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Issue 17 Spring 2024

# DesignEd

A Central Region Schools Trust Publication

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# A note from GUY SHEARS

Our mission of 'supporting social justice through exceptional schools' has never been more important. We are in challenging times, and yet the vast majority of our schools are thriving. We have our own challenges, and yet our staff and pupils continue across all of our 14 settings to show skill and resilience, and thrive. This edition of DesignEd gives some great insights into the creative ways that our schools are a rich tapestry of approaches towards delivering a great education for each and every one of the 7044 pupils in our collective care.

I was struck by an article that Sam McMonagle, our trust school improvement lead, sent me outlining recent research into the benefits of strong GCSE outcomes in particular, and the impact that these have on pupils well-being, as well as employment success. The research confirms that, whilst all of us in CENTRAL see a successful education as so much more than exam results, we rightly aim for these to be the very best they can be.

The researchers from Leeds and York universities interviewed 6,500 people aged 23, recording their GCSE grades and later qualifications such as A-levels and degrees, along with their current occupation, income and questions on their financial and emotional wellbeing, as well as other measures including family background. In a nutshell, what it found was that GCSE grades are a strong predictor of the life chances and well-being (more so than later academic qualifications). This is especially so for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, with pupils from more affluent backgrounds often having support and networks that can support them post-school.

A vital part of our distinctive culture strategy is the focus on our PEOPLE, with its two strands; 'exceptional learners' and 'expert professionals'. For our exceptional learners, our focus on the development of pupils' knowledge, attributes (of character) and skills through (great) experiences (K-AS-E) has to deliver excellent outcomes in public examinations. In order to do that, our expert professionals, including teachers, need to be highly skilled to ensure that we get the

very best from our pupils. Staff need to understand the nuance of research and best practices in order to challenge and support pupils so that we get the very best from them.

Getting the best from them clearly starts in the classroom, and we know that 'teaching what matters' matters, and teaching it well matters too. However, for our schools to support the delivery of our mission, then our wider strategies to develop exceptional learners matter hugely too. We seek excellence in pastoral support, and the following elements of our strategy need to be high on the agenda of all of our school leaders, including governors. These we group as the development of the attributes of character through personal development, explicitly

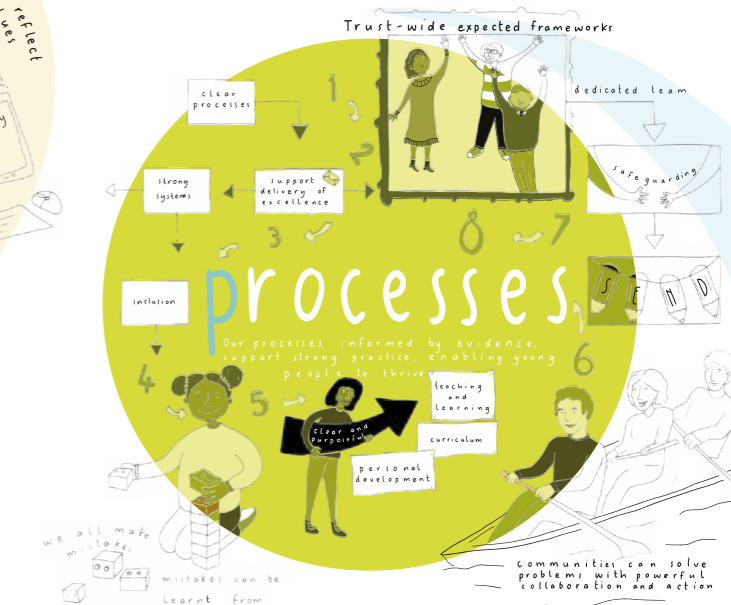
- Our Enrichment Guarantee, ensuring a rich programme of clubs and visits at all ages
- Our Central Futures strategy, with each school developing their own Futures (Careers) Programme to inspire pupils. This includes careers information, advice and guidance but is so much more than that, ensuring pupil access to the world beyond school. The requirement by the DfE is for this to begin in Year 8, but we know this is too late, and we start this work in early years and with our young primary pupils

- Authentic pupil leadership and agency development programmes, ensuring we recognise and develop the essential features of leadership and personal agency.

This DesignEd highlights some examples of the delivery of activities that build towards our mission. We know that we need to do more with some young people that others in order to ensure their success and are comfortable with doing so. Our schools are at different points on their journey, but we know that the development of the attributes of character, whilst ensuring excellence in outcomes, are not mutually exclusive, but indeed fully interwoven. May I wish all sitting tests and examinations all the very best this summer, whether they be A Levels, GCSEs or SATs in Year 6. There is much more to life than these, but we know they also matter. Also, thank you in advance to our staff for the extraordinary work they will do to support our pupils to perform at their very best.



Guy Shears  
Executive Principal (CEO)



# MEET THE TEAM

## The Central Team

### Guy Shears

Executive Principal (CEO)

### Penny Harrison

Trust Finance Director (CFO)

### Stephen Brownlow

Chief Operating Officer (COO)

### Sarah Bates

Trust Executive Principal – Primary

### Samantha McMonagle

Executive School Improvement Leader

### Harinder Sidhu

Business Improvement Partner

### Jennie Homer

Head of Governance & Corporate Services

### Edward Cooper

Head of IT

### Bryan Tait

Lead Estates Hub Manager

### Carley Brookes

Lead HR Hub Manager

## Trust Board

### Elizabeth Keates

Co-Chair of Trustees

### Orla MacSherry

Co-Chair of Trustees

### Trustees

#### Gareth Bower

#### Nicholas Clifford

#### Claire Grainger

#### Eric Griffiths (Vice Chair)

#### John Howard

#### Christopher Smith

#### Joanna Townshend

## Teach Central Leaders

### Matthew Purslow

Trust Assistant Principal (School Improvement)  
CENTRAL Lead Professional Learning, Research & Development

### Teresa Wilson

Trust Lead for ITT & Early Careers

## Executive Leadership Team

### Guy Shears

Executive Principal (CEO)

### Penny Harrison

Trust Finance Director (CFO)

### Stephen Brownlow

Chief Operating Officer (COO)

### Sarah Bates

Trust Executive Principal – Primary

### Samantha McMonagle

Executive School Improvement Leader

### Ian Mellor

Executive Principal

### Angela Crawley

Executive Principal – Primary School Improvement

## Principals

### Sarah Bates

Principal of Abbeywood First School  
and Church Hill Middle School (interim)

### Ian Mellor

Executive Principal of Arrow Vale High School,  
Waseley Hills High School & Holyhead School

### Ange Crawley

Executive Principal of Sutton Park, Oldbury Park &  
Lickhill Primary Schools

### Sarah Allen

Principal of Arrow Valley First School

### Christopher Czepukojc

Principal of Gospel Oak School

### Stephen Brownlow

Executive Principal of Gospel Oak School

### Angela Saul

Principal of Ipsley CE Middle School

### Jane Lloyd

Principal of Lickhill Primary School

### Ben Irving

Principal of Oldbury Park Primary School

### Sarah Callanan

Principal of St Stephen's CE First School

### Lorna Weatherby

Principal of Sutton Park Primary School

### Lynn Kelly

Principal of Oak Hill First School

# MEET THE TEAM

## Co-Design Leaders

### Nancy Ottey and John Barratt

Trust Leads for Maths

### Rebecca Quirk, Helen Cowie & Jas Edwards

Trust Leads for English

### Hattie Hayhurst & Jesse Mohr

Trust Lead for Science

### Nick Whitehouse & Hannah Ainsley

Trust Leads for History

### Hannah Weynberg & Robyn Ballard

Trust Lead for Geography

### Matthew Purslow & Jenna Brown

Trust Leads for Modern Foreign Languages

### Ed Lee

Trust Lead for Drama

### Alice Pearson & Kate Billingham

Trust Leads for Religious Education

### Matthew Purslow & Josh Prentice

Trust Lead for Physical Education

### Angela Saul & Francesca Stanley

Trust Leads for PSHE/RSE

### Sheetal Sommel & Peter Garnett

Trust Lead for ICT/Computing

### Dale Holt & Matthew Purslow

Trust Lead for DT

### Stacey Geal

Trust Lead for Art

### David Hunt

Trust Lead for Music

### Dawn Salter

Trust Lead for Food Technology

## Chairs of LAGBs

### Richard Davies

Abbeywood First School & Church Hill Middle School

### Richard Davies

Arrow Vale High School

### Nicola Robinson

Arrow Valley First School

### Joanne Goodman

Gospel Oak School

### Sajid Hussain

Holyhead School

### Matthew Setchell

Ipsley CE Middle School

### Anna Tyler

Lickhill Primary School

### Kirstin Bluck

Oldbury Park Primary School

### Vicky Jackman

St Stephen's CE First School

### Katherine Maynereid

Sutton Park Primary School

### Chris Passey

Waseley Hills High School

### Tony James

Oak Hill First School

## Strategic Leads

### Samantha McMonagle

Trust Lead for Disadvantaged and Vulnerable  
(including Pupil Premium) Strategy

### Matthew Purslow

Trust Lead for Staff Development & Training

### Claire Round

Trust Director of SEND

### Sarah Bates, Danielle Duignan, Siobhan Gretton, Lauren Clarke & Joss McLeod

Trust Lead for Reading

### Scott Crane

Trust Lead for Safeguarding

### Niall Brennan

Trust Lead for Remote/Digital Learning Network

### Niall Brennan & Michael Williams

Trust Leads for Attendance

### Samantha McMonagle

Trust Lead for Curriculum and Pedagogy

### Samantha McMonagle and Matthew Purslow

Trust Leads for Secondary co-design

### Angela Crawley & Sarah Bates

Trust Leads for Primary co-design (inc. Primary maths strategy)

### Maryellen Homer & Francesca Stanley

Trust Leads for PSHE/RSE

### Matthew Purslow, Kelly McLeod & Jane Lloyd

Trust Leads for Mental Health & Well-Being

### Ellie Meredith

Trust Lead for Enrichment

### Francesca Stanley & Daniel Wright

Trust Leads for Personal Development

# TEACH CENTRAL Update

Our trainees have made a fantastic start, they have settled into their schools and have made good progress to date. This was evidenced in their midpoint reviews, which have made excellent reading and demonstrate their dedication and commitment to their professional development.

