

Issue 19 Autumn 2024

DesignEd

A Central Region Schools Trust Publication



TABLE OF CONTENTS

<hr/> A Note From Guy Shears	Pg. 4	<hr/> Central Support and Services Offer	Pg. 20
<hr/> Meet The Team	Pg. 6	<hr/> Welcome to New Members of Staff	Pg. 21
<hr/> The Vision of Education at CRST in Fulfilling Our Mission	Pg. 8	<hr/> Governance: The Importance of Local and Trust Governance	Pg. 22
<hr/> School Improvement Articles	Pg. 10	<hr/> New Build	Pg. 23
<hr/> CPLRD	Pg. 14	<hr/> School Updates	Pg. 26
<hr/> Personal Development Across CRST	Pg. 16	<hr/> The Possibilities of AI at CRST	Pg. 36
<hr/> Reading Across CRST	Pg. 18		

A note from
GUY SHEARS

IT'S BEEN AN EXTRAORDINARY YEAR FOR CENTRAL REGION SCHOOLS TRUST, ONE WHERE OUR DELIVERY OF OUR TRUST'S MISSION OF SUPPORTING SOCIAL JUSTICE THROUGH EXCEPTIONAL SCHOOLS HAS BEEN TESTED AND, IN EVERY CASE, PROVEN TO BE GETTING STRONGER AND STRONGER.

We have had ten inspections by Ofsted this year and it is true to say that all of our schools have improved and are improving at this time of writing. That's quite something to say, given the world that we're working within, a world that makes the delivery of our trust's mission ever more important.

The reason for the ongoing success of our trust is mainly because of our amazing people. It has been interesting for me to observe, over the last couple of weeks, where people, having given their all throughout the Autumn term and are extremely tired, have proven able to continue to exhibit our important staff behaviours. Our codified staff

behaviours are what we all commit to as a vital part of the delivery of our trust's mission. This is harder for us all when we are tired, where we might slip into 'bad day' behaviours. Our staff are clearly able to manage themselves so that when they're having a bad day, they're conscious to manage their behaviour so that it is not apparent to the young people.

They know the importance of continuing to serve as role models, seeing the bigger picture and so on and recognise that, by not doing so it can be to the detriment of young people's education. We know it is important to the young people that we serve that we are consistently positive.



Scan here to view the latest edition of the CRST 'Our Distinctive Culture'



OUR SEVEN STAFF BEHAVIOURS ARE:

- Prioritise the success of our young people at all times
- Be a role model
- Communicate effectively
- Keep your promises and stick to your organisational commitments
- Commit to the development of others
- Have a solution focused approach
- Demonstrate full commitment to the bigger picture

There is considerable interest in the education sector about our trusts codification of staff behaviours and how this contributes to the delivery of our mission across thirteen schools. It is easier said than done to achieve this at scale, but the internal and external monitoring reports of our schools through 2024 suggest that we're doing very well at this. Thank you to all of our Trustees, Governors, Staff and Volunteers for your commitment and understanding of why these behaviours are so important to our young people and your alignment to the delivery of our mission.

It has been an amazing year for the trust. Now is the time during the holidays to relax, unwind and recharge our batteries. I wish everyone the very best across the Christmas period and all the best for 2025. Let's hope its an even better one for the children, families and communities we serve.

Guy Shears
Executive Principal (CEO)

MEET THE TEAM

Trust Board

Orla MacSherry

Chair of Trustees

Trustees

Eric Griffiths (Vice Chair)

Elizabeth Keates

Gareth Bower

Nicholas Clifford

Claire Grainger

John Howard

Christopher Smith

Chairs of LAGBs

Richard Davies

Abbeywood First School and Church Hill Middle School

Sarah Perrett

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

Nick Reader

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

Executive Leadership Team

Guy Shears

Executive Principal (CEO)

Penny Harrison

Trust Finance Director (CFO)

Andrew Martin

Chief Operating Officer

Executive Leadership Team (cont.)

Ian Mellor

Director of Education, Executive Principal of Arrow Vale High School

Samantha McMonagle

Executive School Improvement Leader (DDoE)

Angela Crawley

Trust Primary Executive Principal (DDoE)

Stephen Brownlow

Executive Principal

The Central Team

Guy Shears

Executive Principal (CEO)

Penny Harrison

Trust Finance Director (CFO)

Andrew Martin

Chief Operating Officer

Gerald O'Connor

Chief Operations Officer Consultant

Ian Mellor

Director of Education, Executive Principal of Arrow Vale High School

Samantha McMonagle

Executive School Improvement Leader (DDoE)

Matthew Purslow

Trust Lead for Staff Development (CPLR&D)

Jennie Homer

Head of Governance & Corporate Services

Edward Cooper

Head of IT & Data

Bryan Tait

Lead Estates Manager

Chelsea Cafolla

EPA to the Executive Principal (CEO) & Office Manager

Principals

Sarah Allen

Principal of Arrow Valley First School

Stephen Brownlow

Executive Principal of Gospel Oak School

Sarah Callanan

Principal of St Stephen's CE First School

Angela Crawley

Trust Primary Executive Principal

Zoe Gilmour

Principal of Abbeywood First School

MEET THE TEAM

Principals (cont.)

Bethany Harris

Head of Church Hill Middle School

Ben Irving

Principal of Oldbury Park Primary School

Dave Knox

Principal of Holyhead School

Lynn Kelly

Principal of Oak Hill First School

Jane Lloyd

Principal of Lickhill Primary School

Ian Mellor

Director of Education, Executive Principal of Arrow Vale High School

Tom Preston

Head of Waseley Hills High School

Matthew Rash

Head of School for Arrow Vale

Angela Saul

Principal of Ipsley CE Middle School

Lorna Weatherby

Principal of Sutton Park Primary School

CPLRD and Teach Central Leaders

Matthew Purslow

Trust Lead for Staff Development (CPLR&D)

Teresa Wilson

Trust Lead for ITT & Early Careers (Teach Central)

Strategic Leads

Samantha McMonagle

Trust Lead for Secondary Co-Design, Disadvantaged and Vulnerable (including Pupil Premium) Strategy & Curriculum and Pedagogy

Matthew Purslow

Trust Lead for Secondary Co-Design & Staff Development & Training (CPLR&D)

Angela Crawley

Trust Lead for Primary co-design

Teresa Wilson

Trust Lead for ITT & Early Careers (Teach Central)

Claire Round

Trust Director of SEND

Danielle Duignan, Joss McLeod & Angela Crawley

Trust Leads for Reading

Strategic Leads (cont.)

Scott Crane

Trust Lead for Safeguarding

Niall Brennan

Trust Lead for Digital Learning Network & Trust attendance

Maryellen Homer & Francesca Stanley

Trust Leads for PSHE/RSE

Francesca Stanley & Daniel Wright

Trust Leads for Personal Development

Dani Hale

Trust Leads for Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs)

Ellie Meredith

Trust Lead for Enrichment

Gemma Loveridge

Trust Lead for Sixth Form

Co-Design Leaders

Nancy Ottey

Trust Lead for Maths

Jas Edwards

Trust Lead for English

Jesse Mohr & Jenny Lewis

Trust Leads for Science

Nick Whitehouse

Trust Lead for History

Hannah Weynberg & Alice Pearson

Trust Leads for Geography

Jenna Brown

Trust Lead for Modern Foreign Languages

Ed Lee

Trust Lead for Drama

Alice Pearson

Trust Lead for Religious Education

Josh Prentice

Trust Lead for Physical Education

Sheetal Sommel

Trust Lead for Computing

Moira O'Hare

Trust Lead for Product Design

Dawn Salter

Trust Lead for Food Technology

Stacey Geal

Trust Lead for Art

Chloe Burke

Trust Lead for Music

THE VISION OF EDUCATION AT CRST IN FULFILLING OUR MISSION

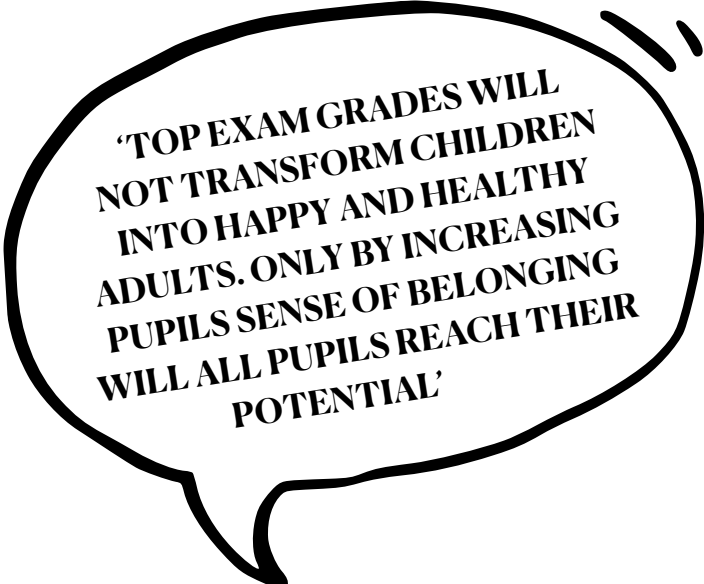
OUR DISTINCTIVE CULTURE HAS ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT MORE THAN EXAM RESULTS

The test of a culture is time. The right culture will outlast changes in leadership, be maintained through turbulent educational landscapes and be here long after changes in government. The right culture is a culture that values all young people for who they are, their strengths and areas for development as people rather than just working to get better at passing exams, although that is important. Only when the culture is such that all members feel appreciated and supported will a sense of belonging manifest. We believe our Distinctive Culture is the vehicle for promoting inclusivity and belonging across our Trust and wider.

