

Issue 20 Spring 2025

# DesignEd

A Central Region Schools Trust Publication



**SPECIAL  
EDITION**

How we deliver Social Justice  
through our exceptional schools.



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*A note from*  
**GUY SHEARS**

As we approach the Easter break, I want to take this opportunity to reflect on what has been an incredibly productive and inspiring term across our Trust. The dedication, professionalism, and shared sense of purpose demonstrated by our staff continue to make a profound impact on the lives of our young people. Your unwavering commitment is what sets us apart, and I am truly grateful for all that you do.

This term has brought many highlights, and I would like to acknowledge just a few. The recent Ofsted inspections at Waseley Hills High School and Abbeywood First School were incredibly positive, reflecting the relentless hard work and expertise of our teams. These successes are a testament to the collective strength of our Trust and the commitment of every one of you to delivering an exceptional education. Well done to all involved - you should be immensely proud.

A notable moment of the term was the Vice Principal / Assistant Principal Biennial Leadership Conference followed by our Senior Leadership Conference, where we relaunched Our Distinctive Culture. This reaffirmed the values and staff behaviours that define us as a Trust, ensuring we continue to prioritise the success of our young people, act as role models, and work collaboratively to achieve our shared mission. The energy and enthusiasm at the conference were inspiring, and I have no doubt that the principles we revisited will continue to shape and strengthen our work moving forward.

Beyond the academic and leadership milestones, we have seen the incredible impact of pupil agency and enrichment across our schools. From student-led charity initiatives to innovative projects like the Year 7 ethical business challenge with Morgan Stanley, our young people continue to demonstrate remarkable creativity, leadership, and a deep sense of social

responsibility. These experiences not only enrich their learning but also reinforce the values that underpin our Trust.

As we look ahead to the summer term, there is much to be excited about. However, I also want to take a moment to recognise some significant changes within our leadership team. After six years of outstanding service, our Chief Financial Officer, Penny Harrison, will be moving on to a new role with the Diocese of Coventry MAT. Penny has played a pivotal role in overseeing the Trust's financial growth, managing a period of considerable expansion with skill and dedication. She has been a passionate advocate for our mission of supporting social justice through exceptional schools and has provided invaluable support in shaping our distinctive culture strategy. On behalf of the entire Trust, I want to extend our sincere gratitude for her contributions and wish her the very best in her next chapter.



I am delighted to welcome Caroline Symonds as our new CFO, officially joining us on April 14th. Caroline brings a wealth of experience from both the education and commercial sectors, having served as CFO and subsequently CFOO at Kenilworth Multi-Academy Trust for the past four years.

Her strategic insight and leadership will be a tremendous asset as we continue to strengthen our financial strategy and operations. Caroline has already begun engaging with our teams, ensuring a smooth transition, and I look forward to working with her as we build on our successes. Additionally, we bid a fond farewell to Lorraine Allen, our MAT Improvement Partner, who is retiring after years of dedicated service. Lorraine has been with us since the Trust's

inception, providing expert challenge and support that has driven school improvement and raised standards across our family of schools. Her knowledge, forthright approach, and commitment to excellence have been instrumental in shaping who we are today. It is no exaggeration to say that our Trust might not exist without her early efforts, and we owe her a deep debt of gratitude. Lorraine, thank you for your outstanding contribution - you will be greatly missed, and we wish you all the best in your well-earned retirement.

As we move into the final term of the academic year, I have no doubt that we will continue to build on the incredible work already achieved. For now, I hope that the Easter break provides a well-deserved opportunity to rest, reflect, and recharge. Thank you once again for your dedication, resilience, and commitment to the young people we serve.

Wishing you all a restful and enjoyable break.

**Guy Shears**  
Executive Principal (CEO)

# MEET THE TEAM

## Trust Board

### **Orla MacSherry**

Chair of Trustees

### **Eric Griffiths**

Vice Chair of Trustees

### Trustees

### **Elizabeth Keates**

### **Gareth Bower**

### **Nicholas Clifford**

### **Claire Grainger**

### **John Howard**

### **Christopher Smith**

### **Nasa Ahmed**

## Chairs of LAGBs

### **Sarah Perrett**

Abbeywood First School and 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

### **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

### **Sue Stokes**

Oak Hill First School

## Executive Leadership Team

### **Guy Shears**

Executive Principal (CEO)

### **Penny Harrison**

Trust Finance Director (CFO)

### **Andrew Martin**

Chief Operating Consultant

### **Ian Mellor**

Director of Education

### **Samantha McMonagle**

Executive School Improvement Leader  
(Disadvantaged and Vulnerable strategy)

### **Angela Crawley**

Trust Primary Executive

### **Stephen Brownlow**

Executive Principal

## The Central Team

### **Guy Shears**

Executive Principal (CEO)

### **Penny Harrison**

Trust Finance Director (CFO)

### **Andrew Martin**

Chief Operating Officer Lead Consultant

### **Gerald O'Connor**

Chief Operations Officer Consultant

### **Ian Mellor**

Director of Education

### **Samantha McMonagle**

Executive School Improvement Leader  
(Disadvantaged and Vulnerable strategy)

### **Jennie Homer**

Head of Governance & Corporate Services

### **Edward Cooper**

Head of IT & Data

### **Bryan Tait**

Lead Estates Manager

### **Christopher Derby**

Head of HR Operations

### **Matthew Purslow**

Trust Lead Staff Development & Training (CPLR&D)

### **Chelsea Cafolla**

EPA to the Executive Principal (CEO) & Office Manager

### **Teresa Wilson**

Trust Lead for ITT & Early Careers

### **Angela Crawley**

Trust Primary Executive

### **Stephen Brownlow**

Executive Principal

# MEET THE TEAM

## 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

### Zoe Gilmour

Principal of Abbeywood First School

### Laura Jarvis

Principal 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

### Tom Preston

Principal of Waseley Hills High School

### Matthew Rash

Principal of Arrow Vale High School

### Angela Saul

Principal of Ipsley CE Middle School

### Lorna Weatherby

Principal of Sutton Park Primary School

## Strategic Leads

### Samantha McMonagle

Executive School Improvement Leader  
(Disadvantaged and Vulnerable strategy)

### Matthew Purslow

Trust Lead for Staff Development & Training (CPLR&D)

### Angela Crawley

Trust Primary Executive

### Carol Newman

Trust Lead for EYFS & Phonics

### Dean Salisbury

Trust Lead for Writing

### Teresa Wilson

Trust Lead for ITT & Early Careers (Teach Central)

### Claire Round

Trust Director of SEND

### Danielle Duignan

Trust Lead for Reading

### Scott Crane

Trust Lead for Safeguarding

### Niall Brennan

Trust Lead for Attendance

### Maryellen Homer & Francesca Stanley

Trust Leads for PSHE/RSE

### Francesca Stanley & Daniel Wright

Trust Leads for Personal Development

### Michelle Martin

Trust Lead for Creative Arts

### Ellie Meredith

Trust Lead for Enrichment

### Hayley Farnell

Trust Lead for English (Secondary)

### Gemma Loveridge

Trust Lead for Sixth Form

### Jenny Lewis

Trust Lead for Ogden Trust Partnership (Physics)

## Co-Design Leaders

### Nancy Ottey

Trust Lead for Maths

### Hayley Farnell

Trust Lead for English

### Jesse Mohr, Jenny Lewis & Hattie Hayhurst

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

### Michelle Martin & Moira O'Hare

Trust Lead for Product Design

### Dawn Salter

Trust Lead for Food Technology

### Michelle Martin

Trust Lead for Art

### Chloe Burke

Trust Lead for Music

# CULTURE, BELONGING *and* DISADVANTAGED

On the 28th January 2025, senior leaders from the Trust met to focus on culture, belonging and disadvantage in our schools. We welcomed guest speaker Katriona O'Sullivan, author of *Poor* and Professor of psychology who gained her PhD at Trinity College Dublin – a journey which began when she moved to Dublin in 1998 and enrolled in an access programme at Trinity College.

Katriona's book tells her story of growing up in Coventry to Irish parents and how her life has been shaped by poverty and neglect, but also by the mentors and supporters who saw her potential. *Poor* is an astonishing personal testimony of growing up in poverty but also an impassioned plea for the future of our children.

It was a privilege hearing her speak to us about her journey and the power of education; the impact good and 'bad' teachers have on children – and the disproportionate impact this has on those at a disadvantage and coming from poverty. If needed, it was a call to arms and a reminder of why we do what do we and why every interaction matters.

"But 'poor' for me was also feeling like I had no worth. It was poverty of mind, poverty of simulation, poverty of safety and poverty of relationships. Being poor controls how you see yourself, how you trust and speak, how you see the world and how you dream." (Katriona O'Sullivan, *Poor*)

We have used her book, our distinctive culture work, alongside our work with the EFF and Marc Rowlands to focus our approaches to disadvantaged through our DVPP co-design leaders' group and with our senior leaders across the Trust. A short summary of this approach which underpins all we do is on the adjacent page.

We have further used Our Distinctive Culture within each of our settings to develop a common understanding of what we do and why we do it. In addition, our Executive Principal (CEO), Guy Shears, and Executive School Improvement Leader, Sam McMonagle, delivered keynote sessions for Optimus on Developing a Distinctive Culture at Scale. These sessions took place in London and Manchester and demonstrate the need to develop culture on a national level.





## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

At CRST, social justice is a core value that drives our commitment to creating exceptional schools where all children thrive. We believe in fostering inclusivity, equity, and a sense of belonging, recognizing that every interaction with a child can have a lasting impact.