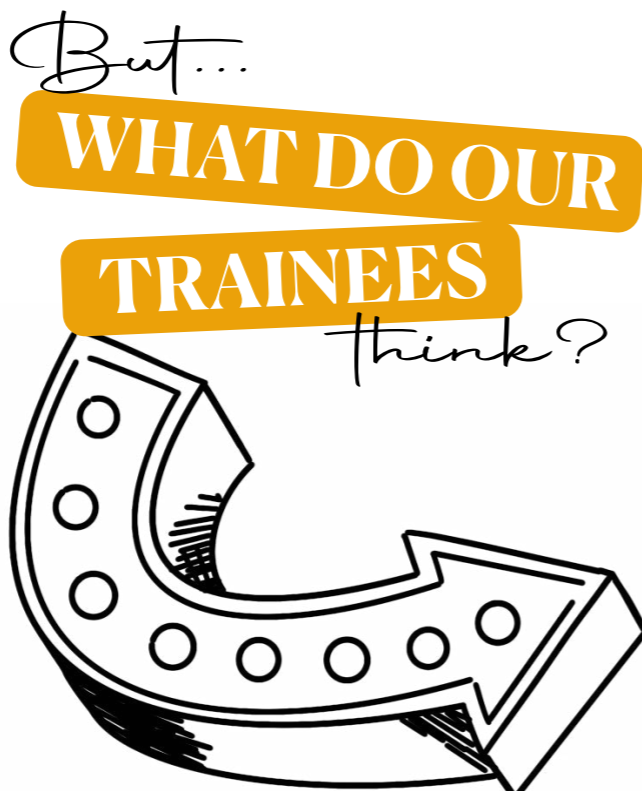
I'm delighted to share our current trainees' accomplishments - trainees are doing well and are working extremely hard. Trainees are developing a range of teaching and learning strategies and starting to embed these into their practice, including the new Core Content Themes, they are beginning to link the theory and subject knowledge to their practice to support their training, incorporating this into their planning and teaching. They are beginning to take ownership for their classes and are listening to advice and feedback. Mentors have commented on how well trainees respond to feedback and act upon it. The level of engagement from trainees has also been fantastic - mentors, professional mentors and BCU tutors have all commented on how proactive trainees are, this is clear to see in their classroom practice and overall professionalism.

Quality assurance visits went well earlier in the term, trainees feel well supported and our provision across our family of schools is consistent and robust. BCU tutor visits and observations are also going well. Feedback from trainees has been fantastic, trainees have commented on the high level of support and training they receive, this has clearly impacted positively on their progress and development. Trainees are enjoying the Monday training sessions, finding them useful, up to date and informative - evaluations have been positive, trainees have commented on how knowledgeable the facilitators are and how pertinent the session content is. Trainees have been able to use this practically in their teaching to support their progress, impact in the classroom and further develop their evidence-based practice to practical application and implementation. It's been a

real pleasure to see how well trainees have settled into their departments, schools, and training. They have made really good progress to date - well done.

We have received applications across a range of subjects and interviews are going well; with a growing cohort for 2024/25 across Secondary and Primary phases. There are still vacancies across many subjects in our family of schools with very attractive bursaries of up to £28k available in some subject areas; we offer courses in both Primary and Secondary across the West Midlands.

**If you would like further information on how to apply or information on our courses and provision, please contact myself directly; alternatively visit our Teach Central website; if you have friends or relatives who are interested in teaching, please do encourage them to come and talk to us or to contact me directly at [twilson@crst.org.uk](mailto:twilson@crst.org.uk)**



**Zain Sharif**  
Maths

"I am enjoying the PGCE course with Central Region Schools Trust. I find that the training provided is tailored to meet the needs of the cohort and further support is offered individually. There is an excellent combination of research and pedagogy one day a week, blended with 4 days of school-based practice. This has allowed me to develop reflective practises and build confidence in teaching mathematics".



**Maris Lloyd**  
English

"Teaching has always been my passion, but I was unsure of how to begin my career once I finished my undergraduate degree. By completing my training through Teach Central, I have had a fantastic introduction to teaching. This route gives me the best of both worlds: I have gained practical experience within the classroom while receiving relevant pedagogy sessions and support from university. Teach Central's training has equipped me with various strategies that I can implement and adapt in order to improve the quality of my teaching. Moreover, my experience in the classroom has allowed me to form positive relationships with my students; something that I have always been passionate about. Most importantly, Teach Central offers me support and comfort as I navigate the challenges of teaching - no question is a stupid question, and I never feel alone. I would not be the trainee I am today without Teach Central!"



**Abi Wilson**  
English

"My teacher training journey started when I was a student at one of the Central Region Schools Trust's schools - Arrow Vale High School. I became inspired by the teachers who taught me and from those years at Arrow Vale, I knew that my career goal was to become a teacher. After achieving my degree at university, I still had the determination to become a teacher and so I decided that following the School's Direct pathway with Teach Central was the best choice to make. Since September, I have grown in confidence, knowledge,

and experience in the teaching world. Through Teach Central, I am able to work with excellent subject and professional mentors at my placement schools, who give strong support and advice. The School's Direct with Teach Central route gives me the needed opportunity and exposure to teaching, through the more hands-on approach. Personally, I prefer first-hand experience, as it allows for me to learn better and have a greater understanding. I am currently about halfway through my Initial Teacher Training year and have enjoyed every aspect of it. Teach Central has been at the core of it and has been fully supportive, ensuring all Associate Teachers have the capability, development, and knowledge to become successful teachers within the trust and beyond."



**Amy Hinchliffe**  
English

"It is strange to reflect that only this time last year, I was feeling unfulfilled by an entirely different career within a corporate world. I can honestly say that taking a risk and choosing to switch professional paths to train as a teacher has been one of the best decisions I have ever made.

The Teach Central training route immerses you in school and teaching life in the earliest stages, allowing you an invaluable insight into the profession and wider environment. I have found every point of contact incredibly supportive and welcoming, from professional mentors to training leaders. I would absolutely recommend the Teach Central training route for anyone considering their journey to become a teacher."

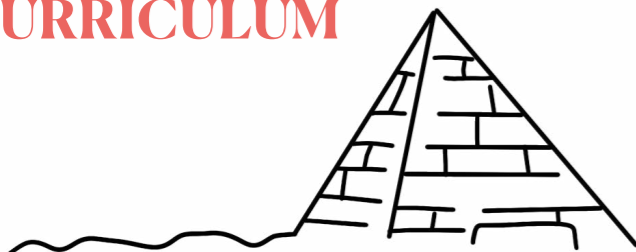


**Maria Sacrieru**  
Geography

"I am currently undergoing ITT as a trainee with Teach Central. If asked to encapsulate my experience within the institution in two succinct terms, they would be: challenging and enlightening. I selected Teach Central as my educational partner due to its esteemed reputation for professionalism, and it has consistently met my expectations. The last, but maybe the most important part of being a trainee at Teach Central, is the support, with trustworthy, knowledgeable, and kind mentors which I will always be grateful for."

## SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

### KS3 REDDITCH PYRAMID CURRICULUM



**As leaders within the trust “we are committed to the partnership of the shared 3- year KS3. This commitment is shown in practice by active, purposeful and innovative collaboration”.**

Redditch middle schools have been working in conjunction with Arrow Vale in ensuring the best possible model for a shared Key Stage is in place. The work has been driven by Michaela Yeomans and the Curriculum and Pedagogy leads for the middle schools alongside the Principals/Heads of schools of each school and the subject leads across the 3 sites. The shared endeavor has always been there but has developed into a model of collaboration and implementation with organised and calendared visits since the summer of 2022.

The autumn visits focused on Maths, English, Science, Humanities and MFL. Booklets to support the visits and initial CPD were updated to reflect trust and pyramid priorities (see below). The booklets ‘frame’ and give structure to the visits across schools and support leads regarding the focus. One of our external Trust SIPs (Ofsted trained) also supports some of these visits and developing our key middle leaders.