Since the inception of Central Regions Schools Trust we have endeavoured to strike the balance between the pursuit of exam results and those other tangible and intangible educational and life outcomes that allow our young people to flourish. Staying true to the principles of our founding organisation, the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (The RSA), we consider how our people, places and processes can best support social justice, putting this commitment into practice. Fundamental to this is inclusion and equity.

We have and will continue to purposely strive to develop a culture in which we celebrate individual difference and consider educational success as wider than just exam results. Culture, in the communities our Trust serves, matters. Our leaders work hard every day to promote our strong distinctive culture and we consciously reinforce this with our shared language.

The new Education Secretary, Bridgette Phillipson recently told school leaders that:



Our people understand the importance of excellent exam grades. They also know their powerful role in fostering our distinctive and intentional culture through their behaviours and mindsets which shape thinking, communication and action to support social justice creating welcoming and transformative education. We ensure a safe, secure school environment by nurturing strong relationships with each other and with pupils to create a compelling vision of the future by acting as role models both for pupils/students and other adults. We deliberately measure learner confidence, learner self esteem and young peoples response to the curriculum. From this we can gauge how our young people feel about themselves and their school so that we can support those who need the most support to gain a sense of belonging.



Our wider curriculum design is underpinned by our vision for what the pupils in our communities need to thrive and become confident learners. Our Curriculum offer identifies more than just exam outcomes as crucial to educational success. Through Knowledge, Skills, Attributes and Experiences (KASE), we aim to enrich our young people's lives to allow them to fulfil their potential. We see each component of KASE as an entitlement for pupils shaping the whole experience within a school. Key to our curriculum vision is that pupils experience a wide range of cultural opportunities and materials and are encouraged to communicate and talk about their knowledge, thinking and learning.



Experiences of activities, visits to places and encounters with people or background context provide stimulus for and models of how knowledge is gained. The design and planning of our curriculum makes explicit the weaving in of authentic experiences and a wide range of rich 'texts' which give pupils the opportunities to see where knowledge and learning could take them and enables connections and links to be made.



**ALL SCHOOLS IN OUR TRUST
AIM TO FULFIL DELIVERY OF
OUR ENRICHMENT GUARANTEE
FOR ALL PUPILS.
THIS ENTITLEMENT INCLUDES:**

- Opportunities to access and participate in visits to theatres, galleries and cultural events;
- Work directly with arts practitioners and designers, sporting experts and the like;
- Aim to ensure entitlement of offer to experience a residential stay;
- Participate in projects for the local and wider community;
- Have access to a variety of careers talks, workplace and university visits, and work experience.



We track the take up of enrichment opportunities of all pupils so that we can signpost and ensure that pupils are making the most of the opportunities afforded to them. This allows us to adapt our Offer of enrichment to allow pupils better access and to foster a sense of place and belonging. We are working with our wider partners to expand our Trust specialist provision for pupils with SEND based in our schools to allow

all pupils to be supported within their own school communities.

The job of our Distinctive Culture is to allow all pupils to be themselves in a supportive environment so that they can be the very best versions of themselves.

Ian Mellor

Director of Education, Executive Principal of Arrow Vale High School

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

HOW WE ARE IMPROVING ATTENDANCE IN CRST AND THE POSITIVE IMPACT ON CHILDREN'S LIVES

Celebrating Our Attendance Journey: Positive Progress Across CRST Schools

Attendance remains one of the most pressing issues in schools today, with a direct link to a student's future success. Studies consistently show that poor attendance disproportionately affects students from deprived backgrounds, exacerbating inequalities in education. Data reveals that students from the most disadvantaged areas are more likely to experience persistent absenteeism, which in turn leads to lower academic achievement, poorer social development, and limited future life opportunities. For example, students who miss 10% or more of school are far less likely to achieve GCSE success, with a significant achievement gap for those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The national trend of declining attendance rates, worsened by the legacy effects of COVID-19, has been felt across schools, including all 13 schools within the Central Regions Schools Trust (CRST). The disruption caused by the pandemic has left a lasting impact, with many students struggling to return to pre-COVID attendance patterns. Our Trust serves communities where these challenges are particularly pronounced, and addressing attendance is central to our commitment to social justice – ensuring that every child, regardless of their background, has the opportunity to succeed.



However, despite these challenges, CRST has made significant strides in addressing this issue. Through a collaborative, strategic approach, our Trust has not only worked to improve attendance but has also developed systems that are setting new standards for the sector. By working together, we have transformed our attendance culture, ensuring that every student has the support they need to succeed.

A Unified Approach: The Attendance Steering Group and Policy Redevelopment

A key component of CRST's success has been the work of the Attendance Steering Group. Led by Niall Brennan (Trust Attendance Lead and Vice Principal at Arrow Vale High School), this group includes Sam McMonagle (Executive School Improvement Leader – CRST), Lorna Weatherby (Principal – Sutton Park Primary School), and Michael Williams (Vice Principal – Ipsley Middle School). Together, this team has conducted **Attendance Deep Dives** in most schools, completed **attendance audits**, and developed **accountable action plans** to improve attendance. These audits have been instrumental in identifying key barriers to attendance and creating tailored strategies for improvement. The group also redeveloped the **Trust Attendance Policy**, which has helped streamline and standardize processes across all schools.



One of the group's major achievements was the development of clear **roles and responsibilities** for attendance within each school. By aligning everyone's understanding and expectations, the Trust has created a cohesive framework for tracking, managing, and improving attendance. This system ensures that all schools within the Trust are held to the same high standards, making it easier to measure progress and identify areas for improvement.

Adopting the Inclusive Attendance National Framework

In order to further enhance attendance efforts, CRST adopted the **Inclusive Attendance National Framework**, a comprehensive approach to improving attendance with a focus on inclusivity. In the early stages, we worked closely with Wayne Harris, a national expert in inclusive attendance, to ensure our approach was as effective as possible.

As part of this framework, staff across the Trust now receive **bespoke Continuing Professional Development (CPD)** on attendance, ensuring that every member of staff understands the critical role they play in promoting consistent attendance. This CPD is not just about policies and procedures, but also about building an inclusive school culture that recognizes the diverse barriers that may prevent students from attending school regularly.



Building the Foundation: Attendance Systems and Support

At the heart of our success has been the development and implementation of an innovative attendance tracker, spearheaded by our Trust Attendance Lead, Niall Brennan, and supported by the Attendance Leads at each school. This tracker has revolutionized how we

monitor, track, and act on attendance data. From the outset of the year, schools like Ipsley, Arrow Valley, and Holyhead have actively participated in the rollout, ensuring that every school has the tools necessary to track attendance efficiently and accurately.

One of the key successes of the tracker is its ability to not only pinpoint early attendance concerns but also to track the actions taken to support each student. This feature allows schools to monitor both the data and the interventions put in place, ensuring that actions are timely, targeted, and effective. By using the tracker to highlight patterns and trends, we've been able to tailor interventions for individual students and cohorts, whether addressing health barriers, family issues, or more complex challenges. This proactive, data-driven approach ensures that every student receives the support they need to stay engaged and attend school regularly.



Impact Across Our Schools

Our work has already had a noticeable impact across the Trust. Several schools have received positive reports from Ofsted, noting the significant improvements made in attendance and the proactive approaches in place to support students facing attendance challenges. This is a reflection of the hard work and commitment of all staff members involved in driving these improvements.

In addition to internal successes, CRST's approach to attendance was highlighted on a national stage at the Worcestershire Attendance Forum in September 2024. Niall Brennan and Michael Williams were invited to present to over 90 schools and 300 delegates about the successful work happening within the Trust. Their presentation focused on how CRST has tackled attendance challenges through a data-driven approach, the adoption of the Inclusive Attendance Framework, and the ongoing training and support available to staff.

Recognition and Achievements

The hard work of CRST schools in tackling attendance has not gone unnoticed. Several schools have been invited to apply for the Inclusive Attendance Bronze Kite Mark, a prestigious recognition that acknowledges schools for their outstanding efforts in improving attendance. This invitation speaks to the dedication of the staff and leadership teams across the Trust who have worked tirelessly to improve attendance and, in turn, the life chances of their students.

Furthermore, CRST's innovation in attendance management has earned us global recognition from Microsoft as a leading school in technology and innovation. This recognition highlights the cutting-edge tools and systems we've developed to improve attendance tracking, engagement, and intervention, and reinforces our status as a global leader in education technology.



Case Studies: Impact Across Schools

Throughout this journey, a number of success stories stand out, showing the positive impact of the initiatives we've rolled out.

Gospel Oak Secondary School: After receiving tailored support through our attendance tracker, the school saw a marked improvement in both punctuality and overall attendance. The introduction of reward systems and consistent follow-ups with families has made a real difference, with attendance rising considerably compared to last year.

Abbeywood First School: The use of the Trust EWO (Education Welfare Officer) to strengthen parental engagement has helped families feel supported, resulting in more students attending regularly.

Arrow Vale High School: The shift to a whole-school approach, where all staff take ownership of attendance, has created a supportive environment that helps students engage with school, regardless of their background.



Ipsley Middle School has made fantastic use of the Kellogg's Breakfast Club, providing a welcoming and supportive environment for students to start their day. This initiative has been instrumental in improving attendance, particularly for students facing morning barriers, by ensuring they arrive at school ready to engage.