Our approach starts with ensuring all children, regardless of background, have access to high-quality education, particularly in core skills like literacy and numeracy. This journey begins early, with some schools supporting child development even before formal schooling. We incorporate diverse perspectives and histories into the curriculum, teaching children about different identities and social issues, encouraging them to challenge discrimination and promote fairness, kindness, and respect.

We provide additional support for those facing barriers to learning, adapting our core offer and building in interventions to meet diverse needs. We strive to remove all barriers to learning and provide equitable access to resources, including extracurricular activities. We also empower pupils through pupil agency groups, encouraging them to express their opinions and participate in decision-making.

A safe and inclusive school environment is essential. We have robust policies that prevent bullying, discrimination, and exclusion, ensuring these values are felt in the ethos of our schools. Social justice is at the heart of every decision we make at CRST, and we believe that through creating exceptional schools, we are making a positive, lifelong difference to all those we serve.

**Author: Angela Crawley (Primary Executive Lead)**

# OFSTED VERIFIES OUR TRACK RECORD OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT WITH SOCIAL JUSTICE 'AT THE HEART OF ALL WE DO'

Within the Central Region Schools Trust umbrella of 13 schools, two have achieved 'Outstanding' ratings — one a fully sponsored project and the other previously graded 'Requires Improvement'. Ten more schools are now rated 'Good', including three full sponsored projects that were formerly 'Inadequate', a DfE intervention project supported by an ESIF bid, one that moved from 'Requires Improvement' to 'Good', three that maintained their 'Good' status, and two recent additions awaiting inspection after joining as 'Good' schools.

This success embodies CRST's mission in supporting social justice through exceptional schools - where every child, regardless of background, has access to high-quality education, opportunity, and a sense of belonging.

By fostering ambitious learning environments, empowering school communities, and ensuring lasting, meaningful improvement, CRST continues to transform outcomes and make a lasting positive impact on young people's lives.

## ONE RECENT INSPECTION WAS FOR WASELEY WHICH HAS MOVED FROM REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT TO GOOD.

Waseley Hills staff and students 'proud to belong to harmonious and welcoming school community' Waseley Hills High School, based in Rubery, has been praised in its latest Ofsted inspection report for improvements made to the curriculum and the support it provides to staff and students.

The school – which is part of the Central Region Schools Trust – was found to be 'Good' in all areas, following the inspection which took place on 4th and 5th February.

Inspectors praised how the school has 'worked hard' to ensure the curriculum is improved, meaning that 'each subject is both ambitious and well sequenced'. As a result of this hard work, outcomes at the school are improving.

The report highlights leaders' 'high expectations' of students' behaviour, and praises how students

'benefit from strong relationships with both staff and their peers'. Students at Waseley Hills are 'courteous and respectful to others' and 'take pride in their work'. Staff know students well and 'always have their best interests at heart', with many students reportedly saying, 'Staff here really care.'

Waseley joined the Central Region Schools Trust in November 2021 as a DfE intervention project to improve the standard of provision at the school. Prior to its most recent inspection, Waseley was graded at 'Requires Improvement' for twenty out of the past twenty-three years of Ofsted inspections.

The new leadership of the school, alongside the new facilities which open in September, gives the local community the educational setting and provision that it deserves. The Ofsted report is a key milestone in the ambitious new future for Waseley Hills and recognises the hard work of the staff, students and community coming together to strive towards excellence.



## THE DAY OF INSPECTION AT WASELEY HILLS

As I sat in the car park very early Tuesday morning and looked at Waseley through my car windscreen, I prayed that when the visitors arrived, they would see what we all see daily. I knew it didn't matter what the day would bring, the warmth in Waseley would remain whatever were to happen. The team would fight, fight hard in the knowledge that we could do no more. This moment was big, this moment was special and Waseley needed to hear the four-letter word more than we could ever imagine.

The two days flew by in a whirl. Mixed with an assembly delivery, meetings alongside others, Hub visits, refocus, call outs, questions, questions and more questions and the odd request for information, each evening I could not quite believe that the time was actually here. Two years was no time at all, and I knew that within those two years MANY people had dedicated so much time effort, tears, laughter and love into Waseley to ensure our students and families knew that we cared for them all. This was a joint effort, one of togetherness!

Thursday morning was the day we were to know. We sat as a united team in front of Tom and his SLT while we waited for the news that we so needed to hear.

I have never, experienced such emotion in any school I have worked. When Tom read through his heartfelt written words, I couldn't be prouder to sit alongside Waseley staff old and new. I was trying not to look up because I knew the tears that spilled over my eyes and down my cheeks, would be contagious. I needn't have worried, when I did look up there were tears all round. The pride in his voice, the emotion and the words that he said will stay with me forever!!!!!!

When I think of that moment I know some would say it's an overreaction, some say it's just a job, others may say get over it, get yourself together, but when you work in education, especially pastorally and live the lives of our pupils alongside them, its more than just a job, it's more than just a school, it certainly is more than just education, it is a home.... A home for so many staff and students!

**Author: Waseley Hills Member of Staff**

# SOCIAL JUSTICE

# IN ACTION

*Author: Samantha McMonagle*

## OUR APPROACH TO SUPPORTING DISADVANTAGE

Inspired by the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA)'s dedication to 'undertakings for the public good,' our commitment to social justice extends beyond ideals; it translates into tangible actions. We operate with a real-world perspective, prioritizing practical steps over abstract concepts.

Our approach centers on critically examining our internal structures – our people, our physical spaces, and our operational processes – to identify areas for improvement and ensure they actively support social justice.

This commitment is deeply rooted in the principles of inclusion and equity, meaning we strive to create an environment where everyone has a fair opportunity to succeed, regardless of background or circumstance. This involves not only identifying and addressing inequalities but also actively promoting fairness and opportunity at every level of our organization.

### 1 IN OUR SCHOOLS:

- We view working with disadvantaged pupils as a privilege, not a problem.
- We believe all pupils can thrive, regardless of background.
- We understand the impact of low family income on opportunity, development, and health.
- We ensure low income is never a barrier to opportunity.
- We maintain high expectations for all pupils, regardless of family support.
- We recognize that every interaction with students matters.
- We understand that poverty influences decision-making and address this in our communications.
- We prioritize social aspects of school/enrichment to foster student agency.
- We acknowledge that schools can either level or widen gaps and strive to level them.

### 2 IN THE CLASSROOM:

#### Enabling Success:

- Know your students: Be experts on their individual needs and learning styles.
- Thoughtful seating: Ensure seating plans promote equity, collaboration, and learning partnerships.
- Targeted resources: Direct resources to pupils at greatest risk of underachievement.
- Frontload knowledge: Address and pre-teach necessary background knowledge for accessing the work.
- Additional support: Provide additional adult support for those who need it most.
- Clear feedback: Ensure pupils receive clear and specific feedback.
- Every interaction counts: Every interaction with students matters.

#### Teaching & Learning Priorities:

- Quality teacher talk: Model effective communication, provide clear explanations, check for understanding, and ask high-quality questions.
- Beyond content coverage: Focus on checking for understanding and ensuring depth of learning before moving on.
- Quality feedback: Provide meaningful and actionable feedback to support student learning.

## **CHILDREN AT A DISADVANTAGE ARE NOT A PROBLEM TO RESOLVE – THEY ARE OUR CHILDREN – AND SO WE NEED TO GET BETTER AT WHAT WE DO TO HELP THEM TO THRIVE:**

“Although the ‘same’ opportunities are open to people of all backgrounds, we live in a system where those coming from stable, secure childhoods do well and there is no allowance for the struggle of those who don’t.

We need equity in education, not equality. If someone can’t see straight because the world is falling in around them, we need to raise them up to clearer skies... and the truth is, we are losing some brilliant minds in the trenches of poverty.”

*Katriona O’Sullivan: Poor*

### **3 TRACKING OF PUPILS:**

Tracking those at disadvantage or vulnerable by looking at their lived experience through the school day, or week, can provide invaluable insights, from pupils’ perspectives. Key questions and activities:

- Are they working with high quality teachers and support staff?
- How often are they working with unqualified staff or supply staff?
- How many staff do they get in a subject area at secondary? Split classes?
- Do they get meaningful opportunities to interact with their peers?
- Do they get thinking time before engaging in questioning and discussion?
- What types of feedback do they get on their learning and their learning behaviours?
- How often are they late / out of lessons during learning time?
- What is their experience at the start of the day and during lunch and break?
- What additional activities are they involved in?
- Participation – use the enrichment tracker. How does this compare to their peers and their experiences of school life?

### **4 OTHER ASPECTS TO CONSIDER:**

- Attendance – look for pupils starting to disengage – starting to get broken weeks e.g. a pattern of odd days off (more critical than the one big block).
- Pupil voice.
- Use of reading data.



# STUDENT AGENCY ACROSS THE TRUST

Following on from the inauguration of our Trust-wide student council in October, our CRST Lead Ambassadors have continued to lead their student councils in half termly meetings, responding to the student voice within their respective schools, and considering how they can make the experience of all students across their school better.

Student councils have been discussing the catering provision across the Trust and within their respective schools, gathering valuable student voice on the availability of food at social times, the quality of the food on offer and its nutritional value. Many councils have met with representatives from Aspens, our catering provider, to create small working parties, to provide this feedback directly and work together to ensure the food available to our young people is nutritional and consistent, demonstrating real maturity and agency.