**The current Curriculum & Pedagogy priorities which were looked at throughout all 3 schools are:**

- Developing in each school staff understanding of disadvantage (within the community and how it impacts on pupils/manifests in classrooms and learning. How staff can then respond to that in curriculum and delivery. What does this do to confidence if pupils can't meaningfully participate?
- Developing a deliberate and structured approach to Speaking and listening (Oracy)
- Caring through high expectations – no opt out.
- Front loading – ensuring deep thinking is supported through expert teacher input.
- Vocabulary development – and purposeful planning for oracy.
- Ensuring routine checking for understanding throughout lessons.

Strengths and agreed next steps were pulled together for each subject area. It is worth highlighting the progress with the MfL ‘Pyramid journey’ and a KS3 experience benefitting from increasingly connected and coherent curriculum from KS3 through to Post 16. The Curriculum Intent is clear and ambitious for all pupils, grounded in the 3 pillars of progression: phonics, vocabulary and grammar; the 3 pillars are creatively framed by the Trust KASE principles in all schools.

Staff commented on how they have benefited from visiting the different schools; last summer the high school leads visited the middle schools and this autumn the middle school leads visited their children in the high school who are now in Year 9. Following children up into high school enabled staff to look at transition in terms of curriculum as well as pastorally and continue work on pitch as well as moderation and book looks. Some of the ‘journey’ included middle school leads meeting up with students they had taught who we now in the 6th form and talking to them about their subject area and their progression.



The co-designed curriculums were all in place and seen in practice - and we know this work is everlasting as curriculums develop, in response to assessments, cohorts, our own reflections and in response to KS4 changes. The conversations on pitch and challenge were robust and within a climate of professional honesty and shared endeavour- our pupils and their journey. Further work and visits have been agreed for March as well as June academic transition days- and agreed windows for KS3 exams and GL assessments. This is a working example of a lived culture; where we are clear we deliver through shared endeavour, genuine collaboration and where our leaders consciously develop a journey and a shared culture for our children. The delivery of the curriculum has taken centre stage and the difficulty of transition points has been a galvanising factor for this work.

**OFSTED****LICKHILL PRIMARY - GOOD WITH OUTSTANDING FEATURES!**

Two weeks before Christmas, in the middle of our EYFS and KS1 Christmas play – (Lights, Camel, Action!) we had the wonderful call from Ofsted. As an RI school, we had been awaiting their return for nearly four years; through a pandemic and a join to CRST. We therefore decided to go for it and show the inspectors how proud we are of the school in every aspect; to show what huge improvements have been made since the last inspection and continue to develop. We definitely felt that it was OUR inspection – not theirs.

The inspectors were very mindful of our well-being and were very impressed with the children when we were at the end of an extremely long term, Christmas elves and excitement etc.. "If their behaviour, respect and attitude to learning is like this at this time of year, imagine what it is like the rest of the year!"

We were incredibly proud of all the children for the way they spoke to the inspectors, explaining their work, their experiences at school and how much they enjoy school life. They were articulate and respectful to the Ofsted team. The inspectors were very impressed with all aspects of Lickhill, especially areas which we regard as high priority – such as personal development and behaviour and attitudes which they rated as **OUTSTANDING!**

Quotes from the report - What is it like to attend this school?

"Staff and pupils are justifiably proud of their school. The development of each pupil is at the heart of the curriculum. Pupils know that good behaviour is expected, but they also understand that they will be helped to put it right if something goes wrong. The saying 'It's not how we mess up that's important; it's how we make up' is often heard.

The school's high expectations are understood by all pupils. They meet those expectations by behaving well and working hard. This helps all pupils to make good progress from pre-school upwards. Pupils say that their teachers make their learning fun. Their enjoyment of their learning is enhanced by carefully planned visits, for example to different places of worship. These occasions give pupils the chance to ask questions and find out more. Pupils have many

opportunities to contribute to their school and make it even better. They can become ambassadors for a wide range of activities. The members of the pupil leadership team have a valuable role as the representatives for the whole school. Their consultations with other pupils have led to more varied after-school clubs and a new 'trim trail', of which pupils are very proud."

Our Early Years (Pre-school and Reception) were extremely close to an outstanding judgement this year, however some work on our outdoor areas still needs developing but is restricted by time and money. Our leadership judgement was also very close to outstanding as well, with our assessment for foundation subjects needing more time to embed as they are relatively new. It was lovely to hear that our areas to improve are things that we have already started but simply need more time to secure.

The team saw Lickhill the way we see it. They consistently commented on how the children's behaviour and all relationships in school felt genuine, not forced. Behavioural choices were observed to be intrinsically motivated – they don't seek external reward, but make the right choices because it is the right thing to do. We felt that it was a true reflection of our school which is vastly different from the Lickhill and its curriculum offer four years ago. Staff at Lickhill have worked tirelessly since the last inspection to make the changes required, during a pandemic and a very different school experience post COVID. Support and reviews from the trust have also driven the changes required to get to this point and having such a supportive network of colleagues made the whole experience bearable!

We had extremely high levels of positive engagement on the parent questionnaire; the inspectors said they were overwhelmed by their support for the school. It was a joy to see their responses.

We now have the validation that what we are doing is having a significant and positive impact on the children's academic and social development; they are equipped to face the next phase of their education as strong, confident individuals who understand how to behave, enjoy their learning and be kind caring individuals supporting their community.



We are delighted to be able to share the outcome of the Ofsted inspection which took place in December by Her Majesty's Inspector Stuart Clarkson. Below is a summary of the key quotes that show the vast amount of improvement at Waseley:

Ofsted reported that since the last inspection in 2022 in which there were a number of areas for improvement, the school has taken "decisive and well-chosen actions to address these areas. There is an appropriate sense of urgency to the changes you are making. Staff are working well with you to implement these changes, and pupils are responding well too."

- "You and your leaders have worked well to ensure that all subject areas have a clearly planned curriculum that builds on key knowledge and skills."
- "Pupils benefit from consistently applied principles of learning that outline how leaders expect the curriculum to be taught. Subject leaders have introduced targeted methods to support teachers' checking of pupils' learning."
- "The support for pupils with SEND is effective."
- "You have acted with urgent and rapid determination to improve information sharing with staff so that there is clarity about identified needs, strategies to support pupils with SEND and what these pupils should achieve in their learning. You and your leaders know the needs of these pupils and have taken effective action to refine the key SEND information which is accessed by all staff."
- "Additional staff, and changes to the pastoral structure, have enabled you to place a critical focus on behaviour. This is making a difference."
- "Across the lessons seen during this inspection and during social times there was no evidence of disruptive behaviour."
- "Pupils were focussed, willing to answer questions, engaged with partners in paired work and work independently."
- "You have prioritised a significant amount of work on mental health in school and the wider community."
- "Pupils, including students in the sixth form, spoke positively about the leadership opportunities available to them."
- "Safeguarding is effective. Expert leaders have clear systems in place to identify pupils at risk of potential harm. A well-developed and systematic approach to dealing with disclosures ensures that leaders take decisive and timely action to support vulnerable pupils."
- "Trustees and governors have worked effectively with the local authority and external specialists in support of the whole-school changes that they know are necessary. This includes the growth in school numbers and a planned new build due to begin in January 2024."

We are thrilled to have the wonderful work of our students, staff and parents/carers recognised in such a way that will continue to rebuild the strong reputation of Waseley. Tom shared with students in their welcome back assemblies how impressed HMI Clarkson was with their conduct and engagement with learning. He reported that it is clear that there is a "respectful culture here".

A section 8 inspection has only two possible outcomes, that leaders are making insufficient progress or that leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to become good. We received the latter as our judgement. We will continue to strive for further improvements and work alongside parents and the wider community to ensure that the education of our young people is of the highest quality.

Tom Preston  
Head of School

Ian Mellor  
Executive Principal

# CENTRAL

## Charity Week

# SIXTH FORM

The week before Christmas saw our very first CRST Secondary Phase Charity Week! Our Central Sixth Form student leadership team and charity committees, made up of Year 13 and 12 students from across our Central Sixth Form schools, came together to plan a week of exciting activities to raise money for Birmingham Children's Hospital.

The chosen charity was nominated by students themselves as the charity of the year for the trust. Their goal? To raise £10,000 to help children who are receiving vital health care at the hospital.

Students came together and met as a trust wide leadership team, discussing possible activities and events that they could lead within their respective schools to raise as much money as possible. Students demonstrated fantastic leadership behaviours as well as a great deal of maturity when considering the implications and limitations of their concepts and ideas and developed a fantastic sense of ownership in their chosen events.

Waseley Hills hosted a wide array of events for the school community throughout the week, ranging from charity wristband sales, a pick and mix sweet shop, a Christmas Fayre and a non-uniform day. Students in Years 7 - 11 very much enjoyed the range of activities available to them and together raised a fantastic £1238! Gospel Oak students raised a fantastic £480 through their very own school wide bake sales and student and teacher raffles. Students within the school enjoyed their delicious baked goods and the raffle was a resounding success!

