorations. Our craft board displays bead kites flying high over a field of sunflowers with colourful geckos below.

Our showcase piece is the Great Bead Cake, created just in time for jubilee celebrations. Red, white and blue geckos and other items were crafted and is topped by a selection of sparkly gold jewellery, our version of miniature crown jewels.

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It is our hope that when the sunflowers (seeds planted in our first session) flower that the war in Ukraine will be over. In the meantime, bead kits and other items are still for sale in the library.

### **So, what did our students enjoy about Bead Craft Club?**

*I love being in the library after school.*

*I can't believe that I have actually made one (gecko), I want to make lots more.*

*This is fun, selecting lots of different coloured beads to make bespoke geckos like Golden Eye (made by Regan)*

*I like teaching and helping others to make geckos and sunflowers*

*It is nice to gift sunflowers to teachers and friends*

*Mr Savage's jokes!!*

*Seeing the amazing, beaded dragon (a Charizard) that Kevin made*

*It is fun bead crafting with a group*

*Showing our family, the different things we made and then our parents buying us beads so we can make more.*

*I enjoyed making the flags and the animals.*

*It's calming and it gives me something to do at break time.*

*Chat with your friends and teachers and having your hands busy. The library is a calm place for people.*

*Bead craft club makes me happy, joyful, calm and relaxed and more patient.*

*I like the bead craft club because it is a peaceful area and the people are kind.*

*I enjoyed making lots of bead penguins.*

*Usually I would go home and be on my own, but now I can socialise.*

Mrs Glover concluded, "What an amazing team! It has been, and still is, a privilege to work with these students and see them develop their skills, creativity and patience! Raising so much money for Ukraine was really the icing on the cake. Hearing the hum of general chatter each week was so refreshing and proves that engaged children do not need to rely on technology all the time. The



students are very keen to continue with the after-school club and have been coming up with ideas for lots of different activities that could be run. The challenge now is to secure funding to assist with these craft-based clubs, which have shown such a positive impact on student well-being and mental health. Using the library as our base also gives the students a relaxing, calm area to just enjoy what they are doing.

**Here is to the next Wilnecote School craft club!"**

## Windmill Primary School takes Gold!

By Lucy Meacham, Windmill Primary School



We are so proud to announce that we have achieved the GOLD School Games Award again this year!

The school games award is a government led scheme which recognises schools for their commitment to the development of competition across schools and in the community.

Each School Games Mark is divided into 4 sections: participation, competition, workforce, and clubs. Participating in this process allows us to evaluate our PE provision and assists us in developing an action plan for future progress.

We are committed to continuing our fantastic Sport and PE provisions at Windmill!

## ...And the Silver!

**Last half-term Miss Jackson and Mrs Boam submitted our 'Artsmark statement of impact' to be graded.**

We are pleased to share with you all that our school has just been awarded the Silver Artsmark!

As a school, we're really proud of this achievement, which is all down to the efforts of us ALL as a whole school team. So, thank you everyone, congratulations and well done!

Artsmark is awarded at three levels, Silver, Gold and Platinum. It's an Arts Council England programme and supports health and well being of pupils with arts, culture and creativity, ensuring every young person can be creative and access a diverse, high quality cultural education.

If you are interested in Artsmark for your school setting, more information can be found here:

<https://www.artsmark.org.uk/about>

Below is some of the feedback we received from the board.

*'You are positively increasing the emphasis on arts and culture and engaging with the Arts is having tangible results on pupils and staff. The arts feature in the school improvement plans are supported by SLT and governors. Teaching is supported by a newly developed, relevant, progression linked curriculum that reflects the demographics of changing school.'*

*'Pupils access a consistent range of experiences with local artists and arts organisations in and out of school which leads to showcasing within school and the immediate community. It's great to see that the pandemic hasn't stopped your music engagement, which continued through digital means. The pupil and parent quotes are lovely, evidence your journey so far and the personal impact on the pupils.'*



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## Introducing....

Because this is the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of our Multi Academy Trust, it seemed a perfect opportunity to discover a little more about our founder trustees, Philip Hamilton OBE and Ed May, Executive Director

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**For someone who couldn't wait to leave school, it is somewhat ironic that by enormous fortune I find myself after 34 years in the profession, as Executive Director and founding trustee, of a successful trust of 18 schools, working with some of the most incredibly talented and dedicated professionals in the trade, and it is a teacher I have to thank!**

I wasn't particularly successful in school; indeed, I didn't do particularly well, being more interested in what was going on outside of it. However, it was an incredible teacher who so motivated a disinterested teenager, because of their love for what they taught, that supported and motivated me to achieve well in subjects which became my A levels, degree and teaching qualification focus.