The CRST Lead Ambassadors have also been working with the various committees within their councils, leading them in our half termly agency drives, this term focusing on eco activities and civic community events. See below a summary of what these committees have achieved across our Trust. Our sixth form student leaders have also been providing guidance and support for these committee drives, working alongside senior Trust leaders to role model how our youngest leaders can take ownership of their activities and create real world change.



**CRST STUDENT  
COUNCIL**

# CIVIC COMMITTEES

Across the autumn and spring terms our 'Civic Leaders' have been working to build strong links and connections between their schools and the wider community. Sixth form senior 'Civic Leaders' from Arrow Vale presented on the importance of this connection at the CRST Student Council Conference in October, and the impact community-based events can have on the development of a strong culture of community in our schools.

'Civic Leaders' worked with their student councils and wider student bodies to plan and execute an event that brings together staff, students, parents and the

wider community and we have seen some fantastic events take place across our trust. Student leaders at Ipsley laid tables and served Christmas dinner to fifty members of Christ Church in addition to running a games school at their annual Community Café event. Members of the Civic Committee at Waseley Hills have been working with a local charity group 'Rubery in Bloom' and have sourced funding for plants and flowers to bring colour and joy to their local area. Student leaders from across the school will be going into the community to plant these flowers in the coming weeks.

# ECO COMMITTEES

In January, our 'Eco Leaders' across the Trust led their respective schools in our annual 'Eco Week'. These leaders took inspiration and ideas from our sixth form senior 'Eco Leaders' from Waseley Hills, who presented to them at the CRST Student Council Conference in October. The focus for this committee was to highlight the impact our energy consumption, as a Trust, has on the wider environment and they were challenged with identifying strategies to reduce each schools' energy consumption by 20% by the end of the academic year, in addition to ensuring that paper consumption was reduced, and recycling was increased. Leaders then worked with their student councils and wider student bodies to develop a range of activities to raise awareness of the importance of energy conservation, and the impact this has on the wider environment.

There was a fantastic range of events taking place during this week in all schools including 'big switch offs', raising money to sponsor an animal affected by

climate change, recycling drives and 'no paper' days. Whilst the focus of this drive was during eco week our 'Eco Leaders' are continuing this work throughout the year, developing a real sense of ownership and strategic leadership and we will hopefully see the impact their work has had on the energy use within our schools across the Trust later in the year.





# CHARITY COMMITTEES

On Sunday 8th March, CRST were delighted to attend the 100 Heroes event for Birmingham Children's Hospital, after being recognised as one of their top 100 fundraisers last year. Students across our Trust raised an incredible £10,000 for the charity and are continuing to raise more this year. It was an honour to attend an event where such strength, resilience and hope were present from all involved.

Our 'Charity Leaders' are continuing to make real world change and build upon that fantastic amount raised for Birmingham Children's Hospital. Last year they raised an incredible £10,000 for the charity and were recognised for their achievements by being awarded a '100 Heroes' award from the charity.

The money they raised provided the necessary funds to refurbish the play and distraction equipment in the waiting area of the day surgery ward, enabling children who are waiting for surgery to feel as calm and happy as they can be. It was an incredible achievement and demonstration of what we can achieve when we come together as a Trust-wide community.

Our CRST Student Council made the decision to continue to raise money for this fantastic cause this year that is so close to the hearts of staff, students and parents within our Trust. The CRST Lead Ambassadors made a pledge to attempt to raise a further £15,000 for the charity this year! 'Charity Leaders' took inspiration from sixth form senior 'Charity Leaders' from Gospel Oak and our four secondary schools hosted their annual 'Charity Week' in December 2024.

This week saw a wide array of events across the four schools ranging from teacher task master, non-uniform and Christmas jumper days, Christmas fairs, staff car washes and football matches, wristband sales, tuck shops and bake sales. Together they raised a fantastic £4000 in five days and are continuing to host further events throughout the year.

Our primary and middle school 'Charity Leaders' are now busy planning their 'Charity Week' which will take place in April where we hope to raise much needed funds for this amazing charity.



# IGNITING A PASSION *in* OUR STUDENTS

In the summer of 2024, the Trust were successful in a bid to run a school partnership with The Ogden Trust, which was established by Sir Peter Ogden in 1999 as a charitable trust that exists to promote the teaching and learning of physics, as part of our commitment to the enrichment guarantee for our young people. This bid for 10 of our schools followed successful existing partnerships for Sutton Park, Lickhill and Oldbury Park, all of whom were instrumental in supporting Church Hill, as the Lead School for the new partnership.

This has resulted in all 13 schools now being part of programmes which aim to increase the uptake of physics post-16 by supporting physics education and engagement for all young people (4-18), particularly those in under-represented groups.

The culture of the Ogden Trust and of our Trust resonate closely, as they seek to establish supportive, collaborative teaching communities, drive an improvement in physics education and engagement; offer enrichment opportunities and create strong environments for physics learning. Further, the partnership will allow us to support science teachers to provide ongoing professional development; strengthen understanding, knowledge and teaching tools; drive inspiration, skills and resources for practical physics and engender a sense of appreciation and value of physics.

Since the successful bid, one of our Science Lead Practitioners, Jenny Lewis – Lead Partner for the partnership, based out of Church Hill Middle School – has been integral in establishing and organising several events which consolidate the intent which was set out in our initial bid. Those events include multiple networking events with colleagues attending the University of Birmingham School; The Ogden Trust 25th year anniversary celebration; and a collaborative online session facilitated by Haybridge Teaching School Hub and The Ogden Trust.

As per our commitment to supporting social justice through exceptional schools, the Chair of The Ogden Trust, Cameron Ogden says:

“Physics as a subject has a huge importance in the world today. We are determined to ensure that everyone has access to good quality, inspiring physics education and that no one feels excluded from taking physics further. We aim to increase participation in physics for under-represented groups. The priority audiences for the Trust include teachers without a physics background, teachers, and students in remote rural areas or in areas of social deprivation, and students on free school meals. Diversity, equity, and inclusion is central to our mission.”



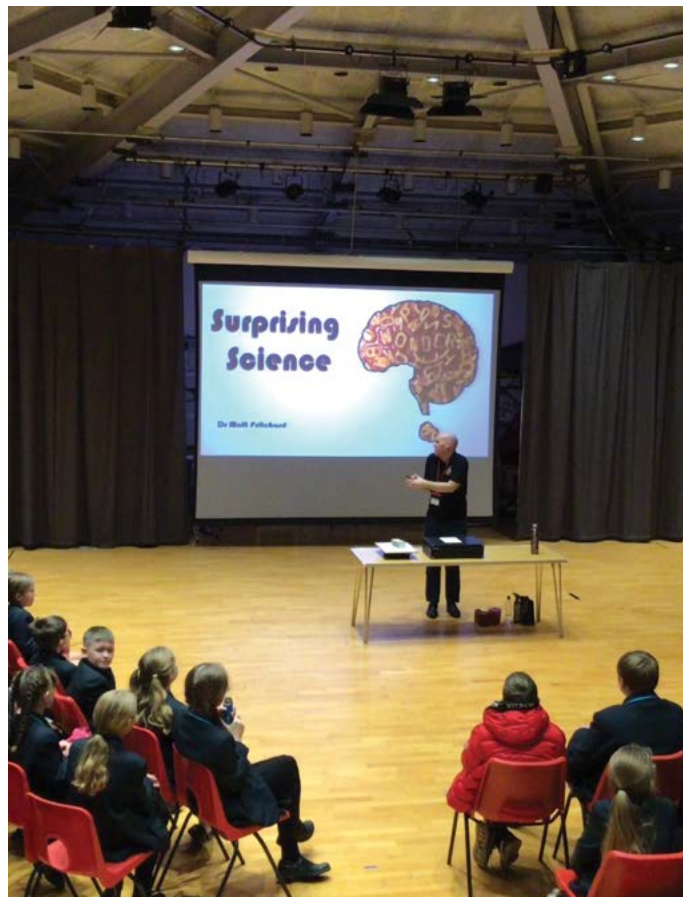
Further, there have been several staff training opportunities which include: our Ogden Trust regional representative Jenny Watson, delivering on-line sessions to both our KS2 and KS3-4 co-design groups, and additionally, facilitating a face-to-face session for KS2 colleagues on 'Phizzi Forces' – a wonderfully interactive and engaging day aimed at providing a plethora of resources and opportunities for colleagues to take back and to build into their planning in our first, primary and middle schools. KS3-4 CPD for colleagues focused on 'Electricity, Forces and Waves' will be delivered in the new year by Lindsey Gooding, another of our regional representatives. The pinnacle of the autumn term was our collaborative, interactive, fun and engaging launch event, held at Arrow Vale School, on the 4th December, which was hosted by Dr Matt Pritchard.

A science graduate of Oxford University and Doctor of Atomic Physics from Durham University, Dr Matt has now established 'The Science Magic Show' company, which travels the country inspiring youngsters from all age ranges and phases of education to appreciate the contribution of science to their world and, in his words, to always think about the 'Wow, How and Now' aspect of science and specifically physics.

He has a presence on TED talks and his philosophy is that science should seek to 'wow' and then you question the 'how' and then what I can do 'now' to develop my own understanding and apply this knowledge. The event was well received with over 30 members of staff, and 400 pupils from across year groups 3-13 in attendance throughout the day, at bespoke key stage sessions. There were a further 150 pupils streamed in 'live' to take part in the event back in their schools. This highly successful event was attended by The Ogden Trust, who brought prizes to be distributed throughout the sessions and again consolidated our ongoing partnership by supporting with logistics and in preparing for Matt's event.