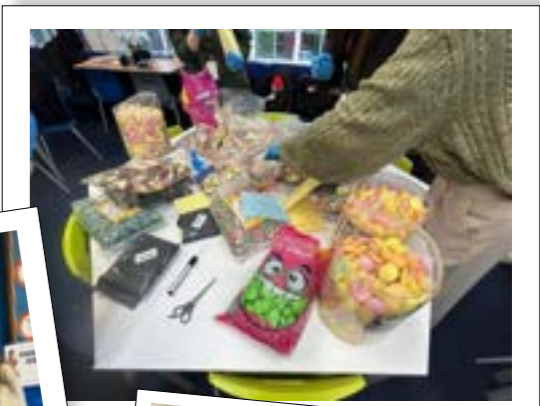
Students at Holyhead also organised a number of exciting activities and were able to raise an impressive £914. Arrow Vale students hosted a Christmas jumper day, wristband and bake sales and raised £350 students and staff are continuing their fundraising efforts into the new year to continue to increase the total raised.

Together, the students across our four secondary schools raised an amazing £2,982 for Birmingham Children's Hospital during their Charity Week, a fantastic achievement that would not have been possible without the generosity of our school communities and their families.

The Central Sixth Form Student Leadership Team have now been working together to launch our Primary Phase Charity Week which will take place in April. They will be supporting students across our primary and middle schools to plan and lead their very own charity weeks to continue our fundraising efforts and get us closer to our £10,000 target.

We are very much dedicated to raising as much as we can for our chosen charity of 2024 and would be grateful of any donations made.

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# ENERGY & CARBON Challenge

## WHAT'S THE AIM?

The aim of working with Energy Sparks is to share real time data with all schools on their current energy consumption and how that consumption and their carbon footprint can be reduced.

One of the main aims would be the engagement of both pupils and staff with the reduction of energy campaigns. This can be achieved by each school setting up a group of pupils and staff who would lead on these initiatives. This group would be responsible for making the wider school community aware of the campaign and monitoring the progress of this campaign on a weekly basis by providing updates directly from Energy Sparks.

The main focus of the energy reduction would be electricity. The rationale behind this is that pupils and staff can have a direct influence on the measures that can reduce electricity consumption. As an example, through 'switch off' campaigns they can quickly see the energy savings by monitoring the data provided by Energy Sparks.

## WHAT ACTIVITIES CAN WE USE TO HELP REDUCE ENERGY COSTS AND SAVE ENERGY?

A list of activities, including classroom resources, is provided, all based on reducing electricity usage. Schools can decide which activities that they would like to participate in and can use the information and materials provided from Energy Sparks with the school community.

Activities are easy to complete, engaging and practical in nature. One example is shown below.

**Label lights and appliances to show which should be left on or turned off:** Identify all lighting throughout the school and indicate which can be turned off using a traffic light coding system  
Pupils and staff would determine which lights in the school would be required:

- to be kept on all day whilst the school is open (green)
- which lights need to be turned off at break and lunch time (amber)
- which lights need to be switched off when leaving a room (red)

Each of these lights could have an information sticker next to the switch to explain what needs to happen on leaving that room and over a period of time the impact of this campaign can be measured against the energy saving costs.

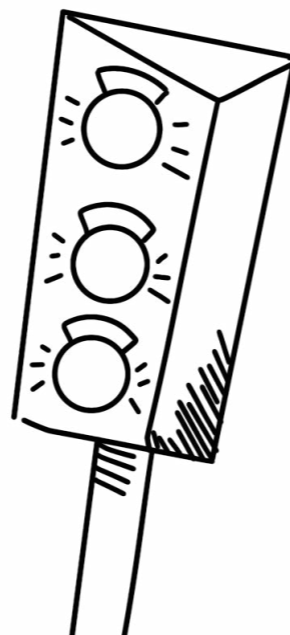
## HOW DO WE MEASURE THE IMPACT?

Energy Sparks provides simple and intuitive energy reporting, showing % change weekly. Schools would keep their energy saving initiatives active across the summer and autumn terms and watch the impact on electricity usage week on week.

## HOW WOULD WE ASSESS WHICH SCHOOL HAD MADE THE BIGGEST IMPACT?

This would be determined by the percentage saving each school had made over the two terms of the challenge.

This is an exciting opportunity for all of us in schools to help the schools to save energy but most importantly helping with the reduction of energy used by all of our schools collectively, making a significant impact in the reduction of our carbon footprint as a community.



## AN UPDATE FROM THE FINANCE TEAM

As we navigated through the bustling Autumn term, finance teams across the sector were actively engaged in the external audit season. Our external auditors conducted a comprehensive review, focused on the probity of the financial year end reports and position, as well as performing regularity testing on our processes. The finalised trust accounts, complete with a clean audit opinion, were submitted to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and are available publicly on our Trust website.

This academic year, budgets have been distributed to all schools. Principals or Heads of School have participated in expectation-setting meetings, where the emphasis has been placed on financial prudence due to sector funding pressures. A careful eye will be kept on resources to ensure adherence to approved

budget plans, and diligent tracking of associated risks will be a priority. Our Executive Team's line managers are actively supporting the management of any emerging risks, aiming to safeguard the needs of our children in the face of financial challenges.

During December, we conducted HR and Finance Function reviews, with the expectation that these will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of our team functions, refining the systems we operate, and enhancing the services we provide to our schools. We look forward to leveraging the insights gained from these reviews to further strengthen our financial and resourcing operations and better serve the educational community within our trust.

## GOVERNANCE AT CRST: ROLES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Governance sits at the heart of the Central Region Schools Trust. Our Trustees and Trust Governors work in collaboration across the Trust to hold to account our senior leaders and drive school improvement. Collectively, we are building a team of Trustees and Trust Governors who possess a diverse range of skills, experiences, qualifications, characteristics, and perspectives, and who come from different backgrounds and settings. These amazing individuals are giving of their time and committed to overseeing the strategic direction of the Trust, not least in supporting social justice through exceptional schools, but in the aim of achieving our strategic objectives of exceptional learners, expert professionals, excellence in infrastructure, systems and places, empowered communities, and lasting partnerships. Our Trust values of integrity, excellence, community, creativity, and respect drive governance through its endeavour to support schools and improve the lives of all our young people.

The role of Trustee and Trust Governors vary significantly. Our Trustees have legal responsibilities and are accountable for the performance of the Trust, including its financial management. Trustees must always have the best interests of the academy uppermost in their minds, and have a duty of compliance, ensuring all relevant laws and regulations are followed.

Trust Governors within the Trust are not responsible for financial or operational decisions and can focus on strategy, character and ethos, community, and providing challenge and support to the school leadership team as a member of the Local Academy Governing Board.

As holders of a public office both Trustees and Trust Governors should also be aware of the Nolan principles of public life selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

### SO...

- WOULD YOU CONSIDER GIVING SOME OF YOUR TIME TO SUPPORT OUR PUPILS?
- WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN AN AMAZING TEAM OF TRUSTEES AND TRUST GOVERNORS?
- ARE YOU READY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO AS A TRUSTEE OR TRUST GOVERNOR?

TURN OVER TO FIND OUT HOW TO APPLY...



We welcome applications from all. A diverse Trust Board and Local Academy Governing Boards will help children from all backgrounds to succeed and thrive – this is in line with the Trust’s distinctive culture and we would encourage all, regardless of age, experience, and background, to apply for the role.

**To be eligible to volunteer within our Trust you need:**

- To be aged 18 or over with satisfactory DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) clearances and references.
- The time to contribute (5 x meetings per academic year, with training opportunities and possible link role contribution).

- **Not to be disqualified under the relevant rules and procedures (shared upon application).**

If you, or someone you know, is interested in making a real difference to the lives of local children and ensuring every child receives the education they deserve by becoming a Trustee or Trust Governor, or if you simply would just like to know more about what governance involves, please email Jennie Homer, Head of Governance & Corporate Services; [jhomer@crst.org.uk](mailto:jhomer@crst.org.uk)

## RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

It’s an exciting time for the HR department as we continue to grow our team. I am pleased to introduce Sandie Coley and Paisley Petrovics to the central HR team who will add capacity to the exciting plans within the HR Department. We have spent a lot of time researching and investing in our infrastructure to support better talent acquisition for our Trust.

We have incorporated new technology by introducing ‘My New Term’ in addition to our existing recruitment platforms - TES & eteach. So far I am pleased to report that we have advertised 32 vacancies, with over 2500 API views and over 60 applications on our live vacancies and a growing talent pool, which allows candidates to be kept abreast with the exciting opportunities to join our trust.

The platform has improved employer branding with all adverts showcasing the exciting and developmental things that happen across the Trust and at each individual school. The platform promotes videos, our distinctive culture, and our offer to staff as attachments allowing applicants the chance to see the culture and the vision of the trust before applying. In addition to this, the platform integrates with school and trust websites along with a multitude of other

recruitment platforms to ensure our vacancies get the furthest reach. My New Term then gives us analytics of where candidates are viewing our vacancies, and this allows us to focus our attentions to enhancing talent attraction with the Trust.