At **Holyhead High School**, the use of 'The Link' has been a resounding success. Staff and students alike celebrate its impact, as it has helped students who were previously struggling to recalibrate and maintain positive attendance. The program has been praised for its role in re-engaging students with school life. These are just a few highlights of the fantastic work happening across our Trust. While there are many more success stories, space limits us from sharing them all.

Engaging Families and Building Relationships

We know that attendance is not just a school issue, but a community issue. Across the Trust, schools have worked hard to engage families in the conversation around the importance of consistent school attendance. Through initiatives such as Family Thrive sessions, attendance workshops, and one-to-one meetings, we've built stronger relationships with parents and caregivers. These efforts have helped parents feel supported and informed, empowering them to be active participants in their children's education.

The Trust Attendance Lead, Niall Brennan, has also played a vital role in facilitating regular attendance meetings, including with Redditch Reengaged and local authorities, to ensure that our approach is aligned with national expectations and best practices.

Challenges and Moving Forward

Despite the many successes, we recognize that there is still work to be done. Some schools are facing challenges with persistent absence (PA) and lateness, particularly within certain year groups. However, the improvements we've seen so far are promising, and the ongoing training of staff, the use of the tracker, and the involvement of external agencies will continue to drive our efforts forward.

Looking ahead, the Trust plans to continue refining the attendance tracking system to ensure that we remain responsive to the needs of our students. There is a focus on celebrating the successes of those who have made significant improvements, while still ensuring that we provide targeted support to those who need it the most.

Trust-Wide Impact: Significant Improvements in Attendance Across CRST

As of 27/11/24, the hard work and dedication across the Trust have already led to notable improvements in attendance data. Overall attendance for compulsory school-age students has increased to 92.70%, compared to 92.40% at this time last year, marking a positive trend. Persistent absence has been reduced from 22.11% to 20.48%, demonstrating our proactive efforts to address absenteeism. More than 2,000 students have achieved 100% attendance so far this year, a true testament to the effectiveness of the initiatives implemented. The Pupil Premium attendance has risen to 89.54%, up from 89.27% last year, with the Pupil Premium gap narrowing significantly from 6.47% to 5.30%. These figures reflect the positive impact of the work done across our schools and the commitment of staff and students alike in improving attendance outcomes.



Looking to the Future

While we are incredibly proud of the progress we've made, the journey doesn't end here. The Trust remains committed to continuous improvement, ensuring that attendance remains a priority for all schools within the CRST family. We will continue to refine our processes, celebrate successes, and address barriers to attendance as they arise. The ongoing work of the Attendance Steering Group and all of the attendance leads and all who work in our schools will ensure that we stay focused on our ultimate goal: to provide every student with the opportunity to attend school regularly and achieve their full potential.

As we look ahead, the Trust is excited about the potential for even greater achievements in attendance and the long-term impact it will have on the students we serve. With strong leadership, engaged staff, and a shared commitment to improving attendance, we are confident that we can continue making a meaningful difference for students across our Trust.



CENTRAL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

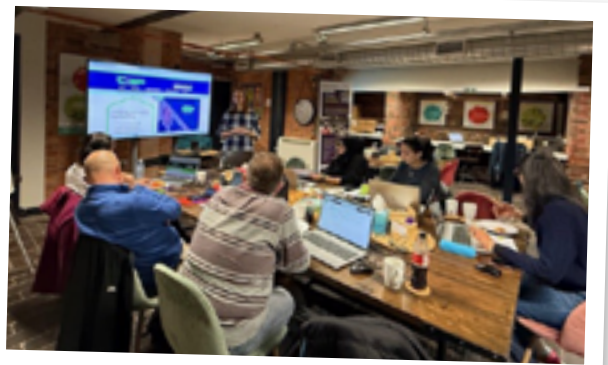


“PEOPLE MATTER; AT THE CENTRAL REGION SCHOOLS TRUST, WE BELIEVE THAT EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING, RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT MUST BE AT THE HEART OF OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITIES. COLLABORATION ACROSS OUR TRUST TO IMPROVE LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR ALL PUPILS IN OUR CARE IS KEY TO OUR MISSION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE.”

Throughout the autumn term, there have been several subject-based co-design & cross-phase strategic conferences at our Assay base, as well as collaborative planning and CPD which has taken place through a hybrid of both virtual and face to face sessions.

Examples of collaboration and staff development include: our secondary computing co-design lead was successful in securing funding from Teach Computing, through whom our secondary curriculum is delivered; this funding will allow for additional support from Teach Computing and therefore develop staff expertise in specific areas of KS3, to increase confidence and provide resources to enhance the teaching of computing in our schools. Additionally, we were also successful in a bid to work with the Ogden Trust, whose educational focus is on engaging learners from KS2-5 in physics teaching and bringing about enrichment opportunities within this curriculum area – one of our secondary co-design leads for science has been tasked in leading this project and the impact has already been felt throughout all schools in the Trust.

Our D&T leads have been enrolled onto electronics CPD with the national D&T association and all our PE leads have been upskilled through the national association for PE in ensuring risk assessment compliance. The PE co-design team have also secured the Abbey stadium for the annual Trust sports day, for 20th June 2025, and this has now been expanded to include YR7,8 & YR10, with plans for KS3 leaders to support primary pupils with an event in the summer of 2025. Our primary science and maths colleagues have met this term to reflect on the sharing of best practice, CPD opportunities and in closing gaps based on national trends, again demonstrating our shared values of commitment to the success of our young people.





We have further worked with regional and local law enforcement agencies and organisations to ensure that our safeguarding leads are cognisant of the latest updates and procedures attached to protecting our most vulnerable young people. We continue to invest heavily in research driven practice with materials and resources having been purchased, and shared, with our assessment leads, pupil premium leads, SENCOs, and our teaching & learning leads. Additionally, we have a bespoke mentoring programme to support our RQT cohort of colleagues, across the Trust and across phases, with their research disciplined inquiries 2024-25. Our commitment to supporting expert practice in the classroom, across both phases, continues with a focus on identifying and developing observational practice for colleagues, specifically in career stage development and in underpinning whole school quality assurance mechanisms.

The CRST continues its work with a wide range of partners which include Worcester University, Haybridge & Tudor Grange Teaching School Hubs, Best Practice Network, The Ogden Trust, Teach Computing, AFPE, BCU, Inclusive Attendance, the EEF & subject/curriculum hubs across our region. We have also partnered with Windsor Talent Institute to investigate the scope for the sharing of career stage developmental CPD and further, opportunities to support our colleagues across all functions of the CRST. Colleagues throughout the Trust have begun their national professional qualifications for 2024-25 across the full suite of NPQs available; recent successes include 20 colleagues having completed their assessment for the 2023-24 NPQ series and the impact of these programmes has been felt throughout our co-design model and within leadership structures. There are exciting developments for CPLR&D in 2024-25, with the development of a programme to support our achievement assistants, as well as our leadership courses beginning again in early 2025 alongside our inaugural SLT conference on the January TED. We are also looking forward to welcoming our ECT YR1 & 2 colleagues to the Essay on the 6th January TED with bespoke career stage CPD linked to the early career framework being delivered by expert lead practitioners. We will be also adopting an enhanced process and provision through the apprenticeship levy including the teacher degree apprenticeship, part of the government's commitment to recruiting and retaining more teachers into the profession.

For more information about our CPLR&D provision and offer, please email mpurslow@crst.org.uk

Matthew Purslow

Trust Lead for Central Professional Learning,
Research & Development

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT across CRST

by **FRANCESCA STANLEY**
TRUST PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT LEAD

As a Trust, the goal of our Personal Development work across all of our schools is to create informed, empathetic, and socially responsible young people who are capable of contributing to society in a positive way. We all strongly believe that by equipping our students and pupils with the tools to understand their own identities and the experiences of others through our Personal Development programmes, Central Region Schools Trust is helping to foster a generation that is committed to our Trust's mission of 'social justice.'

On Monday 17th November 2024, all Personal Development and PSHE leads from all schools across the Trust attended our inaugural CRST Personal Development conference. It was a fantastic event where a wealth of experienced leaders engaged in analysis and discussion of topics such as emotional wellbeing, relationships, sex and health education, careers education and enrichment within our schools. Sessions were led by our Trust Personal Development team; Francesca Stanley, Dan Wright and Ellie Meredith as well as a fantastic session from Director of Careers Sarah Wilkins.



St Stephen's CofE First School:
Led by the School Council, pupils are designing Christmas cards for the local community and are getting them ready to deliver them to the homes around their community.



Holyhead School:
Students have taken part in a 'Interview Day' where a number of business representatives came and ran mock interviews with our students as part of their 'CRST Futures' careers education programme.



Ipsley CofE Middle School:
Students across Years 5, 6, 7 and 8 celebrated 'Odd Socks' day for Anti-Bullying week and then took part in 'Wellbeing Reflection' as part of their mental health and wellbeing education in Personal Development sessions.



During the conference, we also launched our newly branded 'CRST Futures' initiative with the session being led by Sarah Wilkins. This will be a crucial part of the Trust's Personal Development programme going forward; focusing on future aspirations, careers education and work place skills and experiences for all of our young people across all phases, from Reception to Sixth Form. As we know the importance of personal development in students' lives extends to their professional lives too. Skills such as creativity, goal setting, team work and public speaking will all be valued in the workplace. Developing these abilities early on will make our students and pupils more confident and prepared to handle the pressures of employment in their future lives.