We are so excited by this partnership and the impact this will have on our young people. There are many more staff CPD sessions planned for 2025, and the next pupil event will be 'Star Gazing' which will fuse the enrichment of an overnight stay with the opportunity to 'interpret' astronomical structures and excite our young learners to continue Dr Matt's philosophy of 'Wow, How and Now'.

Here's to an exciting 2025 with the Ogden Trust and Central Region Schools Trust. May the 'Force' be with you!!



## CRST MUSIC FEST '25

**Igniting a passion for music through our exceptional schools**

On the 3rd of March 2025 we held our first ever CRST Primary Music Festival – aptly named 'Trust Fest '25!' All nine schools with primary aged children took part in an afternoon of showcasing music skills and singing together. All of the children and staff involved had learned three songs in their own schools where they practiced singing differing harmonies and parts that we shared together in the Arrow Vale auditorium, without a single practice (we didn't need one!). There was such an overwhelming sense of togetherness and joy when we raised the roof with our voices, an absolute privilege to witness.

Individual performances from all of the schools involved singing, percussion, dancing and an awful lot of smiling, celebrating and applause. Children as young as five sang confidently to an audience of 200+ and a number of children sang as part of a duet or even solo.



Oak Hill Choir

I would like to thank everyone who took part and helped to make this event such a success and I am already looking forward to next year's festival.

# A SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS P

## IGNITING A PASSION FOR TEAMWORK

The spring has seen the start of the 2025 Sustainable Business project in partnership with Morgan Stanley, the global financial leaders in investment. Our Year 7 students across the Trust from Church Hill, Ipsley, Waseley Hills High School, Holyhead and Gospel Oak all met the team and attended an interactive workshop looking at environment and social media.

This is a really special and unique opportunity for our students to work with volunteers from Morgan Stanley to discuss, explore and plan their own projects that can be pitched for consideration in the summer. The project is driven by the student leaders, and the teams work in competition with each other to come up with the best idea. Watch this space for the update and outcome in the summer.



## SCIENCE WEEK QUIZ

On Wednesday 12th March, Church Hill hosted a Central Region Schools Trust British Science Week Quiz for our fabulous KS2 children. Due to the numbers who were keen to participate we hosted the quiz online to get as many children and staff involved as we could. It was wonderful to see the excited children desperately wanting to share their science knowledge from all areas of the curriculum. Jen Lewis, our Trust Lead Practitioner for KS3 science, organised the event, hosted and even dressed up for the occasion. Church Hill, Ipsley, Abbeywood, Arrow Valley, Sutton Park, St. Stephens, Oldbury Park and Oakhill all gave their all for an hour of the day with some even taking over their entire school hall to add to the experience. In total, we hosted approximately 450 children and over 30 members of staff took part.

The quiz went on to launch a poster competition in conjunction with the "Change and Adapt" theme of British Science Week 2025. The winning poster from each school will be sent to Jen Lewis, who will award an Ogden Trust prize to the overall winners from the Trust. They will also be entered into the national poster competition.



Children Partaking in the Science Quiz

**FINALLY** - We will be launching our CRST and Ogden Trust science ambassadors training this half term. Those who are successfully selected will be helping with any summer events being hosted in schools and will get the opportunity to visit the London Science Museum as a reward for all of their contributions to science.

Very exciting time to come in science!

# PROJECT *with* MORGAN STANLEY



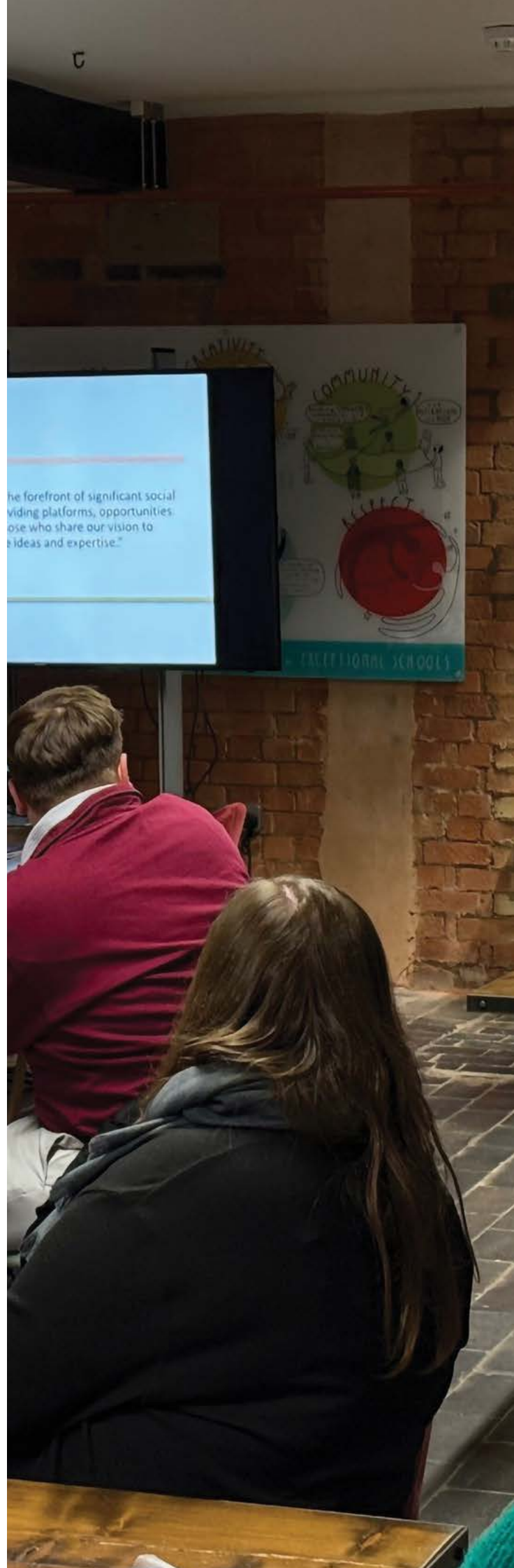
# CO-DESIGN

## OUTCOMES OF SPRING CONFERENCES

“People matter; at the Central Region Schools Trust, we believe that effective Professional Learning, Research and 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.”

The start of the spring term welcomed our ECTs into the Assay for their annual conference. There was a real sense of network and collaboration throughout the afternoon, with sessions targeting expert instruction, SEND support and strategies, and practical ideas to build into their teacher toolkit. Additionally, the ECTs are currently implementing their Places Project into their classroom and schools to add integrity and student agency to an educational space and to support outcomes.

Within co-design, our D&T leads came together in January and completed electronics CPD with the national D&T association and our new Creative Arts lead for the Trust has exciting plans to support curriculum development and enrichment across the Trust. The RE team were hosted by Holyhead School and took the opportunity of visiting two local places of worship as part of their commitment to developing an enrichment and diversity calendar to celebrate a range of cultures and religions. The PE co-design team will be meeting soon to continue with their planning for the Trust sports day in June and have also recently completed a day of moderation together, as well as running the inter-Trust handball competition at Arrow Vale School. All other subject areas have met online and discussed upcoming interventions and strategies to support our young learners and most specifically YR11 in the run up to the exams, again demonstrating a commitment to the success of the young people in our care and in the sharing of best practice. Our primary co-design subject and year team leads continue to work together and have a schedule of meetings organised to support with curriculum and enrichment outcomes.





Our bespoke mentoring programme to support our RQT cohort of colleagues, across the Trust and across phases, continues with their research disciplined inquiries for 2024-25. Further, our commitment to supporting expert practice in the classroom, across both phases from EY-KS4, has also continued apace with a focus on identifying and developing observational practice for colleagues, specifically in career stage development and in underpinning whole school quality assurance mechanisms.

Our leadership courses have also now launched with both pastoral and subject leadership being focused on across a wide representation of schools within the Trust. Sessions so far have focused on Trust behaviours, leading a team and the emotional and psychological well-being of the young people in our care. 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 and subject / curriculum hubs across our region. Colleagues throughout the Trust will soon be starting their national professional qualifications for the April 2025 cohort across the full suite of NPQs available.

Recent apprenticeship levy successes include Jenna Brown from Gospel Oak and Roshida Nessa from Holyhead completing and achieving their Level 7 Senior Leader qualifications with Coventry University; Ash Burbidge, Senior Trust Network Manager and Jamie Stubbs-Thomas, Senior IT Technician, both obtaining a Distinction in their Level 4 network manager qualifications with Baltic IT Apprenticeship; and Josh Barton from Ipsley CE School achieving a Merit in his Level 3 Teaching Assistant apprenticeship through BeReady & Harper Craven. There was also a celebration at the Assay, hosted by Ed Cooper, Head of IT & Data, of the endeavours and successes of his team working alongside Baltic, with presentations made by various colleagues highlighting their achievements – this took place in national apprenticeship week earlier in February. There are many more opportunities being made available through the apprenticeship levy across all functions of the Trust, in 2025.

For further information please do not hesitate to contact Matt Purslow: [mpurslow@crst.org.uk](mailto:mpurslow@crst.org.uk).

welcome

# NEW MEMBERS OF STAFF

## AN INTRODUCTION AND WHAT 'SOCIAL JUSTICE' WILL MEAN IN OUR CONTEXT



**Christopher Derby**  
Head of HR Operations

I joined Central Region Schools Trust in February 2025, having spent over 20 years in Birmingham Arts organisations and a Housing and Care Group.