Furthermore, all HR leads have received training and resources to ensure we are bringing new employees into the trust as quickly as possible whilst maintaining the highest standards of safeguarding and safer recruitment.

Finally, as we accept that public sector vacancies can be hard to fill, we have also teamed up with Affinity supply solutions. They are an umbrella company working with all main supply agencies ensuring that students continue to have quality education provision whilst we continue to secure the brightest and committed employees.

Our vision is to support social justice through exceptional schools by ensuring we can attract, retain and develop top talent and continue to invest in our people.

# Waseley Hills HIGH SCHOOL Rebuild

The staff and students at Waseley Hills High School were excited to see four years of application and planning come to fruition this spring as the builders moved in and started work. Waseley Hills High School was among the first wave of schools to be selected for the Government’s transformational School Rebuilding Programme.

The new 8,493m<sup>2</sup> state-of-the-art facility, comprising two core blocks, will replace the existing school and will cater to more than 1,000 pupils.

The secondary and sixth form school, which includes a dedicated Special Educational Needs department, will support the school in providing a high-quality curriculum in the new inspiring and focused environment. In addition, the new facility will be net zero carbon in operation, maximising natural light and ventilation.

Ian Mellor, Executive Principal commented: “The start of our rebuild project is an incredibly exciting moment for all the Waseley Hills community. The new school buildings will give our fantastic students the facilities they deserve and in which they can excel in.”

Tom Preston, Head of School commented: “It has been amazing to see the students and staff witness the first stage of the newbuild this term. This marks another step in the educational opportunities for our brilliant community.”

David Tighe, Regional Building Managing Director – Midlands at Tilbury Douglas who are the Project Managers for the build, commented: “As a long-term delivery partner for the DfE, we are proud to be selected to deliver this replacement school, which will be an important asset to the educational estate locally. The new facility will serve the community long-term as an aspirational, future-thinking educational establishment.”

Delivered over three phases, the project will be completed in its entirety in 2027.



*Aerial view of whole school site after week 1 with a new construction compound at the front*



*Where the first phase begins. This section of school has been fenced off and a new walkway created*

**Schools Week** @SchoolsWeek

'We cannot reasonably expect our principals to be experts in IT infrastructure, the intricacies of estates management, procurement, accounting and HR legalities while also being excellent teachers and leaders' - @CRSTrust's Steve Brownlow

8:57 pm - 2 Oct 2023 - 3,443 Views

See post

**Gospel Oak School** @Gospel\_Oak

This week we ran mock interviews for our Sixth Form students. Every pupil had an appointment for a mock job interview, with an industry professional from various sectors. Involved in the event were interviewers from a diverse range of companies and organisations

#aspire

**MOCK INTERVIEW DAY**

8:37 pm - 29 Feb 2024 - 411 Views

See post

**Wesley Hills** @WesleyHills

Yesterday our amazing Year 12 students won the @CRSTrust University Challenge! Competing against all 6th Forms in the Trust they knocked out all of the competition in high pressure heats of general knowledge and specialist subject knowledge quizzes. Well done to all involved!

8:37 pm - 29 Feb 2024 - 411 Views

See post

**Arrow Vale School** @ArrowValeSchool

Semi final here we come!! What a great team performance from our Year 9&10's Girls. Showing great desire to score in the final minute to equalise 4-4. Winning the game 5-4 on penalties to secure their place in the next round!

6:09 pm - 22 Feb 2024 - 473 Views

See post

**Arrow Valley First School** @ArrowValleyFS

We have had a very busy week at Arrow Valley. Mice 🐭 and Squirrels 🐿️ (Nursery and Reception) have started learning based on eggs 🥚

1:21 pm - 24 Feb 2024 - 28 Views

See post

**Holyhead Events** @HolyheadEvents

An incredible evening at our Spelling Bee tonight and a huge congratulations to all the finalists! 🏆 The competition was fierce & the atmosphere was buzzing! 🐝 Thank you to everyone who supported the event

@holyhead\_school #SpellingBee #Congratulations #Teachwhatmatters

7:48 pm - 24 Jan 2024 - 952 Views

See post

**Central Region Schools Trust** @CRSTrust

Great to working with @ArboretumTrust & @HaybridgeTSH again at the start of the 2023-24 NPQ season. Today's cohort is Leading Teacher Development, focused on implementing lasting professional development to support outcomes for our young people #SocialJustice #receptionandbeyond

4:03 pm - 2 Oct 2023 from Kidderminster, England - 313 Views

See post

**Gospel Oak Y9** @GospelOakYear9

More artwork from one of our year 9 students. A born artist

@Gospel\_Oak

10:25 pm - 21 Feb 2024 - 223 Views

See post

**Arrow Vale School** @ArrowValeSchool

7 of 4 of our students qualified as Level 1 Trampoline Coaches this weekend. 🏆 All the peer coaching and feedback in lessons has paid off 🏆 Millie & Thalia will hopefully qualify as Level 2 Coaches next weekend!

@CRSTrust

11:07 am - 20 Feb 2024 - 248 Views

See post

**Ipsley C of E Middle School** @IpsleySchool

Every moment in the classroom is incredibly valuable, & we are so pleased with how families work with us to help all of our pupils understand the importance of excellent attendance.

We have received a certificate so that all of us can celebrate our brilliant attendance together!

11:06 am - 29 Feb 2024 - 166 Views

See post

**Ipsley C of E Middle School** @IpsleySchool

A few photos from Year 5's tasty trip to Cadbury World today. It was enjoyed by all - especially the chocolate tasting!

7:53 pm - 19 Feb 2024 - 289 Views

See post

**Arrow Valley First School** @ArrowValleyFS

We have had a very busy week at Arrow Valley. Hedgehogs 🦔 have written invitations to Peter Rabbit 🐰 to ask him to come to their Carrot Party 🥕! Badgers 🦡 have been learning about division.

1:32 pm - 24 Feb 2024 - 37 Views

See post

# THE CENTRAL SOCIAL FEED HAS BEEN BUSY!

Follow us on Twitter: @CRSTrust

# ONLINE SAFETY Conference

On Monday 27th November 2023 Central Region Schools Trust hosted a highly successful online safety conference for parents/carers in collaboration with West Mercia Police and the University of Worcester.

The concept gained its initial momentum in June 2023 after colleagues from Central Region School Trust attended an online safety event for professionals at West Mercia Police Headquarters. The aim of the event was to raise awareness amongst a variety of professionals of the many current and varied threats that the digital world presented. Themes covered during the day included:

- FRAUD
- RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH CRYPTOCURRENCY
- SOCIAL MEDIA HACKING, PHISHING AND SEXTORTION
- RANSOMWARE
- CYBER PROTECTION
- ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

As the event drew to a close, DCI Tony Garner outlined the challenges the police faced in sharing this important information with the wider public and asked professionals to consider how they could work together to ensure that these key messages were being heard in homes across the local area.

University of Worcester Digital Arts department and we headed into the summer holidays both excited and daunted by the conference we had promised we could deliver.

In the weeks after the conference Dean Salisbury (Vice Principal, Sutton Park) and Scott Crane (CRST Director of Safeguarding) met with DCI Garner to discuss our desire to host a hybrid online safety conference for parents/carers in the Autumn Term of 2023. During the meeting DCI Garner shared some of the successes and challenges that the police had experienced in hosting their professionals event, including issues delivering a blended experience for delegates attending remotely. In volunteering to host a parent conference in partnership with the police, we were keen to ensure we learnt from these experiences.

As we returned to school in the Autumn, we knew our priority now was promoting the conference and ensuring that the IT infrastructure would ensure a successful event. Colleagues at Sutton Park took on responsibility for promotional materials and booking systems whilst Ed Cooper (Head of IT) and his team met both remotely and on-site at Arrow Vale for an initial site visit and subsequent 'test event'.

Invitations to attend either the physical event at Arrow Vale High School or to attend the event remotely were distributed across the Trust, Worcestershire Local Authority, the Haybridge SCITT and to the National Fostering Agency.

In the weeks leading up to the summer holidays we met with the Police, the Local Authority and Haybridge SCITT several times. Our intention was not just to deliver for our own parents/carers, but we wanted to spread these messages into schools/homes across the Local Authority and beyond. We enlisted the support of the Senior Technical Coordinator from the

West Mercia Police played their part in promoting the conference with quotes such as this one conveyed across their Social Media channels, "Every day we are seeing children coming to harm because of their online activity and it's a growing problem. I believe there is an urgent need to help parents better understand the risks. I'm really pleased to be working with the Central

Region Schools Trust to address this". DCI Tony Garner

In the final couple of weeks, we met with the Police and agreed that the main focus of this conference would be Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). The Police confirmed that they would share two recent local cases of CSE. In between the two cases, Dr Ian Burke (Child Forensic Psychologist) would talk about the development of the child brain and the danger of accessing pornography at a young age. The conference would conclude with the steps that parents/carers can take to mitigate the risks the online world presents to their children.