Last summer, we launched our 'Trust Enrichment Guarantee' which is discussed by my colleague Sam McMonagle within this edition of Design Ed. Every young person who is part of Central Region Schools Trust will have access to a wealth of enrichment opportunities and a genuine focus on their personal development – investing in them as a person. Our distinctive approach to education means that we are committed to making sure our underpinning principles of KASE develops attributes of character and provides experiences which enhances learning and hopefully creates memories that will last a lifetime. Combined with the knowledge and skills they will gain, this enrichment guarantee means they have everything they need to go on to be the leaders, innovators,

creators, thinkers, community champions and change makers of the future. As a Trust Personal Development team, we have been supporting our schools in being able to ensure that clubs, trips, inspirational speakers and events are planned and engaged with by all students. Within our schools, we teach our young people about British values and equip them with the tools of active citizenship; thus enhancing their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding of the world around them.

Charity and civic responsibility within our Trust Personal Development programme continues to be a focal point. As ultimately, we know that when the young people across our Trust are encouraged to engage in community service, volunteer work, or advocacy for social change, they not only develop important life skills but also contribute to creating a more equitable society. These activities also allow students to see firsthand the impact of social issues on different communities, strengthening their commitment to making a difference. At the end of the day, personal development is all about our students and pupils becoming the best version of themselves. With the right building blocks in place, anything is possible. It is our hope that taking the time to invest in our Trust Personal Development initiative will pay off in leaps and bounds for our young people, throughout their school journeys and well into their adulthood.

Francesca Stanley
Trust Personal Development Lead



Our CRST Student Council which comprises of members from all schools and phases, who came together for our inaugural Lead Ambassadors conference in October 2024.

READING ACROSS CRST

by

DANIELLE DUIGNAN

ADDRESSING THE DECLINE IN CHILDREN'S READING FOR PLEASURE: UNDERSTANDING CONTRIBUTING FACTORS AND SOLUTIONS.

The importance of developing and nurturing children and young people's enjoyment of reading is something which has come up time and time again, with research over the past few years showing a decline. However, research completed this year indicate that rather than improving, figures are even more stark.

Recent findings highlight a concerning decline in reading enjoyment among children and young people in England, revealing significant challenges for educators and policymakers alike. This is by far the lowest level of reading enjoyment we have recorded since we began measuring this metric in 2005. The statistics indicate an alarming year-on-year drop, with an 8.8-percentage-point decline in reading enjoyment compared with 2023. This trend is part of a broader decline since 2016, a period during which nearly two-thirds of children and young people reported enjoying reading.

Compounding this issue is the historic low in reading frequency. Currently, only 1 in 5 (20.5%) children and young people aged 8 to 18 report reading something daily in their free time. This marks a significant decrease of 7.5 percentage points from the previous year, accounting for the second steepest decline on record. Within this troubling context, three notable observations emerge.

Firstly, the plight of boys is particularly alarming. The gender gap in reading enjoyment has nearly tripled, rising from a 4.8-percentage-point difference in 2023 to a staggering 12.3-percentage-point difference in 2024. This shift is largely attributed to a more pronounced decline in reading enjoyment among boys, with only 17.5% of them reading daily – a figure that represents a historic low.

Secondly, age group analysis reveals that secondary school pupils are experiencing a crisis in reading engagement. While 56.2% of 8- to 11-year-olds stated they enjoyed reading in their free time in 2023, this number fell to 51.9% in 2024. In stark contrast, the enjoyment rate among 11- to 14-year-olds plummeted from 40.4% to 30.7%. Moreover, young people aged 14



to 16 witnessed a dramatic drop in daily reading levels, declining by 10.9 percentage points.

Lastly, the narrowing of the free school meal (FSM) gap presents a sobering picture. Instead of the anticipated levelling up, we observe a levelling down, with the decline in reading enjoyment and frequency being more pronounced among those not receiving free school meals.

Despite these alarming findings, there are potential green shoots of optimism. Evidence suggests a strong link between reading enjoyment and reading frequency; young people who enjoy reading in



their free time are over eight times more likely to engage in daily reading. Furthermore, schools play a pivotal role in influencing reading habits. The Annual Literacy Survey indicates that a slightly higher number of children enjoy reading at school compared to at home, with a notably smaller gender divide and a better response from those receiving free school meals.

These insights underline the urgent need for targeted initiatives to foster a love of reading, particularly among boys and secondary school pupils, to reverse

this downward trend in literacy within our education system.

This is something which was discussed at the Autumn Term Reading Conference held at Assay Studios. Reading leaders from schools across the Trust shared their take on these insights and what they are doing collectively in schools to debunk the trend within their settings. A number of strategies are in place to foster a motivation and love for reading while noting the importance of trying to create a strong reading culture which is not tokenistic.

PRIMARY PHASE:

- Family 'read together' sessions
- Library spaces used exclusively for Reading For Pleasure with classes timetabled and discussions surrounding books being prioritised
- In class reading corners: books displayed creatively in classes, rotation of books, themes and authors recommended by pupils
- Reading books rearranged into genres so that pupil interests are clearly accessible
- New books based on pupil voice outcomes purchased
- Time allocated in the daily timetable for reading marked by a school bell to show importance
- Opportunities for pupils to bring in books to share and discuss with their peers
- Events organised throughout the school year – author visits, 'snuggle up with a book', poetry slams
- Key texts mapped across the school
- Audio books used in library time

It is vital that we consider how reading is viewed by pupils in our settings and ensuring that we are providing a reading offer which enables this. For example, how do we incorporate pupil voice and interest into our provision? Pupils will be more likely to engage with texts and resources which they can relate to or hold an interest in. Understandably, this cannot always be the case when set texts are planned as part of Curriculum teaching, however we need to consider when pupils are provided with these opportunities and how we can adapt our practice in order to facilitate this.

Are we providing enough opportunities for pupils to 'read' in different ways? Are audiobooks, online magazines, e-Books and books written by role models

SECONDARY PHASE:

- Book vending machines with tokens provided as rewards
- Mini workshops with pupils
- High expectations from Year 7 – teaching about the importance of reading as a life skill
- Making links between texts that will be studied
- Class readers -not linked to main Curriculum. Similar to primary provision. Feels like a book club
- Spending time in the library with staff who are passionate about books and reading
- Library passes – keeps space 'special'
- Time spent reading with teacher (in double periods)
- Focusing on current events using 'The Day' – keeping pupils interested in what is currently happening and in their daily lives

“EVIDENCE SUGGESTS A STRONG LINK BETWEEN READING ENJOYMENT AND READING FREQUENCY; YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ENJOY READING IN THEIR FREE TIME ARE OVER EIGHT TIMES MORE LIKELY TO ENGAGE IN DAILY READING”

or influences considered and offered enough? This thought provoking and relevant research allows us to reflect and consider ways forward so that we can beat the statistics and ensure that there is a positive view of reading across all of our schools.

CENTRAL SUPPORT *and* SERVICES OFFER

MEET THE ESTATES HUB MANAGEMENT TEAM

A strong foundation is vital to the success of any school, and the Estates Hub Management team has been established to provide exactly that – ensuring the schools within our Trust remain safe, compliant, and fit for purpose. This newly-formed team brings together dedicated professionals who share a common goal: to deliver excellent estates support and management.



The Lead Estates Manager is Bryan Tait, who leads the team with expertise and vision. Supporting him are Roy Williams, representing the Redditch Hub; Matt Clapham, overseeing the North Hub; and Adam Sherriff, championing the South Hub. Together, they bring a wealth of experience and an unwavering commitment to keeping our schools running smoothly.

The team's day-to-day focus is on ensuring that compliance checks and inspections are carried out efficiently. Their work extends beyond routine maintenance; they liaise directly with schools to prioritise condition surveys and organise remedial works, ensuring that every task contributes to a safer, better learning environment for staff and students.

DELIVERING CHANGE THROUGH IMPACTFUL PROJECTS

Since its formation, the team has been busy rolling out the Trust's capital investment programme. This includes a range of projects that are already making a tangible difference in our schools. From the repair and replacement of fire doors across all sites to replacing windows at Ipsley, enhancing the outdoor nursery area at Abbeywood, and developing the school house at Gospel Oak.

These projects are far more than just plans on paper. The team carefully manages every stage, from initial feasibility assessments and procurement to implementation and completion, ensuring each project is delivered efficiently and to the highest standards.

INTRODUCING CUTTING-EDGE COMPLIANCE TOOLS

Looking ahead, the Estates team is embracing technology to improve oversight and compliance. They are implementing a new health and safety compliance system (Handsam), designed to centrally track all estate-related checks and remedial works. This powerful tool provides schools and the Trust with real-time visibility into compliance levels via a Trust-wide dashboard, ensuring statutory requirements are met consistently.

More than just a monitoring tool, the system also offers schools direct access to up-to-date health and safety advice, guidance, and model risk assessments. This approach enhances collaboration while maintaining our shared commitment to creating safe and inspiring places to learn and work.

As the Estates Hub Management team continues to evolve, their impact is clear: they are building a legacy of excellence, ensuring our schools are not only compliant but also well-equipped to thrive for years to come.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS & STAFF

BENNET QUAYSON **ASSISTANT MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTANT**

Since joining Central Region School Trust (CRST) on September 30th 2024, there has been a distinct shift in drive, self-expectation and determination to always improve. My line manager and the finance team have been immensely supportive from the first day. I have received regular coaching and development from my line manager, and other colleagues not to mention various external training opportunities. The behaviour management strategies that are being put in place is like a breath of fresh air. For me it is an opportunity to learn about the Trust and how unique we work in a healthy working environment which helps me grow.