As a Chartered Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, I will have responsibility for leading the HR Operations of the Trust along with my team. I am always up for new opportunities which push me to develop and working within a completely new sector will do just that. Furthermore, I'm looking forward to working with a team with shared values and to see what contributions I can bring.

For me, throughout my career, social justice has always been about fairness, inclusion and providing the same opportunities for all to succeed irrespective of their background. Therefore, it is about ensuring our processes are aligned to this right from the very start, for example, recruitment and that our workplace culture and professional development opportunities reflect our dedication to equality, diversity and inclusion.

**Michelle Martin**  
Trust Assistant Principal/Director of Arts

I am thrilled to be joining Central Regions Schools Trust as Trust Director of Arts, bringing my passion for Art and Design to a role that supports creativity across our schools. I believe in the power of the arts to inspire curiosity, spark joy in learning, and give every student the confidence to express themselves.

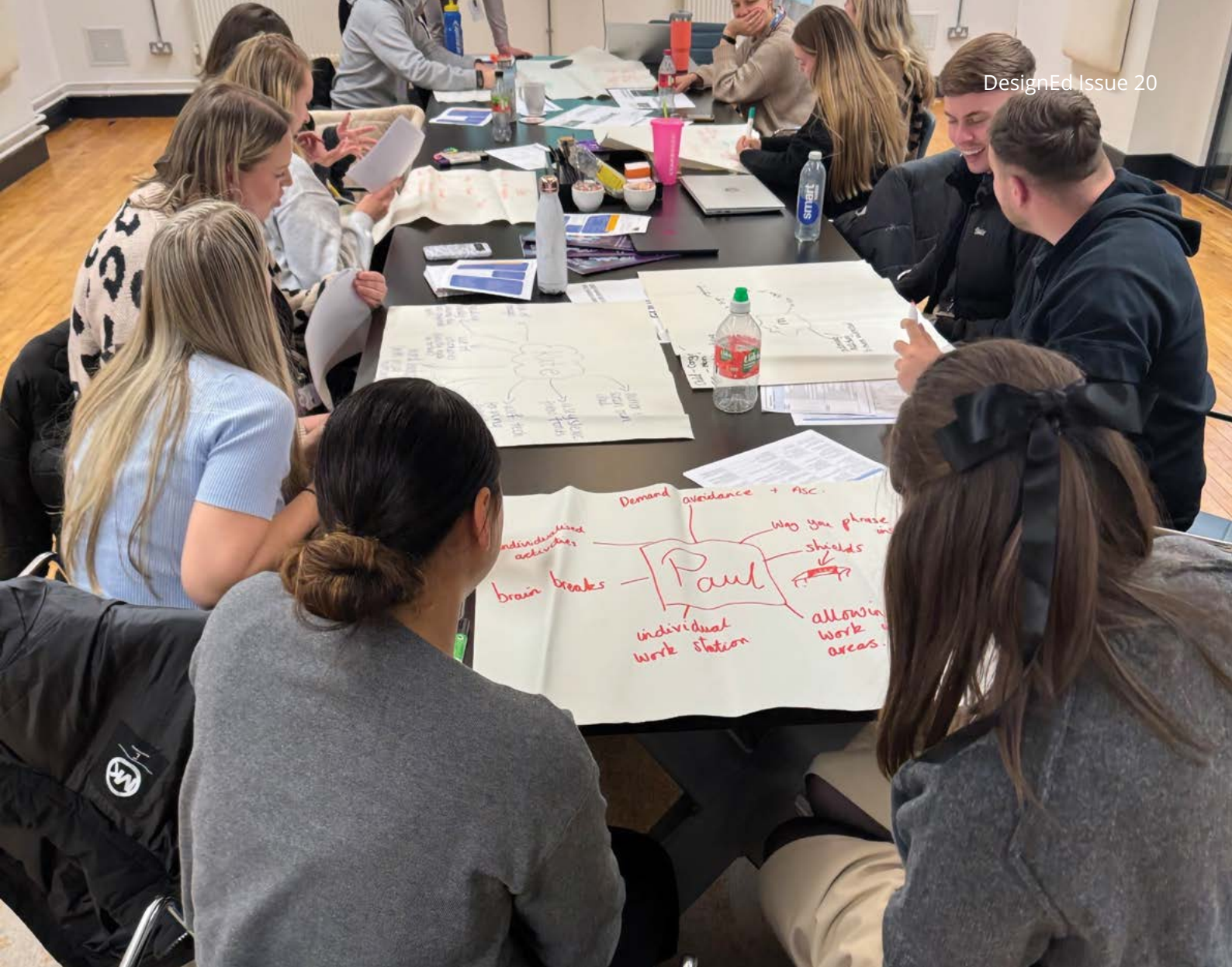
For me, social justice in the arts means ensuring every young person, regardless of background, has access to a rich, high-quality creative education. It is about breaking down barriers to cultural capital, championing diverse artistic voices, and ensuring our curriculum reflects and empowers the communities we serve. Through my role, I hope to support teachers and students alike in making the arts a truly inclusive, transformative experience across our Trust.

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**Hayley Farnell**  
School Improvement Lead (English)

With over 20 years' experience teaching English, including leadership roles (Head of KS4, Head of English) at multiple schools since 2006, and 15+ years of service with AQA and Edexcel (GCSE marking, standard-setting, examiner support), I bring extensive expertise to my role as Trust Lead for English. My background includes working at Arrow Vale in Redditch.

My approach to teaching English centers on social justice, creating an equitable learning environment where all students can thrive. This involves curating a diverse curriculum that reflects students' backgrounds, using literature to address identity, inequality, and social justice. Classroom discussions on relevant topics empower students, fostering critical thinking and literacy skills, while using education as a tool for transformation and breaking cycles of disadvantage.



# REFLECTIONS ON THE CRST EXPERT PRACTITIONER PROGRAMME

Taking part in the Expert Practitioner Programme (EPP) has transformed the way I approach classroom observations. Initially, my understanding of a classroom environment focussed on surface-level elements - behaviour management, engagement, and lesson pacing. However, as the programme progressed, my observations became more nuanced, shifting towards deeper pedagogical strategies, questioning techniques, and understanding the subtle ways teachers foster independent learning.

One of the most eye-opening aspects has been reflecting on my own practice. Observing colleagues across different subjects has not only broadened my perspective but also challenged me to refine my own teaching methods. I've gained a clearer understanding of what truly impacts learning – how small, intentional adjustments can make a significant difference.

This journey has reinforced that observation isn't just about evaluating others; it's about continuous self-improvement. As I move forward, I'm eager to embed these insights into my own practice, ensuring every lesson is as impactful as possible.



# WORLD

# B



# BOOK DAY



# SUPPORTING SOCIAL JUSTICE AT ARROW VALE HIGH SCHOOL

## Social Justice at Arrow Vale: Empowering Every Individual to Thrive

At Arrow Vale, social justice is the foundation of our school, creating an environment where all thrive. We foster inclusivity and high aspirations for students, staff, and the community.

## A Shared Responsibility and Purpose

Shared values drive our commitment to social justice. Students, teachers, staff, families, and the community collaborate to create an equitable educational experience, encouraging aspirations and realizing dreams. Our house system (Aim High Alligators, etc.) embodies this shared purpose.

## Empowering Every Student

We ensure every student receives an exceptional education, breaking down barriers to learning through personalized support, adaptive teaching, and accessible resources (laptops, peer mentoring). Initiatives like LGBTQI+ and Girls' Running Clubs foster confidence and resilience.

## Enrichment Inside and Outside the Classroom

Learning extends beyond the classroom. We offer diverse enrichment opportunities (extracurricular clubs, trips, Women in STEM program) to cultivate curiosity and self-discovery. The student-run Badminton Club promotes community spirit.

## Student Leadership: Connecting the Present to the Future

Student leaders are advocates, ensuring their peers' voices are heard. Committees (Diversity and Equality, Well-being) shape school culture, exemplified by student-led World Culture Day.

## A Safe and Inclusive Environment

Our inclusive atmosphere is reflected in our commitment to student well-being (Well-being Advisor, therapy dogs) and the No Hands Up policy, promoting participation from all learners.

## Pathways to Success

Our broad curriculum (GCSEs, A Levels, BTECs) and robust post-18 guidance provide diverse pathways to success, connecting students with further education, apprenticeships, or employment opportunities.



# SUPPORTING SOCIAL JUSTICE AT ARROW VALLEY FIRST SCHOOL

## Social justice through literacy in our exceptional school

At Arrow Valley First School, reading attainment is 'impressively high'. As John Tomsett noted, "The levels of pupils' literacy were extraordinarily high." This success is attributed to a consistent approach to teaching phonics, reading comprehension, and writing. The outcomes are indeed impressive.

Literacy is more than just reading and writing; it's essential for living the life you want. From a young age, literacy helps you develop and communicate. But if you start off with difficulties, it's easy to fall behind.

In school, being able to read, write, speak, and listen well is crucial for success. Struggling with these skills can make learning hard and affect your confidence.

Ofsted's February 2024 report highlighted the school's effective literacy strategies: "When children join in Reception, they start learning to read almost straight away. All adults are faithful to the phonics programme.

Almost all pupils reach the expected standard in phonics by the end of Year 1. Where this is not the case, the school provides effective support to enable those who find reading difficult, have fallen behind, or are at an early stage of reading to catch up. Pupils can use their phonics skills to sound out unfamiliar words. Consequently, they are quickly developing their confidence and fluency, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils at all stages enjoy reading and talking to adults about their books."