Understanding the power of a teacher to make a real difference to young lives is behind my motivation for what I do. Working in mostly deprived and challenging primary and secondary schools I learnt that children learn best in secure, supportive and stimulating environments in their own communities, challenged appropriately by well trained teachers who radiate the love of their subject.

Whilst I enjoyed working for an excellent local authority, at a time when the 'academy agenda' was hot news, the freedoms and opportunities provided by working outside of their control and doing something different was an exciting prospect. Having moved as Head on a one term secondment to Birchwood Primary School, with a brilliant secondary next door and its great leadership, it became clear that the opportunity could not be missed to work far more closely with talented secondary colleagues to develop a different approach and fulfil a desire for every child to attend an excellent school in their own community.

I must admit to initially having some doubts about forming a trust. Ten years ago, there were no primary academies in the local authority I worked for, and there was much negative press that made winning the argument a challenge with staff, parents and governors. However, with the enormous experience and vision of my 'Headteacher colleague next door', Philip Hamilton, and his passion and belief in 'the new agenda', the possibilities of developing world class schools in our local communities shone through. And so, with the strong vision and support of my secondary colleague Philip, the Community Academies Trust was born.

In the early 'growing pain' days we experienced many challenges. Without the strong central support team we have today, many HR, finance and other functions were down to Philip and I, and all the brilliant people who had worked with us in our schools as office managers, finance officers, site managers and our Headteachers.

Whilst we had few disasters, it became clear that we needed to grow to be able to develop a strong trust. In the years that followed our trust grew quickly, but at the right pace and always through invitation rather than coercion. Our belief that every school joining us 'added capacity' whatever their situation, was proven as we grew to a trust of 18 primary and secondary schools, making valuable use of the enormous talent from within the trust's schools.

I have personally, thoroughly enjoyed the challenges and our experiences during the last ten years of developing our trust and I know the future for our trust, detailed in our latest 5 year strategic plan, is a bright one. I am very much looking forward to the next phase of our development in which we move to a greater alignment of the very best practice that exists in our trust, building on the talent within our family of schools and supported by the research and expertise of our Institute of Education, as well as our expert and network groups.

## UNDERSTANDING EMERGING BEHAVIOURS

Delivered by trainer and behaviour specialist Mike Glazebrook, this session aims to provide a better understanding of why children behave like they do and offers strategies to create change.

### THIS SESSION WILL:

- explore background/triggers to emergent behaviours
- help understand impact of emergent behaviours on ourselves and those we work with
- improve support strategies/interventions to work with children who have emergent behaviours

**Friday 4 November, 10-12, Dordon Primary School**  
**Tuesday 15 November, 12-14.30, The Telford Langley School**  
**Friday 9 December, 10-12.30, Heathcote Primary School**

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## UNDERSTANDING & MANAGING

### DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS WITH ADULTS

Delivered by trainer and behaviour specialist Mike Glazebrook, this session will help you have a better understanding of why adults behave as they do and provide strategies to manage difficult conversations more effectively.

### THIS SESSION WILL:

- help understand key principles for managing challenging conversations
- assist you in utilising communication and listening skills to generate positive outcomes
- increase confidence in resolving and addressing conflict

**Friday 4 November, 13.30-15.00 Dordon Primary School**  
**Tuesday 15 November, 14.45-16.15, The Telford Langley School**  
**Friday 9 December, 13.30-15.00, Heathcote Primary School**

REGISTER NOW



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## Trust CEO Philip Hamilton OBE, tells us just what it is that motivates him to do what he does.



**Why do I do what I do.....? I have talked before about my commitment to achieving a secure, emotionally intelligent and nurturing trust.**

I have a profound belief, originating from my own childhood that people only thrive if they form strong relationships, are nurtured and fully cared for.

Throughout my career I have tried to do this, initially in the Maths classroom ensuring my work helped children to form great relationships for learning - powerful learning bonds with each other and with me, so that they grew emotionally as well as intellectually. This has grown to building teams - initially, my own Maths team as a Head of Maths in Bristol and as my career has progressed creating teams within teams, distributing responsibility, empowering and enabling so that the best ideas and practice to come to the fore through the achievements of the great people I work with. It is crucial that I work to provide an environment that allows children to learn and staff to thrive, develop and perform.

Behind this is a 'moral driving force' of my work. The overriding intent throughout my career has been to provide the best for all the children in my care and for all the colleagues I have worked with and led.

Quoting Ralph Waldo Emerson:

*To know that even one life has  
breathed more easily because you  
have lived, that is to have succeeded.*

This moral driving force has been behind the growth of our trust over the last 10 years. The drive to make sure more children's lives are impacted positively because they come to one of our schools.