HELEN WORRALL **TRUST EHCP SEMH SUPPORT PRACTITIONER**

Since I started working for the Trust, I have been greatly thankful and impressed by the way we are all most definitely working hard deliver our Trust values and culture through shared endeavour, professional high expectations, warmth, inclusivity, positivity and kindness. As a professional with a disability, I have been very pleased to have received invaluable understanding and support from the Trust and everyone I have met since I started. It has made a huge difference to me receive such support and understanding – thank you all!

I have been welcomed into my role by a committed, passionate and often funny, SEND Team and a team of warm and hard working SENDCos who regularly collaborate and work to support each other with their very busy roles. I have met teachers who are keen to understand, support and include our most vulnerable children and young people to the best of their ability alongside the high expectations that they have for all. Most importantly I have met lots of children and young people who are clearly benefitting from our trauma informed approaches and commitment to give them a secure base via the secure and warm relationships that we build with them as a priority and how we hold them with high positive regard. Thanks for a fabulous first term with the Central Region Schools Trust – I feel very lucky to be here and to work with you all.

ADELAMI ADEBAYO **TRUST FINANCE CONTRIBUTE FURTHER TO THE TRUST'S MISSION – AND PROCUREMENT OFFICER**

Since joining the Trust, I've had an incredibly positive experience. The support from my colleagues has been outstanding, with clear explanations of tasks and timely assistance whenever needed. It's been a rewarding environment to learn and grow, and I'm genuinely excited about the opportunities to contribute further to the Trust's mission.



GOVERNANCE:

The importance of

LOCAL AND TRUST GOVERNANCE

IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL AND TRUST GOVERNANCE – JENNIE HOMER, HEAD OF GOVERNANCE

In a world that is increasingly changing, amid a landscape which is sometimes hard to navigate, governance has never been so important at both the Trust Board level of accountability and the local tier level of delegation in supporting the “Four Ss” of Governance: School Improvement, SEND, Safeguarding and Stakeholder voice. Both Trust and Local levels of governance are a centrally governed functioned within the Central Region Schools Trust and the focus is on the collective approach, sustaining and retaining those amazing volunteers in both Trustees and Trust Governors, who are integral to its success.

Governance within our Trust promotes community at its heart as Trustees and Governors endeavour to support “Social justice through exceptional schools”. Governance activities and collaborative working foster a sense of accountability and shared responsibility,

benefitting each child in their school improvement journey. Not least in activities including Chair’s Forums, Trustee Strategic Days, Link Ambassador programs and whole Trust Governance Conferences (pictured).

KEY THEMES OF THESE IMPORTANT GATHERINGS HAVE FOCUSED ON:

- Disadvantaged focus
- SEND and Safeguarding
- Sustainability
- Creative Thinking
- Being Strategic
- Fostering the Trust’s Distinctive Culture
- AI developments



Trustees, Trust Governors and Senior Leadership gathered for the annual whole Trust Governance Conference , hosted by Ipsley CofE Middle School in July 2024.

These activities, in essence, ensures higher standards of compliance, efficient challenge, more robust decision-making processes and stronger boards, which can only benefit and promote the varying communities in which we serve.

WHAT IS LOCAL GOVERNANCE?

Local governance is the governance which understands the challenges and unique position of the school in which it serves; it provides a clear view of the challenges faced and places itself in the heart of the community. Local governance and local governors are the invaluable caveat to Trust Board oversight of the “bigger picture” within our Trust.

WHAT IS A TRUST BOARD?

The Board of Trustees within the Central Region Schools Trust is the hub in which governance focuses on the Trusts vision for high quality and inclusive education in line with its charitable objectives. Trust Board sets the strategic direction of the Trust, makes decisions on delegation through its Scheme of Delegation and sets the long-term vision and direction. Trustees are skilled professionals whose expertise and skill sets drive the vision and values of the Trust’s distinctive culture, its People, Places and Processes. Trustees engage in a variety of activities which provide strategic oversight and undertake training in line with statutory requirements; no stone is left unturned in a Trustee’s mission to provide each and every pupil with a clear culture delivered “through shared endeavour, professional high expectations, warmth, inclusivity, positivity and kindness”.

IN SUMMARY

In a landscape of change and increasing uncertainty within the sector, focusing on strengthening collaboration between the Trust Board and Local Academy Governing Boards is the most effective way to empower this important function. The importance of Trust and Local governance cannot be overstated and the Central Region Schools Trust Board of Trustees and it’s Trust Governors work tirelessly to promote stronger communities and more efficient, robust governance processes, supporting to provide, with integrity, “Social justice through exceptional schools”.



NEW BUILD



WASELEY HILLS NEW BUILD: GREAT PROGRESS SO FAR, AND AN EXCITING YEAR AHEAD IN 2025

Waseley Hills High School, nestled in the heart of our Trust, has been on an incredible journey of transformation since joining the Central Region Schools Trust at the end of 2021. As part of the Trust's commitment to creating inspiring learning environments, a comprehensive condition survey was conducted shortly after the school's induction. The results revealed the urgent need for significant improvements to ensure the school could continue to provide a safe, functional, and inspiring space for students and staff.

Following extensive discussions and close collaboration with the Department for Education (DfE), a momentous decision was reached: Waseley Hills would be approved for a brand-new school building. This marked the start of an ambitious and exciting project that will not only modernise the facilities but also redefine the educational experience for its community.



A SHARED VISION TAKES SHAPE

In June 2022, the contractors, Tilbury Douglas, were appointed by the DfE to spearhead the new build. Over the following months, detailed plans were developed in collaboration with the Trust and the DfE, culminating in the final project sign-off in September 2023. The result is a phased plan that will see Waseley Hills transformed into a state-of-the-art educational facility by the end of 2026.



BREAKING GROUND

Work officially began on the first phase of this ambitious three-phase project in February 2024. Phase 1, the cornerstone of the transformation, focuses on creating key facilities essential for the school's daily operations and curriculum delivery. This includes a brand-new main hall, drama and dining spaces, sports facilities, and subject-specific classrooms for Humanities, Maths, ICT, Music, PE, and Sixth Form, alongside office accommodation. Excitingly, Phase 1 is on track for completion, with the new facilities set to welcome students and staff in September 2025.

LOOKING AHEAD: PHASE 2 AND BEYOND

The second phase of the project will commence immediately after Phase 1, starting in September 2025. This phase will see the demolition of the existing quad building and parts of the older structure to make way for another new building. The Phase 2 development will house a library, classrooms for English, Art, Food Technology, Design Technology, ICT, Science, and Modern Foreign Languages, as well as the school's main reception and office areas.

By the end of 2026, the entire redevelopment will be complete, with a formal opening planned to celebrate the fully transformed Waseley Hills High School.



A VISION REALISED

This project represents a significant investment not just in bricks and mortar, but in the futures of the students and staff who call Waseley Hills home. The new facilities will provide an environment that supports innovative teaching and learning, fosters creativity, and promotes physical and mental well-being. The transformation of Waseley Hills High School is a testament to the power of collaboration, careful planning, and a shared commitment to excellence. With Phase 1 nearing completion and Phase 2 on the horizon, 2025 is set to be a truly exciting year for the school and the Trust. Stay tuned as we continue to share updates on this incredible journey towards a brighter future for Waseley Hills High School.

SCHOOL UPDATES



ARROW VALE OFSTED 2024 INSPECTION

Arrow Vale High School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection in 2019.

OFSTED Inspection

At the end of last term, we were visited by Ofsted. From our inspection, I'm delighted to share that we have now received the final report, confirming:

"ARROW VALE HIGH SCHOOL HAS TAKEN EFFECTIVE ACTION TO MAINTAIN THE STANDARDS IDENTIFIED AT THE PREVIOUS INSPECTION"

"READING IS A PRIORITY AT THIS SCHOOL"

"PUPILS APPRECIATE THE WIDE RANGE OF LEADERSHIP ROLES THEY HAVE"

The two-day inspection involved a thorough evaluation of the school. Inspectors examined key priorities, including safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, sixth form provision, reading, student participation, learning, and leadership. All stakeholders were observed and engaged in discussions to provide a comprehensive view of the school's performance.

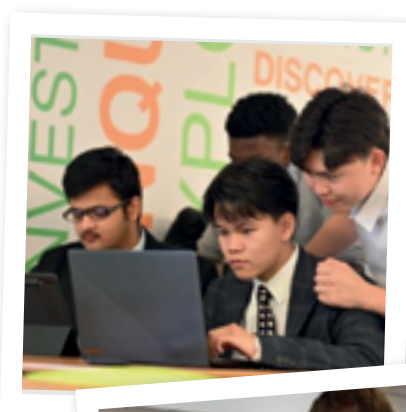
We are thrilled to announce that Arrow Vale High School has once again held the standing of the previous 2 inspections. Since 2013/14, we have upheld this standard, which is a remarkable achievement. A huge thank you to our students and staff for their unwavering commitment and dedication throughout the inspection process.

Here are some highlights from the report:

- "The school is highly inclusive, where everyone is valued."
- "Pupils speak positively about the support they receive from staff and enjoy their learning."
- "Pupils are safe and say they are happy at the school. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school's ethos."

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to parents who participated in the inspection, whether through surveys or ongoing support of the school's efforts. Your role in fostering a strong partnership with the school is invaluable and plays a crucial part in our continued success.

We are incredibly proud to be recognised as a leading provider of education for the Arrow Vale community. As we look ahead, the upcoming new school build, with its design phase set to commence in 2025, marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter for our school and the wider community.