Despite these strategies there are times when pupils find it tricky to access age-appropriate material. There are times when it has been tempting to use the power of technology to solve this issue e.g. AI to reduce the complexity or giving simple summaries. However, we need to remember that children understand more than they can read, and all pupils should have access to vocabulary. At Arrow Valley we support these children through high challenge and high support for every child, but especially for the weaker readers.



# Englishworking wall



Key vocabulary

- Misspelling
- Abbreviation
- Personification
- Metaphor
- Similes
- Adjectives

**Full Stop**

Used to mark the end of a sentence.

*Example: The sun is shining brightly.*

**Comma**

Used to separate items in a list or to separate a clause from the rest of the sentence.

*Example: I like apples, oranges and bananas.*

**Apostrophe**

Used to show possession or to form contractions.

*Example: The dog's tail was wagging.*

**Speech Marks**

Used to show what someone has said.

*Example: "I love this book!" she said.*

Dear Mrs Jarvis,

I am writing to you to demonstrate and highlight how including "dress down Fridays" would help to improve the quality of work, engagement and mental health of both students and staff.

*Write it a quest to benefit.*

**Formal language** - Sensible vocabulary, Subject specific, polite tone.

**Informal language** - Relaxed vocabulary including slang and contraction words.

**Formal** - Used to raise important issues and when speaking with officials.

**Informal** - Used when talking to friends. General chat and conversations.

Dear Mrs Jarvis,

**Purpose / Introduction:** Fun and engaging lessons, kind and helpful teachers, Examine & test ability. To include 'dress down Fridays' every week at CHMS.

**Reason 1<sup>st</sup>** - Allows Students to feel relaxed. Can focus on work. Helps them to stay calm.

**Reason 2<sup>nd</sup>** - Help parents with working. Save money. Reduce the need to wash uniforms as often.

**Reason 3<sup>rd</sup>** - Strengthen their fun knowledge. Build relations through Ssemblies. Low stress, allows more interaction on individuality.

**Main Clause**

A group of words that contains a verb and can stand alone as a sentence.

**Subordinate Clause**

A secondary clause, which depends on a main clause for meaning.

**Semicolon**

Used to separate two related clauses, which are closely related but not joined by a conjunction.

**Colon**

Used to separate two related clauses, where the second clause explains or illustrates the first.

**Question mark**

Used to show that a sentence is a question.

**Exclamation mark**

Used to show that a sentence is an exclamation.

## BE CURIOUS...

# WHY?

THINK HARD!!!

## REMEMBER MORE...



# SUPPORTING SOCIAL JUSTICE AT CHURCHILL MIDDLE SCHOOL

A pivotal word in understanding how to broach social justice is the difference between equality and equity. We all strive for equality but need to deliver it through equity.

“Equity recognises that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.”

Equity is classroom scaffolding but on a whole school level.

To me, in my first six weeks, this included looking at the school through a critical eye both as its leader but also utilising my experience as a parent; the question of ‘would this be okay for my own child?’ routinely cogitated in my mind. If the answer was no, then it needed fixing.

## This included:

- Re-painting walls in classrooms and re-doing displays; they needed bright colours to bring in vibrancy and fun to the children’s learning environment.
- Ensuring that our extra-curricular provision undergoes a programme of improvement to bring about a wide ranging, consistent offer that students want to take part in.
- Improving the children’s toilets; cleanliness, set routines and fully functional facilities are essential.
- Re-assessing how we meet the need of a truly disadvantaged child in the classroom by creating our inclusive checklist that all staff use when planning and delivering lessons.
- Creating as many opportunities as possible to communicate with parents through meet and greets, the school Facebook page, reforming our PTA, re-starting our newsletter, obtaining parent voice and being on the main gate AM and PM to meet with parents, to become a familiar face and voice in the community.
- New walls and new displays

It has been half a term, and I am incredibly proud of the staff and children at Church Hill. The phrase ‘start as you mean to go on’ feels very apt; and social justice has never been better exemplified than through the efforts of our Vice Principal, Mrs Terry, when she set out to improve our food offer.

One aspect of social justice is to ensure that students entitled to a free school meal take up this provision. We identified that only around 50% of those students that were entitled to a free school meal were claiming this provision. As a school dedicated to social justice, we were not happy with this and wanted to encourage more children to eat a free school meal. We spent part of last term investigating the root causes of the shortfall in uptake, through extensive student and parent voice.

We then met with Aspens and worked together to improve the provision available including larger portion sizes, and a wider range of cold options to include baguettes with a variety of flavours. One identified barrier to uptake was the system of pre-ordering meals, which meant that students were unable to view the options and choose what they would like to eat each day.

This led to a change in the ordering system so that all students can now choose from the selection of hot and cold options when they get to the counter. Although some of these changes were small, the impact has been big, with 72% of our students entitled to a free school meal now taking advantage of this provision on a weekly basis.

## SUPPORTING SOCIAL JUSTICE AT GOSPEL OAK SCHOOL

### BRINGING COLOUR AND COMMUNITY TO DUDLEY TRAIN STATION

Talented Gospel Oak students collaborated with artist Steve Edwards to create uplifting artwork for Dudley Train Station. Commissioned by Samaritans, the nature-inspired designs aim to create a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere, promoting well-being and reducing stress.

Guided by Edwards, the students focused on connection, community, and resilience, transforming the station into a positive and accessible public space. This project showcases young people using art to drive social change.



### EMPOWERING STUDENTS THROUGH ENVISION AND COACHBRIGHT AT GOSPEL OAK

Gospel Oak School is proud to offer two programs, Envision and CoachBright, designed to empower students for success beyond the classroom. Envision involves tackling real-world issues through social action projects, while CoachBright provides personalized academic support and mentorship.

Both programs aim to develop leadership, confidence, and future aspirations, equipping students with valuable skills and shaping their futures.



## IMPROVED ATTENDANCE AT GOSPEL OAK SCHOOL

Gospel Oak School is thrilled to announce a significant improvement in attendance this academic year, with a remarkable 4% increase in overall attendance. This achievement is a testament to the dedication of students, parents, and staff, who have all worked together to prioritize consistent attendance.

We recognize the crucial link between attendance and academic success. Each day missed represents a loss of valuable learning time, potentially impacting students' progress throughout their school career. We are committed to fostering an environment where all students feel supported and motivated to attend school regularly.

While we celebrate this progress, we remain dedicated to further enhancing attendance rates. We will continue to work in partnership with parents and carers to ensure that all students have the opportunity to benefit from a full and enriching educational experience.

## THE BRILLIANT CLUB

Gospel Oak School's year 7 students are participating in The Brilliant Club's Scholars Programme, a prestigious initiative offering university-style learning experiences. Students will engage with PhD researchers, explore advanced topics, and develop critical thinking, writing, and research skills. This program will broaden their academic horizons and prepare them for future success in higher education.

Hayley Nutting, Vice Principal at Gospel Oak School, expressed enthusiasm for the program, stating, "We are delighted that our students have been selected for The Brilliant Club's Scholars Programme. This experience will broaden their academic horizons and boost their confidence in pursuing higher education." By participating in this program, Gospel Oak School continues its commitment to social justice, providing students with enriching educational experiences that prepare them for a bright future.



## CELEBRATING DIVERSITY AND UNITY AT GOSPEL OAK'S CULTURE DAY

Gospel Oak School recently came alive with colour, music, and celebration as students and staff took part in Culture Day, a vibrant event dedicated to embracing diversity and fostering unity within our school community. The day showcased the rich cultural heritage of our students, reinforcing the importance of inclusion, respect, and global awareness.

Throughout the day, students had the opportunity to share and celebrate their backgrounds through traditional clothing, performances, and cultural displays. From music and dance to art and storytelling, the event provided a platform for students to express their identities and learn from one another. The school was filled with the sounds of different languages, the sights of traditional dress, and the aromas of international cuisine, creating an immersive and enriching experience for all.

The event not only allowed students to take pride in their heritage but also fostered a deeper appreciation of the diverse community we are part of. Activities encouraged dialogue, understanding, and connections across cultures, helping to create an environment where everyone feels seen and valued.

Culture Day at Gospel Oak was more than just a celebration. It was a powerful reminder of the strength that comes from diversity. By embracing different traditions and perspectives, our students are shaping a school culture built on respect, curiosity, and unity, ensuring that everyone belongs and thrives together.