The metaphor in the following extract from 'A Catcher in the Rye' by JD Salinger of literally saving lives illustrates what I think 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 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 from 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 that's the only thing I'd really like to be.*

I feel fortunate that Ed May and I have the same moral driving force.... Our decision to work together to make sure we could 'catch' as many children as possible and make the biggest difference we could, led to the trust of which we are now all part - 8500 children and their families, 1200 staff sums up our collective reason for getting up in the morning. It is behind the strategic decisions we have made year after year, always testing them against the values we hold dear.

Our trust was one of the first, originating from a desire to path break, rather than merely follow well-trodden routes. There were lots of problems to solve initially, and a big task to do as we moved from home spun and intuitive to creating something underpinned by quality, structure, rigour and of course great people.

Fully living one's values and achieving congruence between what I say, do and am continues to be one of the most challenging experiences I have had, but one I relish here at CAT. Here's to the next 10 years....

# Education Matters



**If you haven't downloaded our App onto your phone yet, instructions on how to do so are earlier in this newsletter. Benefit from having articles pinged directly to your email account, or be notified when there's a new announcement, being the first to get the news. Even better? You can reserve your places onto our Developing People courses as conveniently as pressing a button. Don't miss out on what's going on in your trust.**

If you haven't joined the information super-highway, then you can still catch up on articles by accessing the OCMJ on the web here: <https://www.theocmjournal.com/> As usual control and click on the pictures.



Becks Wilkinson  1 day ago • 5 min

**Assessment for Learning - It's just going back to basics**

**For all your blog posts**

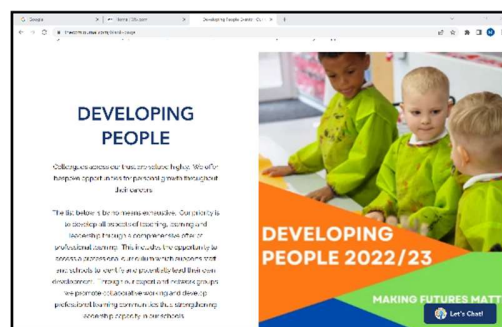


Our Community Matters News Follow

 11  7

Welcome! Notices, updates and time sensitive articles will be published here. Only site members are able to comment.

**For instant news**



**For courses and events**

# 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 reported in the September edition of the OCM, we have invested in Zoom Events. Both the expert groups and the networking groups have now all met using this platform. All of the sessions for each group were run at the same time using the same meeting link. On clicking the invitation link, you register for a ticket. The ticket enables you to access the sessions. Each group has their own session. Each session is run as an independent meeting. Once you join the conference you enter a lobby. If you've registered, at this point you can select the session you wish to join, or you can watch a live stream of each of the sessions and join your group from there. If you haven't registered, then you can enter the lobby, but you won't be able to join any of the sessions.

This system gives you the flexibility to join one group, leave, then join another one. It's just like being at a face to face conference from the comfort of your chosen device. We're really happy with how the first events have gone and are looking forward to many more.

If you'd like to join any of these groups then please contact [ioe@catschools.uk](mailto:ioe@catschools.uk) and we'll add you to the team. If you have an idea for a group you might like to run, or you think should be represented, then again contact us and we'll see what we can do.

If you are thinking of developing your leadership skills in readiness for that next role, the CAT Expert Group for Leadership have devised a trust Leadership Support Model. The aim of the course is to guide you on your personal leadership journey through examining the disciplinary knowledge you need to develop in order to become an effective leader. With only 25 places on offer, this three day course will fill up quickly, so we would urge you to sign up as soon as possible. See the flyer in this newsletter for further details.

In other news, the new IoE website is going live, just a few final tweaks and you'll be able to access resources, information and sign up for events from there. If you haven't signed up for the new App yet, please do, we will be making more regular announcements, posting information, news and articles on there as well as updating information on courses on offer. So, if you don't want to wait for the next OCM, then the App is definitely for you.

Alexis Rickus  
Director, CAT Institute of Education



## Expert Group News

The **Early Reading and Literacy group** met for the first time this month, however, there is still time to join us and we would love to welcome you! The group has a wealth of experience and ideas and looks set to be a supportive and collaborative experience for all involved. Key areas raised by members in the initial meeting were spelling approaches, the use of reading buddies and the impact of new SSP programmes on early reading.

Our next session will focus on which areas the members have chosen to focus on developing this year and how the group can help facilitate and further their research. We will also be looking at research into spelling and phonics from CLPE and discuss best practice in our own settings. Members will also be encouraged to share any prevalent research that address the interests of the group and strategies for spelling intervention and keep up groups, with a focus on the lowest 20%. I really hope to see some more new faces at our next meeting in November!