HOT OFF THE PRESS: BARONESS VISIT

On Friday 6th December we welcomed Baroness Jacqui Smith to Arrow Vale.

Baroness Smith of Malvern, is a British politician, broadcaster and life peer who has been serving as Minister of State for Skills and Government spokesperson for Equalities since 2024.

A member of the Labour Party, she was Member of Parliament (MP) for Redditch from 1997 to 2010 who previously served as Home Secretary under Gordon Brown from 2007 to 2009 and was the first woman to hold the position.

Jacqui started her teaching career at Arrow Vale High School as an Economics teacher therefore was keen to come back to her old school and visit.

Our student Ambassadors led the tour of the school where we observed excellent wave one teaching with students working hard in the lessons.

Jacqui spoke to our A level Historians regarding the art of public debate and how to plan and prepare for these events. This discussion will most certainly be remembered for a long time as it was insightful.

We discussed many aspects of education and schooling at length including curriculum diversity, food within schools and funding.



YEAR 9'S ADVENTURE AT UPTON WARREN: BUILDING RESILIENCE AND TEAM SPIRIT!



During this term Year 9 embarked on an unforgettable adventure at Upton Warren with the amazing team from Aztec Adventure. The students eagerly took on a series of outdoor challenges, including rafting, canoeing, bell boating, high ropes courses, archery, belaying, and abseiling. Throughout the week, they showcased courage, teamwork, and an impressive level of resilience – a skill that helps us face challenges with perseverance and determination. From overcoming fears to mastering new skills, our Year 9 students embraced every challenge with enthusiasm.

The experience didn't just end at Upton Warren; back at school, Mr. Brennan hosted an assembly to reflect on the lessons learned during the adventure. He emphasised the importance of resilience – a vital life skill that allows us to bounce back from setbacks, face adversity, and keep moving forward. The assembly linked inspiring examples back to the students' experiences at Upton Warren. Whether it was facing the high ropes or paddling for the first time, our Year 9s demonstrated courage and the willingness to take on difficult tasks – a mindset that will serve them well in their studies and beyond.

Be sure to check out our social media accounts on X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and Instagram to see photos of Year 9's amazing experiences at Upton Warren.

We are so proud of our Year 9 students for their hard work, bravery, and support for each other throughout this experience. Their spirit and resilience are a reminder of what they can achieve – both at school and in the world beyond!



HOLYHEAD SCHOOL DESIGN – BLUE EARTH SUMMIT

On Monday 21st October, two of our Eco Committee members (Dominika Y8, Suniya Y10) had the amazing opportunity to become roving reporters for The Day x Lego Group at the Blue Earth Summit in London. This annual event attracts businesses and industry experts from around the world to talk about the ever increasing need to look after our planet in the fight against climate change.

It was an early start for the students (6am), alongside Mr Goodison and Mrs Joyce, to travel down. En route, both students were hard at work creating their flashcard prompts for their interviews and panel discussion points. Upon arrival, there were hundreds of entrepreneurs, guest speakers and some famous faces, and it wasn't long until both Dominika and Suniya were put to work! Firstly, Suniya was taking part in the "Future Cities" panel - alongside Will Norman (Walking and Cycling Commissioner for London); Hana Sutch (Go Jauntly founder); Elise Van Middeltem (Founder of the Sugi project) and Mary-Ann Ochota (moderator and broadcaster). This was an excellent opportunity for Suniya to be the voice of young people, talking about what she would like to



see in cities as they develop - giving ideas on how they can be built more sustainably, but also have children in mind. Suniya spoke excellently, in front of a capacity audience of 250!

Whilst Suniya was busy on the panel, Dominika was interviewing business leaders and climate activists about what could be done to have a more sustainable future. Dominika firstly interviewed Amber Rudd (Former Home Secretary and climate activist), quickly followed by Erica Neve (Trustee at the Eden Project) and Dominique Palmer (activist and environmentalist).

Both students conducted themselves superbly, speaking with confidence and posing some very powerful questions. After a short break for lunch, lots of "off-the-cuff" interviews took place, starting with Douglas Lamont (CEO of Tony's Chocolonely), who spoke about how his company is helping to fight child slavery in the chocolate industry, as well as being a sustainable company - he even gave out lots of Tony's Chocolate!! Maeve Campbell (Channel 4

SUTTON PARK

The Power of Parental Engagement in Primary Schools: Building Bridges for Success



Parental engagement in primary education is a valuable tool that contributes to a child's academic and personal development, creating positive relationships and a sense of belonging for both children and their parents or carers. Engaged parents and carers nurture a culture of learning, collaboration and resilience in their children, laying the foundation for success in secondary education and beyond. Additionally, a successful partnership between parents, carers and schools enriches the wider community, creating a network of support that benefits all pupils and supports learning outcomes.

Aligned with the Trust's distinctive culture and strategic objective to develop empowered communities and lasting partnerships, Sutton Park aims to offer parents and carers regular opportunities to engage with the school community. Initiatives such as our weekly Community Café

provide an informal platform for parents and carers to engage with school staff and one another over a hot drink before collecting their child at the end of the school day.

In partnership with external agencies, there are also more targeted opportunities for parents and carers, aiming to support their own learning and development. In November 2024, the NHS Wellbeing and Emotional Support Team delivered a workshop to parents and carers, focussing on sleep and the importance of it in children. The workshop was well attended and shared some helpful tips to empower parents and carers to support their child's sleep. This workshop followed on from ones during the previous year around mental health and promoting resilience.

Starting earlier in the Autumn term, a group of parents and carers have been taking part in a workshop delivered by Adult Learning Worcestershire. The ten-week course, 'Solar System and Beyond', has provided an opportunity for parents and carers to develop an understanding of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) through exploring different parts of the solar system each week. The course is delivered by a dedicated Family Learning Tutor and engages children to take part in activities with their parents/carers, promoting a passion for STEM.

News presenter) gave an insight to life as a presenter and how the news can help push sustainability into becoming mainstream news.

After the event - and lots of connections being made - we are looking forward to the Sugi Project coming to Holyhead to look at building a "pocket forest" on our site, to help us look after nature and create lots of homes for native species of animals!

Suniya reflected on her day and said "The Blue Earth event opened my eyes to the changes people around the world are trying to make. Being asked to participate in the panel and doing interviews enhanced my voice and passion, almost reflecting the optimism and faith of the next generation".

Similarly, Dominika said "My day at the Blue Earth summit was amazing. I liked hearing about other people's opinions because they were interesting and inspirational. I think the day was wonderful and it was fun interviewing other people and hearing about their ideas and how they can help the Earth."



While parents and carers play an important role, schools must first foster an environment that welcomes and encourages parental involvement. Through establishing a warm, inclusive environment and ensuring that communication is clear and regular, parents and carers feel informed and willing to engage with school.



CHURCH HILL

Diwali:

Church Hill Middle School pupils had lots of fun celebrating Diwali! Pupils enjoyed dressing in bright colours, took part in Indian drumming sessions which were hosted by our very own Mr Singh, made pakoras and created some beautiful Diwali lanterns!



Black History Month:



In October, pupils at Church Hill Middle School celebrated Black History month by taking part in assemblies, PSHE sessions and lessons about Black History. Our celebrations culminated in all pupils having a morning or afternoon session with a company called Genesis Sun. Genesis Sun provided lots of information regarding inspirational people, interesting information about Black culture, and our pupils even got to enjoy a performance from an up-and-coming young rapper! Our pupils were really well engaged and enjoyed learning more about Black History.



Macmillan Coffee Morning:

Church Hill Middle School raised a whopping £805 in total for Macmillan by hosting a coffee morning for parents and carers and a special breakfast for pupils. We also had some brilliant prizes donated from the

local community and local businesses to hold a raffle which contributed to this fantastic total.

Emergency Services Day:

To celebrate 'Emergency Services Day' which was on the 9th September, Church Hill Middle School had a paramedic visit school to give a talk and host a Q & A session. She spoke about how to become a paramedic, what her role involves, and when and how to call an ambulance. The visiting paramedic was SO impressed with the behaviour, knowledge and thoughtful questions asked by our pupils! Well done all!



OLDBURY – NEW LIBRARY FOR READING

Library Transformation: Revamping Our School Library

Our school library has undergone a remarkable transformation, with a focus on promoting reading for pleasure among our students. The goal of this project is to ignite a passion for reading and create a welcoming shared space for our children to enjoy.



fundraising activities. These efforts have included sponsored reading events, book fairs, and non-uniform days in collaboration with our Usborne representative. Over the last year these events have raised around £2000 with which we have bought brand new books. More recently we have partnered with a local business, our Coop Travel branch. Their support through coffee mornings and tombola events has raised nearly £500 for us, which we plan to use to purchase Geography reference books that align with our curriculum.

Currently, children throughout the school have the opportunity to visit the library every two weeks for



WE ARE CONTINUOUSLY WORKING TO ENHANCE THE READING EXPERIENCE FOR OUR CHILDREN!



To kickstart this initiative, we enlisted the expertise of an experienced librarian to help us organise our collection of books. Ensuring that our library is stocked with current, engaging, and age-appropriate literature was a top priority. Our fiction library is divided into sections tailored to different age groups, including early years books, KS1 fiction, lower KS2 fiction, and upper KS2 fiction. Additionally, we have a reference library that follows a simple Dewey system, with books categorized by subjects such as History, Geography, and Science. We also have a section dedicated to well-being texts which will enhance our PSHE curriculum. In order to keep our shelves filled with new and exciting literature, we have conducted various





a dedicated library session. During these sessions, students can explore the shelves, read quietly, share books with peers, listen to stories read aloud, participate in author interviews, and engage in reading quizzes and games. The children have been excited to see the changes made and there has certainly been an improved buzz around reading.