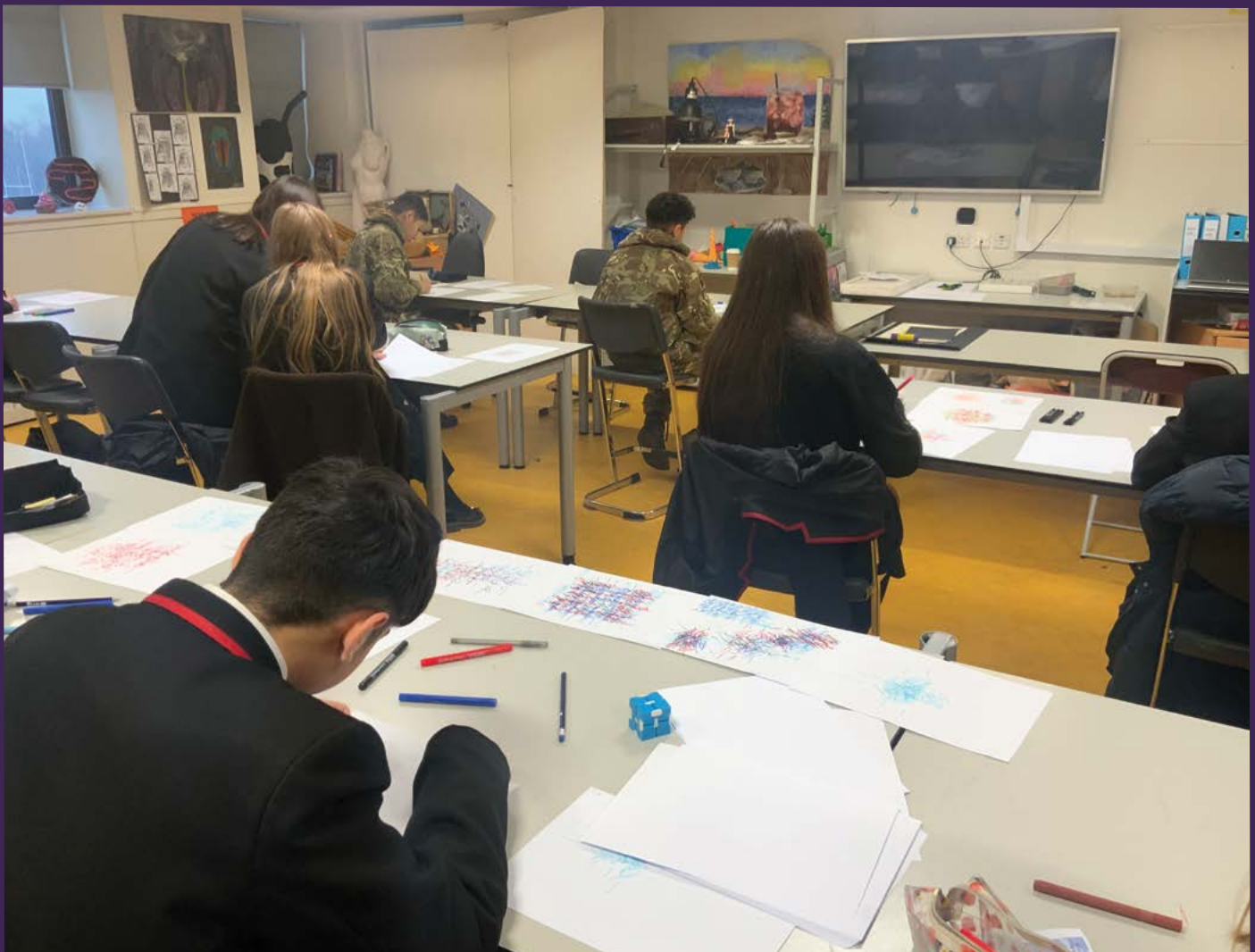
# YEAR 11 'PREPARATION FOR EXAMS'

Year 11 students have been undertaking a huge amount of work to support their preparation for success this summer; classroom teaching has seen a big shift towards 'deliberate practice' with students working hard on understanding exam technique and having lots of opportunities to practice this. Outside of the classroom, our homework culture has grown significantly and students have amassed nearly 3000 hours of Seneca usage already this academic year.

Parents and carers are playing a key role, and our Parent and Carer forum was extremely complimentary about all of the support available

for Year 11s: February half-term and Easter holiday sessions, over 20 different Exam Masterclasses at lunchtimes and after-school each week along with targeted interventions with tutoring and PET-XI. All students have also worked with Elevate to support their understanding of revision techniques.

Improved academic outcomes is the mainstay of social justice; our students, strategically supported by their teaching staff who are working collaboratively with common practices across the school, are working harder to achieve better exam results to support their next steps.





# MOCK INTERVIEWS

Year 10 and Year 12 students at Gospel Oak School are gaining valuable experience as they take part in mock interviews designed to prepare them for future careers, apprenticeships, college and university applications. These sessions, led by industry professionals and experienced educators, provide a realistic insight into the interview process, helping students develop confidence and essential communication skills.

Throughout the experience, students are learning how to present themselves professionally. From maintaining eye contact and speaking clearly to answering challenging questions with confidence, they are developing the skills needed to make a strong first impression. For many, this

is their first taste of a formal interview, giving them the opportunity to understand employer expectations and refine their approach.

Teachers and careers advisers stress the importance of making these interviews as authentic as possible. Interviewers are asking relevant questions, providing constructive feedback and guiding students on how to improve.

As students complete their mock interviews, they are gaining more than just interview practice. They are building key life skills - confidence, professionalism, and effective communication - that will benefit them in whatever path they choose to follow.



# THE NEST

Gospel Oak School is delighted to announce the opening of its state-of-the-art facility, The NEST, designed to provide targeted support for students with Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. The NEST aims to transform the educational experience for students who have faced challenges with attendance and engagement, ensuring they achieve excellent outcomes in their GCSEs.

The NEST (Nurture, Encourage, Support, Teach) represents a significant investment in the future of our students, combining a welcoming and inclusive environment with specialist teaching and pastoral care. It is a purpose-built space where students can access individualised support, tailored to meet both their academic and emotional needs.

Key Features of The NEST include specialist staff, therapeutic spaces, small group learning and a focus on well-being, mental health and academic progress.

Louise Mooney, SEND lead practitioner at Gospel Oak, has been instrumental in the success of the NEST. "We are so proud of what our students have achieved so far in the NEST. Students are already attending a variety of lessons in the main building again. This is due to the culture of belonging, working closely with parents and having such high expectations of students."

The launch of The NEST is a proud moment for Gospel Oak School, demonstrating our ongoing commitment to inclusion, excellence, and opportunity for all.

# MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AIDERS

We are incredibly proud of the invaluable role that our trained Mental Health First Aiders play in supporting the diverse needs and experiences of our students. These dedicated individuals have undergone comprehensive external training to equip them with the essential skills to support students through a wide range of mental health challenges.

Their expertise allows them to provide immediate assistance, guidance, and a compassionate ear, ensuring that every student feels heard, supported, and understood.

Our Mental Health First Aiders work closely with our Mental Health Leader to coordinate campaigns and fundraisers aimed at breaking the stigma surrounding mental health and promoting healthy, positive ways of living. Their commitment to fostering a safe and inclusive environment for all students is a testament to the school's dedication to the well-being of every individual within our community.

Through their efforts, we continue to create an atmosphere where mental health is prioritised, and students are empowered to seek help and support when needed.



## SHAPING A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR TIPTON

Gospel Oak School is excited to be working on a community action project, collaborating with local businesses and in partnership with Intensive Engagement. On 14th February 2025 we held a launch event for our community action project, Shaping a Brighter Future for Tipton, at the Black Country Museum. We invited over 40 local business leaders and the Mayor of Sandwell to attend.

The purpose of the project has social justice at its heart, investing in the community that our young people live in, raising their aspirations and the opportunities available to them. The launch event was a 'call to action' to get the community leaders and businesses to work together and share ideas that will have a positive change for our young people. We are really proud of six Year 12 students who not only accompanied us to the launch event, engaging

with the business leads, but also wrote the powerful message that accompanied a launch event video of why this project is very much needed for Tipton. Over the next year and beyond, we will be working alongside Intensive Engagement, engaging these community leaders, students and parents in fostering a thriving and resilient community where everyone feels empowered to contribute.

In the words of the students; it is time to challenge the outdated narratives, to highlight the strength of our town, and to take steps towards a future where Tipton is known not for its struggles, but for its spirit. We cannot rely on others to change the perception of Tipton for us. We must do it ourselves. Through small acts of community engagement, through celebrating our successes, through taking pride in our town and refusing to let outdated stigmas define us.

Tipton is not just a town. It is a home. It is a history. It is a future. And together, we will shape it into a place that people are proud to call their own.



## READING

At Gospel Oak School, raising students' reading ages is not just an academic goal – it is a commitment to social justice. As part of the CRST mission, ensuring that every student, regardless of background, can access, understand, and engage with the curriculum is a crucial step in closing the attainment gap. By implementing targeted literacy interventions and structured reading time, the school is equipping students with the fundamental skills needed for success in education and beyond.

By improving reading proficiency, we are breaking down barriers to opportunity, ensuring that all students have the same access to knowledge and success. A strong reading foundation enhances students' chances of achieving high academic outcomes, pursuing further education, and securing meaningful careers. This directly aligns with CRST's mission of social justice – creating a fairer society where every child, regardless of their starting point, has the tools to thrive. Through a dedicated approach to raising literacy levels, the school is not only improving academic performance but also fostering greater equity and social mobility.





**Holyhead**

Teach What Matters

# SUPPORTING SOCIAL JUSTICE AT HOLYHEAD SCHOOL

**Social justice = Creating a fair and equitable society where everyone has equal rights, opportunities, and access to resources, regardless of their background, identity, or circumstances.**

CRST's mission to promote social justice matters hugely at Holyhead. We are privileged to work in a diverse and vibrant community where we celebrate and learn from the many cultures our students come from. Whilst we are culturally rich in our diversity, Holyhead is one of the most deprived wards within Birmingham. This presents us with challenges and opportunities, namely with children who need care and role models to help shape their future, lift aspirations and keep them safe.

At Holyhead, we passionately believe in our ability to influence the lives of our young people and the wider community, so we focus on what we can control. Our mission is shared by all that work at Holyhead, and we take it as a responsibility to help promote social justice in reality. We strive to "Open doors and inspire futures in the heart of Handsworth".