The conference was highly successful and delivered safely via an MS TEAMS live event without any technological issues - well done IT team and University of Worcester! Whilst a relatively small number of delegates attended in person, the conference was broadcast in circa 600+ locations, some of these being schools themselves that screened the event from their own school hall.

The event can still be accessed by a West Mercia Police Padlet link and so the viewing numbers continue to grow. What started out with a 'we think we can help with that' response to the conundrum faced by the police about reaching a larger audience, turned out to be a huge success. There have still been lessons learned though about how this could be even more successful going forwards. We have now started to engage with the Police about delivering another

**“WHAT STARTED OUT WITH A ‘WE THINK WE CAN HELP WITH THAT’ RESPONSE TO THE CONUNDRUM FACED BY THE POLICE ABOUT REACHING A LARGER AUDIENCE, TURNED OUT TO BE A HUGE SUCCESS.”**

conference for parents/carers in 2024. The focus of this new event: Vulnerability & Exploitation.

**Scott Crane (CRST Director of Safeguarding)**  
**Dean Salisbury (Vice Principal, Sutton Park)**



# ENRICHMENT & ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

In the last edition we had a taster of what was up and coming in our exciting CRST enrichment and engagement calendar.

## MORGAN STANLEY

The Morgan Stanley project, which brings Year 7 students together from all the middle and high schools working with industry professionals to devise their own ideas for business and pitch them for investment, has launched. We have had three preparation meetings with the lead staff from each school and have met all the Morgan Stanley volunteers that will be visiting all our schools in the next few weeks. Watch this space for developments in the next edition.

## RSA 4 AND 8

Our Year 4 and Year 8 students have fully embraced the RSA4 and 8 projects which will drive a collective approach to tackling a local issue and bring social action to life. The students have now been selected and have embarked on some preparation activities about the community and what that means to each of the schools. The theme for the project will be released in the next edition and so you will hear it here first! All of the Y8's will be meeting for the Launch Event at WHHS on Tuesday 5th March. Everyone is excited to share their ideas. Social action for change...

## WORLD BOOK DAY

Spring is in the air.... we look forward to sharing the World Book Day cross trust competition winners for their Creative Covers and the Brilliant Blurbs along with the dress up efforts of some of our staff – who will win the best dressed staff team?

## ATHLETICS COMPETITIONS

Here comes the Sun! In the summer term we will race into athletics season and with this will see the first cross trust Athletics Event to be held at the Abbey Stadium. Look out for the events and team sheets in the next edition.



# TRIBUTE EVENING TO CELEBRATE BENJAMIN ZEPHANIAH

In remembrance of the late Benjamin Zephaniah, a tribute evening was held in Holyhead to commemorate his life, works, and the significant influence he had on the community's youth and their families. The event took place on Monday, December 17th, bringing together staff, students, and guests to pay homage to his legacy.

- Presentation of Benjamin's life led by Mobashar Year 10 supported by Miss Brade
- Renowned musician and award winner Soweto Kinch delivered a keynote speech and played a saxophone tribute

The evening featured heartfelt and powerful performances from students and staff who took to the stage in Benjamin's honour. Performances included:

- Readings of original poems and spoken word inspired by Benjamin
- A touching classical violin duet by Ms. Bulkeley and Alyssa Year 11
- A rendition of "Lean on Me" by Bill Withers performed by Suraiya Year 12 and Alexandra Year 9

The occasion also marked the unveiling of artwork generously donated by Liverpool artist Goppang N'yarta, adding to the artistic ambiance of the evening. One of the highlights was the presentation of a poem titled "We are Holyhead," created in collaboration with Benjamin, and performed by three Year 7 students Riasz, Zuri, and Zian.

The evening was well-attended, with over 200 guests, including our guest of honour Benjamin's sister Millicent and her husband, who shared fond memories of their time with Benjamin and expressed appreciation for the event's warmth and significance.



# HOLYHEAD GOES TO FRANCE

As we reflect on the whirlwind adventure that was our culinary and cultural exploration of France and Belgium, it's evident that the past four days have been nothing short of extraordinary. From the aromatic corridors of "Le Fournil" to the enchanting streets of Brugge, and the magical world of Disney, each moment has added a unique flavour to our collective experience.

The laughter-filled croissant-making session at Boulangerie-Pâtisserie "Le Fournil" has become more than just a memory; it's a testament to the joy that comes from embracing new cultures and flavours. Who could forget the infectious enthusiasm of the man guiding us through the art of baking, sprinkling humour like the essential 'farine, sel, sucre, oeuf, and beurre'?

Our journey continued through the charming Christmas Market in Lille, the aromatic workshop at Gaufre du Pays Flamand, and the fascinating P&J Chocolate Factory. Brugge, with its picturesque streets and vibrant Christmas market, offered a perfect blend of freedom and cultural immersion, leaving us with shopping bags filled with memories and delights. Then came the climax of our adventure—the enchanting Disneyland Paris. The sparkle in the students' eyes as they entered the magical world of Disney, the adrenaline rush on rides like Spiderman and The Twilight Zone Tower of Terror, and the awe-inspiring sight of the Sleeping Beauty Castle all combined to create a day that will forever be etched in our hearts. As one student aptly put it, "Miss, this has been the best day of my life."

Our gastronomic journey concluded with a taste-testing extravaganza at Dhardelot Biscuiterie, where flavours danced on our taste buds, marking the perfect finale to our culinary exploration. As we crossed borders, both physical and cultural, and made our way back to England, the memories of our adventure lingered in the air. The shared silences on the coach, the contented smiles of "sleeping beauties," and the excitement over a last-minute McDonald's stop—all tell the story of a trip that went beyond education. It was an odyssey of flavours, cultures, and camaraderie. In the hearts and minds of these 34 students, a kaleidoscope of experiences now resides—a tapestry woven with the threads of laughter, learning, and shared moments. Until the next adventure beckons, we carry with us the flavours of France and Belgium and the cherished memories of a journey that transformed each of us in ways words can only begin to capture. Vive la cuisine, vive la culture, and vive l'aventure!

As we unpack our suitcases and share our stories with those who couldn't join us, let us celebrate the magic of exploration and the profound impact that travel has on our lives. Our journey through France has not just been a school trip; it has been a transformative odyssey that has broadened our horizons and enriched our perspectives.

Until the next adventure awaits, à bientôt, France!

**Mrs Davies, Mr Bowen, Mr Shaw and Mrs McKinney**



# CHARITY WEEK

The week before Christmas saw our very first CRST Secondary Phase Charity Week. Our Central Sixth Form student leadership team and charity committees, made up of Year 13 and 12 students from across our Central Sixth Form schools, came together to plan a week of exciting activities to raise money for Birmingham Children's Hospital.

The chosen charity was nominated by students themselves as the charity of the year for the trust. Their goal? To raise £10,000 to help children who are receiving vital health care at the hospital.

Students came together and met as a trust wide leadership team, discussing possible activities and events that they could lead within their respective schools to raise as much money as possible. Students demonstrated fantastic leadership behaviours as well as a great deal of maturity when considering the implications and limitations of their concepts and ideas and developed a fantastic sense of ownership in their chosen events.

Waseley Hills hosted a wide array of events for the school community throughout the week, ranging from charity wristband sales, a pick and mix sweet shop, a Christmas Fayre and a non-uniform day. Students in Years 7 – 11 very much enjoyed the range of activities available to them and together raised a fantastic £1238! Gospel Oak students raised a fantastic £480 through their very own school wide bake sales and student and teacher raffles. Students within the school enjoyed their delicious baked goods and the raffle was a resounding success!

Students at Holyhead also organised a number of exciting activities and were able to raise an impressive £914. Arrow Vale students hosted a Christmas jumper day, wristband and bake sales and raised £350 students and staff are continuing their fundraising

efforts into the new year to continue to increase the total raised.

Together, the students across our four secondary schools raised an amazing £2,982 for Birmingham Children's Hospital during their Charity Week, a fantastic achievement that would not have been possible without the generosity of our school communities and their families.

The Central Sixth Form Student Leadership Team have now been working together to launch our Primary Phase Charity Week which will take place in April. They will be supporting students across our primary and middle schools to plan and lead their very own charity weeks to continue our fundraising efforts and get us closer to our £10,000 target.

We are very much dedicated to raising as much as we can for our chosen charity of 2024 and would be grateful of any donations made.

**Gemma Loveridge**  
Trust Sixth Form Lead



# WASELEY HILLS HIGH SCHOOL SKI TRIP - AUSTRIA 2024

Over February half term, 33 Year 8 and 9 students from Waseley Hills spent an amazing week on the slopes in Alpendorf, Austria. Students showed incredible determination and perseverance, learning to ski over the course of 5 days.

Resilience and independence grew as the week progressed with all students venturing on to the main mountain. Some students even conquered red and black runs -impressive progress for beginners!

In addition to skiing, students enjoyed a fantastic alpine rollercoaster 'The Lucky Flitzer' and had lots of fun bum boarding!