We are continuously working to enhance the reading experience for our children, so intend to continue to make exciting developments in the near future!



ABBEEWOOD – NEW OUTSIDE SPACE

We are thrilled to announce the opening of a brand-new outdoor learning space designed specifically for our reception-age children. This exciting addition to our school's facilities marks a significant step in our commitment to providing an enriched environment that nurtures the development of young learners. The new outdoor space has been thoughtfully designed to support the Early Years curriculum, offering a range of opportunities to enhance knowledge, skills and creativity.

The all-weather surface ensures the space can be enjoyed in every season, making outdoor learning a consistent and integral part of the children's daily experiences. Highlights of this vibrant area include:

- A dedicated track for bikes and scooters, helping children develop their balance, coordination, and motor skills while having fun.
- A stage area, perfect for fostering imagination, storytelling, and performance skills, as children bring their ideas to life.
- A sandpit, encouraging sensory exploration, creativity, and collaborative play.
- A seating area, designed for group discussions, quiet reflection, and social interaction. We are proud to provide this exciting outdoor area that not only enhances the Early Years curriculum but also helps children build confidence, independence, and a love for learning. It's a space where young imaginations can flourish, and we look forward to seeing how it continues to inspire our reception children. Here's to many happy, adventure-filled days in our wonderful new outdoor learning space!



LICKHILL – THRIVE



Lickhill Primary School, Stourport-on-Severn, have joined 137 schools nationally to be recognised as a Thrive School of Excellence. This highly

sought after award recognises the value they place on the behaviour, social and emotional development and mental wellbeing of children in their care.

Thrive, an organisation that equips education professionals to bolster the social and emotional growth of children and young people, presented Lickhill Primary School with a School of Excellence Award on Wednesday 27th November 2024.

The award, the organisation's highest accolade, is granted to schools that demonstrate exceptional commitment to implementing the 'Thrive Approach'.

The scheme underpins the understanding of young people's behaviour, encourages positive relationships, remove barriers to learning and foster better attendance, behaviour, and achievement.

The award follows a meticulous assessment procedure, which involved the school submitting comprehensive evidence and impact forms.

Representatives also visited the school to observe the approach of the school's staff. Parents, Governors and the Mayor of Stourport, John Thomas, spent the morning observing Thrive activities in action in the classrooms before Emma Bradford, from Thrive, presented the school with a plaque to mark their achievement.

The school, part of Central Region Schools Trust, have been using the Thrive approach since 2012. It's use in school has grown and developed since, and the approach is now embedded in every aspect of school life. Children at Lickhill feel valued and safe, knowing that their emotional needs will be met and supported.

The current Thrive focus is building resilience in children, increasing their 'bounce-backability' from day to day challenges. Lickhill Primary are also working hard to develop children's understanding of the brain, equipping them with the knowledge required to both recognise their emotions and to manage them in an appropriate way.

In consultation with children, parents and staff, Lickhill Primary have completely changed their approach to behaviour. Their approach focuses on intrinsic motivation and children making choices because it is the right thing to do rather than simply for a sticker. Staff have reported a significant improvement in motivation and focus as a result.



Thrive's impact is based on genuine connection --- Every child and adult in a school helps to build this through their daily interactions, tones and in how they speak to one-another in all situations. These positive relationships help build a safe space for our children and adults to learn and take risks together.

Kelly Rodriguez, Assistant Principal and mental health and Thrive lead at the school said:

"It is a joy to be recognised for the thing that we value most here at Lickhill – the wellbeing of our children. Our knowledge of the brain enables us to ensure that our children are in the best place to learn by putting their wellbeing first. Our Lickhill family have worked hard to achieve this award and continue to constantly improve the offer for our children. I am proud to work at this school – the moment you walk through our front door, you can feel the calm, supportive environment. Each and every one of our staff, present and past, deserve this recognition as do our children. Our Year 5 and 6 Thrive Ambassadors do a wonderful job each day, supporting their peers to feel safe, happy and valued.

Thrive training has changed the way we teach; with the understanding that all behaviour stems from an unmet need, we are able to adapt our curriculum to ensure all children not only succeed, but Thrive in our care."

Principal, Jane Lloyd said, "Thrive training has by far had the greatest impact on our understanding of how children learn – it should be mandatory for all. Thanks to Thrive, we have greatly improved outcomes for children, preparing them for their next steps and beyond."

Since 1994, Thrive has worked in tandem with educators and organisations in efforts to help young people feel secure, supported, and ready to learn.

To date, they have positively impacted over 795,500 young lives.

WASELEY

Waseley Hills once again hosted our annual Careers Fair on Wednesday 20th October. All students from Years 7 – 13 visited the fair and were able to speak to employers and employees about routes into various careers and fields as well as exploring their post 16 and 18 study options. We were joined by over 22 exhibitors from a wide range of industries including:

- Universities
- Colleges
- Apprenticeships
- NHS
- Police Force
- The Army
- The Royal Air Force
- Solicitors and Law Firms
- Architects
- Construction
- Surveyors
- Tattoo Artists



delivered information on what it means to be eco-friendly, responsible and charitable citizens as well as how we can work together to promote and celebrate diversity. They presented with professionalism and confidence and were a real credit to our trust. All students shared ideas for reducing energy consumption in all schools, how they will raise money for our trust charity, Birmingham Children's Hospital, and planned a variety of other community events that they could lead within their respective schools. This event really showcases how highly we regard student agency within the trust, supporting our young people to make real world change.

It was a fantastic event for our students and allowed them to have meaningful encounters with real people from the world of work and education, we would like to extend our thanks to all of the exhibitors who gave up their time to support our young people.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

On Thursday 10th October we hosted our first annual CRST Student Council Conference. Lead Ambassadors from all schools within the trust attended the conference hosted at Arrow Vale in Redditch, forming our very first trust wide student council.

During the event they participated in leadership development activities and students from both primary and secondary schools worked together to plan an exciting year of events covering charity, diversity, civic duty and eco drives.

Our sixth form lead ambassadors took on the challenge of presenting to the conference and

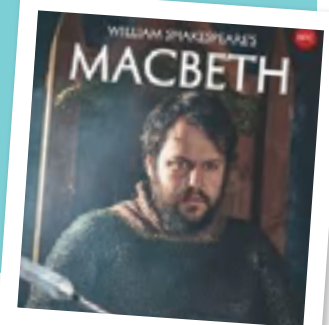
ENRICHMENT IN ENGLISH

Understanding a text for its intended purpose is crucial in studying English. At Waseley Hills, we spent this half term ensuring that our students are fully immersed in the texts that they are studying through being exposed to the visual experience, giving our students the opportunity to question how methods have been used to make meaning for different contexts.

Year 11 watched the National Production Company's adaptation of Shakespeare's 'Macbeth', performed in Redditch's Palace Theatre. Our students were reminded of the etiquette of theatres and were able to cross-reference their studies in the classroom with the performance.

Our Business and Enterprise hall transformed into a gothic scene as Year 9 watched the Redheart Theatre's performance of Edgar Allan Poe's 'Tell Tale Heart' and H. G. Wells' 'The Red Room'. Students visibly jumped out of their seats seeing the conventions of Gothic Literature in action, using the experience as inspiration for their own pieces of creative writing.

Finally, we finished off the half term with a Year 12 and 13 visit To Stratford to watch the RSC's production of 'Othello'. Emily (Year 12) watched it with her family on opening night and then again with the school a week later. She said, 'It was even better the second time! I was able to see what they had changed based on their first run, which was really interesting!'



SENDIASS CAREERS SESSION



We have been fortunate to obtain a successful careers session, led by Abi Sinclair, from SENDIASS Young Person Adviser for Worcestershire. This is a great opportunity for some of our vulnerable students to start considering their career journey and the skills/attributes they need.

Abi has hopefully built the confidence and self-esteem of our learners with how to apply and discuss different pathways of higher education/workplace. We have booked Abi for another 4 days which we are looking forward to.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT DAY AT WASELEY HILLS HIGH SCHOOL

Waseley recognise the importance of developing our students in all aspects of school life which goes beyond the classroom, and so we put the personal development of our students at the heart of everything that we do.

We are committed to ensuring that all students have the opportunity to be exposed to a wide range of experiences and enrichment activities throughout their journey with us, making real the CRST enrichment guarantee. It is paramount that time is given for students to explore and develop skills to equip them for life whilst embodying the values of the school and the trust.

On the 18th September, Waseley students were all invited to take part in a personal development focused day. The day was full of excitement, fun and an array of activities which allowed students to work on team building, student leadership, self-reflection and

BATTLEFIELDS OF FRANCE

Just before half term, Y11 Historians had a fantastic few days exploring the Battlefields of France and Belgium to link into our Medicine Through Time Historical Environment Study. Our visits included Bayernwald trench system, the amazing Railway Dugouts Burial Ground, Lochnagar Crater, Sunken Lane, and Thiepval. We were honoured to be able to leave wreaths in memory of relatives of students and soldiers of Worcestershire and Warwickshire at Thiepval and Tyne Cot. Students were exceptional at the Menin Gate for the Last Post. Our thanks to Mrs Jones, Mrs Stanford, Mr Wolstencroft, Mrs Dumycz, Beth our guide, and Curtis our driver.