## GROW YOUR LEADERSHIP SKILLS

### ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

The CAT Leadership support model has been devised by the Expert Leadership group based on extensive reading and research. This course will guide you on your personal leadership journey by examining the disciplinary knowledge you need to develop in order to be an effective leader, and allow you to practise these explicitly.

**WHEN? ALL SESSIONS 09.00-15.30**  
 Thursday 1 December 2022: Introduction to Leadership, the Model Overview: The Heart  
 Monday 20 March 2023: The Head; The Hands  
 Thursday 6 July 2023: The Feet; The Mouth

**WHERE? THE BARNES HOTEL**  
 Cocksparrow Lane  
 Huntington, Cannock  
 Staffordshire, WS12 4PB

**CONTACT THE IOE TO RESERVE YOUR PLACE NOW!**  
 Contact: [ioe@catschools.uk](mailto:ioe@catschools.uk)

Limited to only 25 places for colleagues across our trust. Don't risk missing out on this fantastic opportunity to tap into the talent of the trust's own leadership expertise and put yourself in the best place to achieve your own leadership potential.

COMMUNITY ACADEMIES TRUST



COMMUNITY ACADEMIES TRUST  
 Institute of Education

# NEW ARRIVAL

[WWW.THECATINSTITUTE.ORG](http://WWW.THECATINSTITUTE.ORG)

Your gateway to the expertise within our trust and beyond. Join a network, book a course, get involved with what's happening across your Trust!

## Going Live Soon!

COMMUNITY ACADEMIES TRUST

## New Institute of Education website going live!

Ten years of the Community Academies Trust is a huge milestone! As we move forward to the next ten years, we have started off the journey with the emergence of the CAT Institute of Education, with which you should now all be familiar.

Throughout the summer and the first weeks of the autumn term, we have been working on the creation of a new website from which you will be able to engage more fully with all the network and expert group activities as well as access information and resources available only to CAT schools.

Upon launch, each school will be given their unique user email and password. Your Headteacher will be receiving your school credentials very shortly and should be circulating these to you.

Don't forget there is still the App, from which you can have notifications of new courses, blog articles and news articles sent straight to your handheld device simply by downloading the App from the Wix Spaces App on Apple or Google Play.



# And finally.....

Hopefully you found us on Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/schoolscat/> (#schoolscat) as well as on Twitter @SchoolsCat (#catschools). Follow us and we'll follow you back. You can also find us on our App via the Wix Spaces, Our Community Matters.

## Our Half Term in Pictures

**Birchwood Primary** @BirchwoodPrim · Oct 6  
Sycamore 5 really enjoyed meeting poet Ash Dickinson who read some of his poems and shared tips for effective writing. @ashdpoet

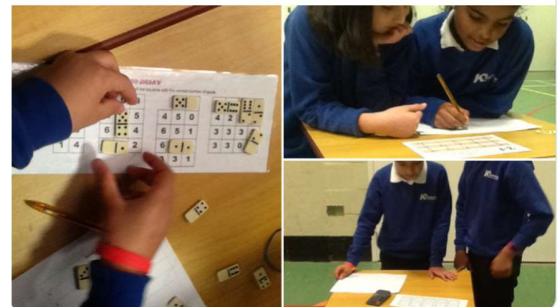
**Windmill Sports** @windmillsports · Oct 14  
Congratulations Jess!  
She entered a gymnastics competition and came first for her age group on floor and beam (and first overall!)  
Brilliant achievement Jess 🏆🏆🏆



**Telford Langley School** @TelfordLangley · Oct 13  
Enrichment activities are in full flow this half term. Pupils who attend Art club on Tuesday have not only been making pumpkins out of clay but have been developing their personal skills achieving something they feel proud of. 🍂@schoolscat

**Telford Park Reading** @readingatPARK · Oct 7  
@HollyRigby1 presenting some of our new Librarians with their badges this week. Welcome to the herd my padawans. @telfordprksch @ParkSquad7

**Kingsway Community Primary School** @SchoolKingsway · Oct 12  
Four Year 5 children had a fantastic time at the Maths Challenge held at Princethorpe College. The children worked in pairs against the clock to solve a range of mathematical challenges. The children worked with perseverance and resilience throughout the morning.



**Telford Park Reading** @readingatPARK · Oct 11  
After school librarian duties today. Thankfully someone gave Millie a hand! 🤗@HollyRigby1 @telfordprksch

**Stratford-Upon-Avon Primary School** @StratfordPrim · Oct 10  
Today Year 2 created some fantastic clay sculptures of King Henry V111 and Queen Elizabeth 1. They used observation skills as well as a range of techniques and tools to ensure their models looked like the portraits of these royals. #clay #art #sculpture #CATschool

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](mailto:communications@catschools.uk).

# Our Community Matters