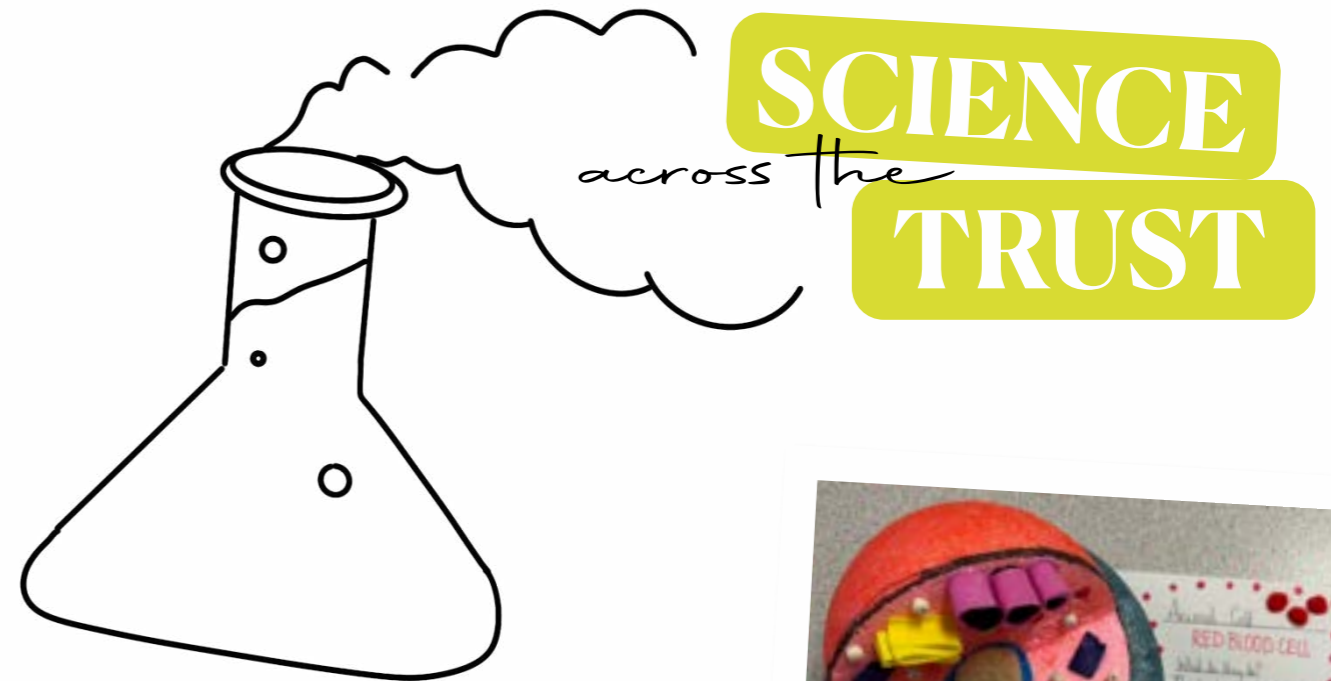
We are so proud of those who took part. All were a credit to us and true representatives of Team Waseley.

After the success of this trip, we are hoping to arrange future ski trips for 2025 and beyond - watch this space!



**THE SKI TRIP WAS THE BEST WEEK EVER! I WAS PROUD OF HOW MUCH I PROGRESSED IN A WEEK AND HOPE TO GO BACK.**  
-ZACH C

**AUSTRIA WAS AN INCREDIBLE EXPERIENCE! IT SHOWED ME I AM CAPABLE OF SO MUCH MORE THAN I THOUGHT. I'LL NEVER FORGET IT.**  
-SAVANNAH K



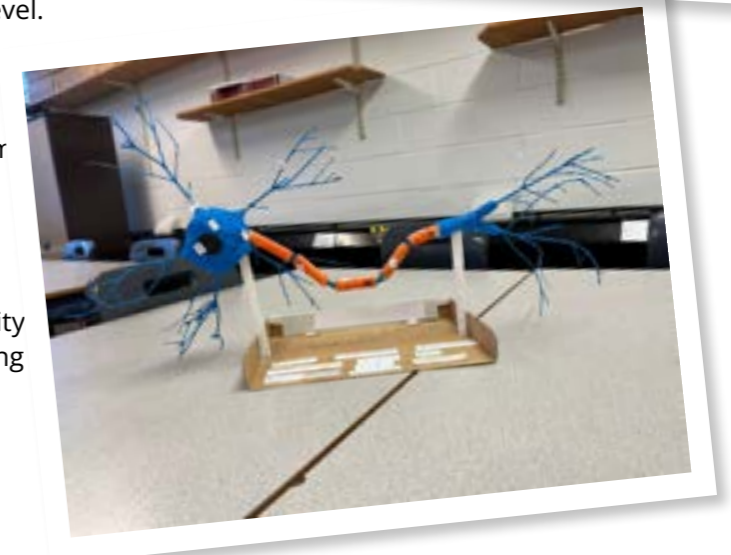
In an exciting celebration of science and creativity, our trust recently concluded The Great Cell Model Competition, an event that brought the microscopic world into the spotlight. Students across grades participated with enthusiasm, creating intricate models of cells that showcased not just their understanding of biology, but also their creativity!

Amidst a field of brilliant entries, two stand-out models crafted by students from Holyhead clinched the top prize. This competition was not only a testament to the creativity and scientific ability of our students but also a vibrant educational journey that highlights the importance of hands-on learning.

The event has sparked a new-found interest in biology among students, encouraging them to explore and appreciate the complexities of life at a cellular level. The success of this year's competition promises an even more exciting challenge over the next term, as we continue to celebrate the curiosity and creativity of our students with a solar system model competition!

Congratulations to our winners from Holyhead and to all who participated, showcasing the remarkable talent within the CENTRAL community. This competition was a brilliant display of learning beyond the classroom, and we look forward to what our students will bring to the table in future events.

Hattie Hayhurst  
Trust Lead Practitioner - Science



# READ READ READ

## THE ST STEPHEN'S BOOK DIET.

Here at St Stephen's our day starts and ends with a book. When the children finish breakfast, they read a book! There is a wide selection available at breakfast club. Then we move onto phonics and comprehension. Read a bit more. What about lunchtime? There's an after-lunch book. Children can choose books from a selection at the back of the hall. The books in the hall were hand picked by the children across the school. All the titles and topics requested magically appeared a week later, and now the children enjoy their favourites every day.

In the afternoon, children requiring fast track tutoring as part of our Read, Write, Inc programme access this. Children who have completed the RWI programme but are still needing a bit of extra access fluency groups. Again, the titles are chosen by the children. Our current fluency groups are particularly partial to a bit of Anthony Browne, they have already requested four titles this term!

There's more reading in class of course. Each class has its own class library. We have had an author visit this year, and a social and emotional well-being theatre company based around famous titles such as Daisy's Dragons and Ruby's Worry!

The day ends as it starts with DEAR (Drop Everything And Read). Each class enjoys a good book read by their teacher. Before taking home their book bags for a bit more of a book time at home.

But that's not all...

Our Early Year's Snuggle up with a Book was really well attended this year. The children and their families came to school at night dressed in their cosy pj's to hear their teachers read and sip hot chocolate. The children joined in with the story-telling and performed 'The Little Red hen' to their families. It really was a lovely bedtime read.



## GOSPEL OAK - SEND BUILD UPDATE

It is an exciting time at Gospel Oak School where the specialist building to support students with additional educational needs and disabilities is due for handover on Wednesday 21st February.

Together with Hawker Construction and S2E, CRST have project managed the construction of a single storey building, purpose-built for students with SEND needs.



The build comprises of two main teaching classrooms, a room for 1:1 intervention and a kitchen to support students with life skills

The main aim of the building is to create a unique space where students with additional educational needs can study and learn. As you can see from the images this will provide a high quality and unique learning space for the students at Gospel Oak. Well done to all of those involved with this amazing project.



## IPSLEY C OF E MIDDLE SCHOOL – WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOL?

As a Church of England Middle School, our Christian Vision is at the very core of everything we do here at Ipsley:

'As Team Ipsley, we strive to create a community where all flourish, following God's example by loving each other as He loves us. Together, we become the best versions of ourselves by being ambitious, courageous and kind, creating a community which can achieve anything we set our minds to.'

In short, TEAM Ipsley are Ambitious, Courageous and Kind because we love each other as God loves us.

Each day, TEAM Ipsley joins in an act of Collective Worship. These take different forms, but throughout the week we reflect on bible verses, stories and questions and consider what we can do to make positive changes in our community and the wider world.

We explore and develop our spirituality and gain a deeper understanding of ourselves. At Team Ipsley, spirituality is all about connections and the way we look at the world. We look at this in 4 ways:



Aligned with CRST principles, our community is at the front and centre of our vision. Recently we held our fantastically popular 'Community Cafe' where over 200 families (500 people) came to share time with us as well as finding out what support they may be able to access – crucial for families in these challenging times.

On a regular basis, we welcome Canon Nathaniel and his wife, Jenny, to lead our worship – it is always lovely to share this time with others. We also enjoy visiting our local churches and taking part in services there.