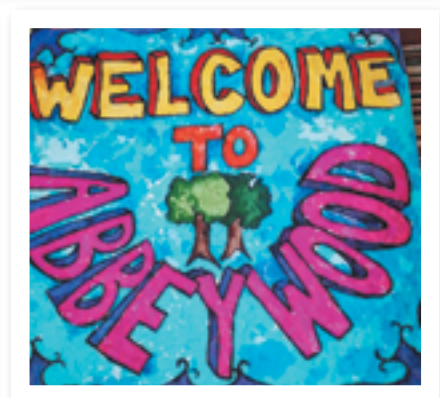
building of character.

We were lucky to be joined by the pioneer leadership team who were able to facilitate engaging and challenging activities for all the students at Waseley to take part in. As well as this the students got to “have their say” through student voice sessions, Wellbeing talk and workshops as well as subject focused activities to push learning limits beyond the classroom.

The day was a great success and we look forward to the Pioneer team returning in the summer!



YEAR 3 REDDITCH SCHOOLS – ART COLLABORATION



THE POSSIBILITIES OF AI *at* CRST

EXPLORING THE POSSIBILITIES OF AI AT CENTRAL REGION SCHOOLS TRUST

The world is rapidly changing, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) is at the heart of this transformation – especially in education. At Central Region Schools Trust, we're embracing this revolution, unlocking AI's power to reshape teaching, learning, and operations in ways we never thought possible. Imagine a future where every lesson is tailored to the unique needs of each student, staff workloads are drastically reduced, and innovation knows no bounds. **AI is not just a buzzword; it's a game-changer**, and we are excited to lead the way in harnessing its incredible possibilities for our schools and communities.

SUPPORTING TEACHING AND LEARNING THROUGH PERSONALISED EDUCATION

One of AI's most exciting promises is its ability to personalise learning while also driving overall school improvement. By analysing student data, AI tools can identify patterns, predict progress, and recommend tailored resources for each learner, ensuring students receive the right support or challenge to help them reach their full potential. For instance, AI might suggest targeted interventions for a student struggling with fractions or generate advanced science challenges for a high-achieving pupil. This level of personalisation allows teachers to focus on meaningful interactions, creating an environment where every child thrives and is well-prepared for the future.

In addition to personalising education, AI is also transforming attendance management and school improvement. Predictive models can spot patterns, such as students more likely to miss school during

poor weather, allowing schools to intervene early. AI provides valuable insights that enable school leaders to make data-driven decisions, track progress more efficiently, and allocate resources where they're most needed. This combination of AI-driven personalisation and data analytics is helping to improve both individual student outcomes and overall school performance.

RELIEVING STAFF WORKLOAD AND SUPPORTING EVERY ROLE ACROSS THE TRUST

AI isn't just revolutionising teaching and learning – it's also easing the administrative burden and improving efficiency for staff across the Trust. By embracing AI, we are streamlining processes and empowering staff to work smarter, not harder.

A prime example is AskArbor, an AI-powered assistant integrated into our Arbor MIS. Arbor is leading the way in the MIS world with its AI advancements, significantly reducing staff workload. Whether drafting end-of-term letters to parents, generating student reports, or creating communications, Arbor automates time-consuming tasks, freeing staff to focus on what matters most: teaching and supporting students. Looking ahead, Microsoft Co-Pilot will bring even more capabilities. As a Microsoft partner, this tool could help staff develop consistent policies, summarise meeting notes, and quickly find existing resources across our schools – eliminating the need to reinvent the wheel. By harnessing AI tools like these, we aim to support staff in working smarter, not harder.

AI can also streamline routine tasks like scheduling, data entry, and report generation, allowing staff to focus on higher-value activities. In areas like SEND, AI tools can analyse data to identify trends, enabling schools to design more effective interventions. For instance, predictive analytics could highlight changes in attendance, engagement, or behaviour, enabling proactive support for vulnerable students.



Additionally, we are piloting the Aristotle AI Programme at Sutton Park, where AI is being used for personalised coaching and lesson analysis. Though still in its early stages, the programme shows great promise in streamlining teaching processes and enhancing professional development. We look forward to gathering further insights that will optimise teaching effectiveness and better manage workloads across the Trust.

Together, these AI tools are making a significant impact on staff workload. By automating routine tasks and providing valuable insights, we empower all staff – teachers and administrative teams alike – to focus on what truly matters: delivering exceptional education and support for our students.

CELEBRATING INNOVATION: ARROW VALE'S MICROSOFT SHOWCASE SUCCESS

Central Region Schools Trust is proud to be at the forefront of educational technology, and Arrow Vale High School exemplifies this commitment. For the second consecutive year, Arrow Vale has been awarded Microsoft Showcase School status, a testament to our ongoing collaboration with Microsoft and our dedication to integrating cutting-edge

technology into education. Huge credit goes to our Trust Lead for Digital, Niall Brennan, who oversaw the Microsoft Showcase project.

As a Microsoft Showcase School, Arrow Vale serves as an inspiration to other schools within the Trust, demonstrating how technology can be seamlessly integrated to create impactful, inclusive, and innovative learning environments.

BUILDING A FUTURE-READY AI STRATEGY AT CENTRAL REGION SCHOOLS TRUST

At Central Region Schools Trust, we are committed to preparing our staff and students for an AI-powered future. To maximise the potential of AI, we are working with leading experts to develop a comprehensive Trust-wide AI strategy that goes beyond simply implementing new tools. We are embarking on a collaborative journey with our schools, consulting with leaders across all phases to shape an approach that reflects the unique needs of our communities. As part of this effort, we will seek to identify AI Champions in each school to help us drive the vision, share best practices, and support effective implementation.

By embracing AI responsibly, we aim to create a culture where technology enhances human potential

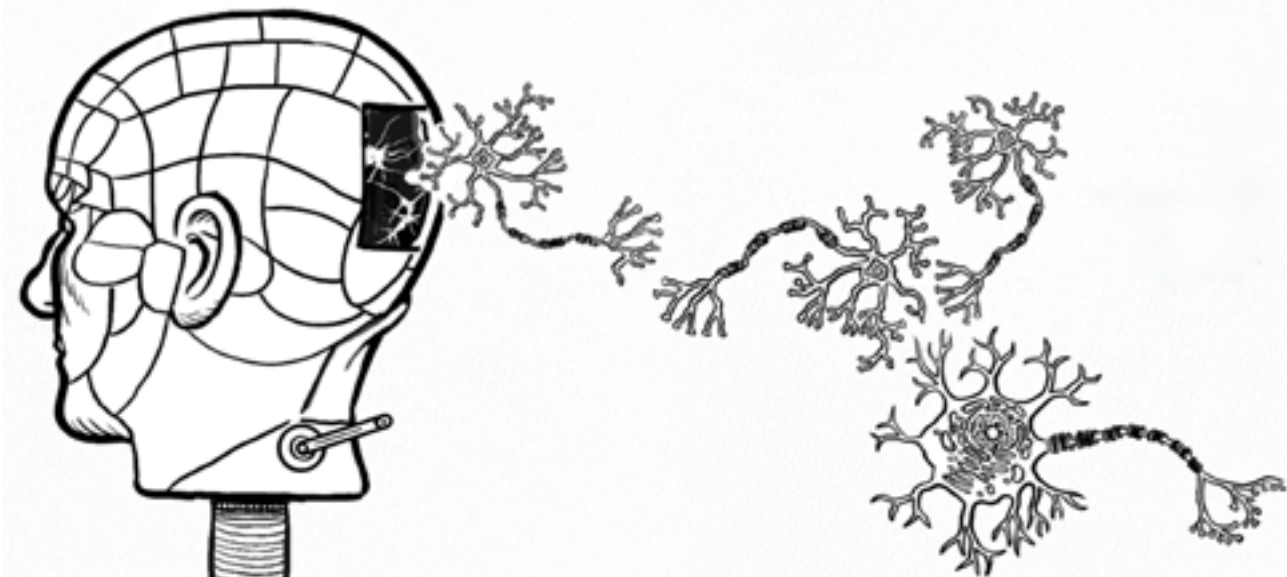
rather than replacing it. Our strategy ensures that AI is used ethically, safely, and effectively across the Trust. This journey is just beginning, and the possibilities ahead are truly exciting. With the hard work and dedication of our staff, the recognition of innovations like those at Arrow Vale, and the opportunities AI brings, we are shaping the future of education at Central Region Schools Trust. Together, we will unlock AI's full potential for the benefit of all, building a workforce ready for the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow.

WHAT'S NEXT?

As we move forward, we have developed a comprehensive AI roll-out plan and are in the process of creating a Trust-wide AI strategy. We are consulting with experts and gathering insights from our schools to ensure the strategy aligns with the needs of our entire community. This approach will be shaped by consultations with staff at all levels, ensuring it addresses real-world challenges and opportunities.

We recognise that the success of AI integration relies on the active contributions and feedback of our staff. As part of this process, we will be seeking input from across all levels to ensure our strategy is grounded in the practical needs of classrooms, leadership teams, and support functions. Your experiences, ideas, and concerns will be critical as we shape this transformative journey together.

The future of AI in education holds immense potential, and we are excited about the ways it will empower our staff, enhance student learning, and streamline administrative tasks. Together, we will harness the power of AI to create a forward-thinking, future-ready educational experience that prepares our students for an ever-evolving world.





Central Region Schools Trust
B.06 Assay Studios
141 – 143 Newhall Street
Birmingham, B3 1SF

centralregionschoolstrust.co.uk