Jenny also comes to school each week to offer a prayer space for pupils and staff. This allows time for prayer, support, reflection and sometimes, just a quiet, caring space.

We are always proud of our pupils, but sometimes they truly inspire us. For example, one year 8 pupil asked for our help to create bags for the homeless – they wanted to show the gift of love to others. Another pupil, wanted to support a local animal charity, while a member of staff ran a fun day to support Natasha’s law after members of our local community have been tragically affected in the same way - It is these acts of courageous advocacy that show our team living out our vision each and every day.

And what do pupils say? In a recent survey, pupils overwhelmingly agree that Collective Worship is an important part of our day, they also feel strongly that this helps them to think about how they can be even better.

So, what’s next? We are working with students to establish an Ethos Committee which we are very excited about! These pupils will continue to drive our vision and develop worship within the school.



**OAK HILL**

**READ ALL ABOUT IT**



As the most recent school to join the trust, we have taken the opportunity to refresh our understanding of our vision and our unique identity with our school community. We began with our vision statement:

**“LITTLE SEEDS GROW MAGNIFICENT TREES”**

We want it to resonate around the school. We want our community and visitors to see it in action in the classrooms, corridors and playgrounds. We are using it to provide a hook on which to hang our pupil conversations, helping them see their future potential in their work. What is important to us is that it provides the backbone that supports everything we do at school.

Despite a lower than average entry baseline our cohorts would typically be at national age-related expectations by the end of key stage 1, and higher than national for pupils demonstrating greater depth – so demonstrating progress was thankfully something we could evidence well. Following our return from COVID lockdowns, we noticed for many of our pupils, reading did not suffer to the same extent as writing

or maths - it would appear that given the difficulties around remote learning, reading was something our parents felt equipped and able to support their children with. Grateful that this was the case, we only had to tweak the reading curriculum to get them back on track....or so we thought.

Our curriculum provided the opportunity for our children to become better at decoding, fluency and vocabulary skills but in hindsight we realised that we needed to regain that love of reading which our parents had initially nurtured. We had assumed that habitual reading at home would continue, but this declined when pupils returned to school after lockdowns ceased – probably the relief of remote learning ending.

A newly appointed literacy lead picked up the baton and with a passion for reading she set about surrounding pupils with books, encouraging adults to regularly read books aloud – actively modeling a love of reading. Reading is very important at Oak Hill; we know that much research has shown that children who read regularly at home, perform better at school.



**“READING GIVES US SOME PLACE TO GO WHEN WE HAVE TO STAY WHERE WE ARE” - MASON COOLEY**

The most powerful key to unlock the love of reading has been our Reading Ambassadors. Our Reading Ambassadors provide a child's voice in how we promote reading throughout the school.

These roles are not new to schools, we merely wish to share and celebrate our experience of developing this initiative in our own setting.

Our Reading Ambassadors engage, encourage, and support the creation of a positive reading ethos across the whole of our school and peer-to-peer recommendations have been such an important influencer.

Reading recommendations are so powerful and intrinsic to building a community of engaged readers. Teaching staff, pupils and all members of our volunteer community sharing their recent reads ensure books are at the heart of our school.

- The children work with our Literacy Lead ensure that high quality texts and a positive reading atmosphere are a high priority in our school. They maintain our school library and write mini reviews, sharing them in the reading areas.
- They gain feedback from their peers and collate suggestions of new books that are relevant and exciting for all age groups across the school.
- Our ambassadors play a pivotal role in organising book events such as Book Week, National Poetry Day, competitions and World Book Day.
- They offer advice, support and recommendations to their peers about which books to read.
- They promote reading across the school presenting assemblies and will soon be helping to run Reading Mornings for parents and carers who are invited into school to read stories to their children and organise outdoor reading areas in the summer.

They are easily recognisable across the school and are proud to wear the badge and feature on a reading display with them talking about a recent favourite read. Being an ambassador is a huge opportunity for them and has really helped with their own personal development.

Our Reading Ambassadors have also helped to increase the number of times our children are reading at home each week. Each class has a pom pom jar that they aim to fill by reading at least 3 times a week at home under adult supervision. When filled the class choose one brand new book for their reading corner. Everyone then celebrates and enjoys reading and sharing books together.

The impact of promoting a love of reading, through our ambassadors, has had a significant impact.

- We have increased home school reading from 45% to 76% since January 2023.
- Children are interacting independently from adult led discussions, to make recommendations around books.
- Younger children are given a sense of cohesion and being part of the whole school by interacting with the Reading Ambassadors.
- The profile and importance of reading has been raised and our children know they are at the heart of this.
- The Reading Ambassadors feel empowered and inspired and want to share their knowledge and support.

This is what nurturing that "little seed" looks like in practice.

An invitation to our Trust learning community: Our children and staff would be delighted if you were to visit Oak Hill to find out more about who we are, what we do and why we do it. Our Ambassadors have just introduced a VIP weekly reading session for those who have become more regular readers. If you are in the area and would like to be one of our VIP's and talk about a book you have enjoyed, then Oak Hill is the place to come to on a Wednesday lunchtime. Virtual sessions can also be arranged! We look forward to welcoming you.

## ADDING VALUE TO THE CATERING PROVISION

**Aspens Services provides the catering services for 12 out of 13 schools within CENTRAL. Aspens has a passion for fresh food, healthy eating and a balanced nutritional menu with seasonality that includes 'Home Style' traditional meals as well as dishes from around the world. Aspens also guarantees 100% provenance as well as ensuring that all allergens are managed and controlled. We believe that our role goes beyond just providing school lunches - we want to enhance pupils' knowledge and widen the variety of what foods our students are eating. This term we have hosted a range of what we call 'added value' events to engage further with the school communities within the Trust.**

For Arrow Vale's Sports Festival, Aspens provided a celebratory BBQ which included our smoothie bike, where participants could choose from a range of healthy fruit & vegetables to create their own smoothie. However, we also encouraged them to include at least one nutritious ingredient that they wouldn't usually opt for - such as ginger, kale and spinach. Students and staff loved choosing their

ingredients then cycling their way to a tasty, nutritious smoothie. It was fantastic to see the school community come together and cheer each other on.

At Ipsley CE Middle School, pupils really enjoy the Streateries main meal offer at lunchtime. Aspens' focus is increasing Free School Meal uptake in all of our schools - having a hot, nutritious meal at lunchtime is key for enabling pupils to succeed in the rest of their school day. Last term Aspens hosted a taster session offering pupils the opportunity to try a selection of dishes from our current offer to encourage even more students to eat with us. Pupils from all year groups enjoyed tasty dishes such as Chana Masala, Vada Pav Bhaji Burgers, and Chicken & Vegetable Meatballs in Spicy Baharat Sauce. It was wonderful to see pupils trying new things and giving their feedback on our offer, with some students even saying they would now try a hot meal at lunchtime instead of bringing a packed lunch.





Ashley Padfield, Regional Development Chef for Aspens, recently hosted a 'Farm to Fork' session with Year 3 pupils at Sutton Park Primary School. Pupils learnt the process that different fruit and vegetables follow - from the moment they are planted on a farm right the way through to when they reach the consumer in the supermarket. They were asked to identify less common fruit and vegetables in their raw and cooked forms, what dishes they thought they could be used in and finally, taste them! The selection of ingredients that pupils tried all feature on our current primary menu. As a treat for trying new things, all pupils that took part in the session got to try our

beetroot brownie and had the opportunity to guess the secret healthy ingredient. This term, Aspens launched our 'Feed Your Family of 4 for £5' campaign. This initiative provides a fully-costed shopping list and recipe for a variety of tasty dishes that anyone can cook at home whilst on a budget - just scan the QR codes to access. So far, we have launched BBQ Pulled Chicken Loaded Chips and Chorizo Paella - with plenty more tasty recipes to come!

Izzy Wilson  
Group Manager-Aspens

**Aspens**  
🌱🌱🌱🌱

**FEED YOUR FAMILY FOR £5**

# CHORIZO PAELLA

Feed your family of four for £5 with this delicious Chorizo Paella recipe. You can make it yourself, just scan below to watch the method and get the recipe card.

**SCAN ME**

**TO WATCH**

**SCAN ME**

**FOR THE RECIPE CARD**

**Aspens**  
🌱🌱🌱🌱

**FEED YOUR FAMILY FOR £5**

# BBQ PULLED CHICKEN LOADED CHIPS

Feed your family of four for £5 with these amazing BBQ Pulled Chicken Loaded Chips. You can make it yourself, just scan below to watch the method and get the recipe card.

**SCAN ME**

**TO WATCH**

**SCAN ME**

**FOR THE RECIPE CARD**

# PHOTO WALL



Lickhill Primary School - Ofsted report was good with outstanding features displayed by the children in the playground.



Waseley Hill High School ski trip - Austria 2024.



Holyhead goes on a French Trip. Making croissants.



Waseley Hill High School ski trip - Austria 2024 making snow angels.



Christmas fayre - preparations for the charity week.



Christmas fayre, with a range of activities to raise money for charity!



Send Building Update at Gospel Oak School.



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