**Author's Name**  
Job Title

## SO WHAT DOES SOCIAL JUSTICE LOOK LIKE?

At Holyhead School, social justice isn't just a concept, it's a way of life. The school actively works to ensure that all students, regardless of their background, have access to the same opportunities. This includes providing enriching experiences like trips to sporting events, theatre productions, and even a ski trip to the Dolomites! They also make sure students have the tools they need to succeed, with programs like the University of Birmingham Pathways and the Social Mobility Foundation helping students reach top universities and pursue successful careers.

Holyhead's commitment to inclusivity is evident in their diverse curriculum, which celebrates student backgrounds and encourages them to learn from each other. They also actively engage with the Handsworth community, providing essential

services like a free Breakfast Club, food drives, and a Christmas meal for the homeless.

The school prioritizes equitable access to resources, providing Chromebooks to students without home access and eliminating the need for students to bring ingredients to food lessons. They also prioritize mental health support, providing emotional and psychological support to students and families.

Holyhead is proud to be part of CRST, a Trust that shares their commitment to promoting social justice and creating a more equitable world. They empower students to advocate for themselves and others, fostering a strong sense of community and ensuring that every student has the chance to reach their full potential.

# HOW OUR SCHOOLS

## EXEMPLIFY 'SOCIAL JUSTICE'

### SUPPORTING SOCIAL JUSTICE AT ABBEYWOOD FIRST SCHOOL

Abbeywood's new state-of-the-art outdoor Early Years environment is a significant investment reflecting a commitment to social justice and equal opportunities for all children. Designed for year-round use with all-weather surfaces, it offers a stimulating and inclusive learning space.

The environment is carefully structured to promote holistic development. Specifically, it enhances physical development through dedicated areas for climbing, running, and balancing activities, thereby improving children's coordination, motor skills, and overall confidence.

Simultaneously, it fosters strong communication and language skills. Interactive play spaces and a dedicated stage area encourage meaningful dialogue, storytelling, and collaborative play, building vocabulary, listening skills, and positive peer relationships within a rich language-filled environment.

The design ensures that every child has consistent access to high-quality resources, regardless of the weather, removing potential barriers to engagement and learning. This new space embodies the Central Region Schools Trust's core values, fostering a strong sense of belonging and ensuring that every child feels valued and empowered. It aligns perfectly with the Trust's mission to create exceptional schools that provide opportunities for all learners to thrive.





## SUPPORTING SOCIAL JUSTICE AT IPSLEY C of E SCHOOL

Social Justice at Ipsley is all about us being **AMBITIOUS, COURAGEOUS** and **KIND**, which is rooted in our Christian vision – we want our pupils, staff and community to flourish, feel loved and achieve anything they set their minds to!

We support our pupils in being ambitious by giving them diverse opportunities and ensuring our rich curriculum allows all pupils to aim high. Pupils are encouraged to develop resilience and wisdom, learning new skills and knowledge which they can use across all aspects of their life. A focus on oracy and ethics allows pupils to develop and articulate their ideas and values so they work and communicate well with others and are confident in sharing and questioning their opinions and beliefs while taking on board those of other people.

Pupils need to learn how to be courageous in both their learning and their relationships so that they can lead fulfilled lives. We offer pupils bespoke interventions around developing their self-esteem and confidence and our strong pastoral offer supports pupils in developing strategies to help them when life can be challenging – and to celebrate when life is good!

Most importantly, pupils are expected to be kind. Through our everyday interactions, from the moment they enter the school site to the end of the school day and beyond, pupils are expected to be respectful and show love to their community. Collective Worship offers pupils and staff the opportunity to learn about how we show love and kindness – this involves 'tough love'. Honesty and high expectations show us how we should behave towards ourselves and others. We support our community by working with charities and experienced partners to ensure all have access to the support they need.

All our pupils leave us knowing how they can make a difference in their community and beyond – they are ambitious to do this, courageous in the pursuit of their goals and make the world a better place through their kindness.





## SUPPORTING SOCIAL JUSTICE AT OAK HILL FIRST SCHOOL

At Oak Hill social justice is about ensuring fairness, inclusion, and equal opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their background. As a first school, we believe that we play a crucial role in fostering these values from a young age, to shape the attitudes and behaviours of future generations, and extracurricular activities provide an effective way to instil principles of equity, respect, and compassion in our children.

By participating in clubs, sports, the arts, and community service, our pupils have the opportunity to develop empathy, leadership skills, and an awareness of social issues. These activities create a foundation for our young learners to become responsible and inclusive members of society.

Art, music, and drama are powerful ways for our pupils to express their emotions and share their experiences. Creative extracurricular activities provide an outlet for pupils to explore important social themes, such as diversity, kindness, and justice. Our performing arts club have recently explored the issues around inclusion and tolerance through the theme of *The Jungle Book* before performing songs to our school community.

Sports clubs in our school teach much more than physical skills – they promote teamwork, respect, and fairness. Our clubs improve cognitive skills encourage decision making, strategic thinking and problem solving. We ensure that all children,

regardless of gender, ability, or background, have the opportunity to participate.

We are developing opportunities for our pupils to make a difference in their communities and are focussing on learning empathy through action. They have engaged in activities that help them develop understanding of our local community and a sense of responsibility by taking action to support fairness and equality in our community. Currently, children are working on a project to design and make care packs to support patients at our local Alexandra Hospital.

These types of activities provide an additional opportunity for our pupils to experience and understand social justice through creativity, making complex concepts more accessible and engaging.

By fostering these values early on, our school helps shape young minds into compassionate individuals who will grow up to create a more just and inclusive society.



# SUPPORTING SOCIAL JUSTICE AT LICKHILL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Lickhill Primary School is dedicated to ensuring equity for all students. They actively work to create a level playing field by:

## **Inclusive PE**

All PE lessons are adapted to meet diverse needs, and the school actively identifies students who may lack sports opportunities outside of school. They use a sports tracker to monitor participation and ensure everyone has the chance to participate.

## **Enrichment for All**

The school intentionally includes students who may not excel academically or have limited opportunities in singing events, theatre trips, and musical instrument programs (like FAME). Religious beliefs and other reasons for non-participation are considered, and alternative ways to participate are offered.

## **Supporting Families**

A "Help Yourself" area in the reception provides pre-loved uniforms, Tesco food surplus, and donated books. This resource is accessible to all parents, allowing them to donate items they no longer need and take what they require.

## **Fostering Pupil Agency**

The school proactively selects students from disadvantaged backgrounds to participate in various leadership roles, such as Pupil Leadership Teams, School Council, Eco committees, and subject-specific ambassador programs. This ensures that the voices of all students are heard and that they have a meaningful role in shaping their school experience.





### Monitoring Enrichment Activities

The school uses the Trust's Enrichment Tracker to monitor student participation in all clubs, trips, and sporting activities. This allows them to identify students who haven't engaged in enrichment opportunities and offer incentives, free access to after-school clubs (where funding allows), and opportunities to participate in festivals and other events.

### Encouraging Diversity Understanding

The school offers a range of trips beyond the curriculum to deepen students' understanding of the diverse world. These trips are carefully planned, and targeted phone calls are used to encourage parental engagement.

### Supporting Families' Learning

The school offers Family Thrive and adult/child learning sessions to support families with behavior and their own learning. They also provide books to families who have struggled with their own learning to support their adult education opportunities.

### Addressing Financial Barriers

Pupil Premium funding is carefully monitored to ensure fair use for all pupils, including supporting families with expenses like glasses, residential trips, and other curriculum outings.

### Providing Wrap-Around Care

While wrap-around care is not free, the school offers free Breakfast Club to vulnerable families to encourage attendance and punctuality. They also provide free breakfast to children who arrive at school stressed and haven't eaten.



**SUPPORTING SOCIAL JUSTICE AT  
ST STEPHEN'S C of E FIRST SCHOOL**



# BREAKFAST CLUB

## LET'S START LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELD

At St Stephen's, we believe serving our community is a fundamental duty. This belief is embodied in our daily breakfast club, open to all children, parents, and staff. As a Trust school, we see breakfast club as a way of delivering our vision of social justice through exceptional schools. As a Church school, we see it as a way of truly delivering our vision that 'Every pupil is special in the eyes of God'. Breakfast club ensures that every child has a nutritious start to their day, providing them with the energy and focus they need to thrive in their learning.

The club is a social space, a gentle ease into the day, with our Mental Health Lead on hand for those who need emotional support. It's also a wonderful way to connect with our children, greeting them every morning with a warm smile and a piece of toast. The club is run by our SENDco and Deputy, Sarah Barrett, the Principal, Sarah Callanan, and our Mental Health Lead, Elaine Ralph. This team ensures that all children feel welcomed and supported from the very beginning of their day.

Our breakfast club is run on charitable donations and the generous time of our volunteers. Without their dedication, this valuable resource wouldn't be possible. We are regularly supported by staff, including Ann Mertens, Sarah Carter, Hailey Clark, and Sam

Shergold, as well as Year 4 pupils, Heidi Boniface and Aliza Mughal, who help clear plates and support younger pupils. John Wake, a Year 3 teacher, often plays the piano, adding to the calm atmosphere. Older pupils also independently take it upon themselves to read to younger pupils.

We are hoping to become an Early Adopter school for the DfE, which would allow us to offer a wider menu, including healthy choices of fruit and perhaps hot porridge. This would help us to continue to provide this valuable service to a larger number of students. We are currently providing breakfast for about a third of the school population, which is already a large breakfast club. To make it sustainable for all, it would need a proper paid staffing model and access to trade food providers. We believe that by working with the DfE, we can help them find solutions to ensure that all schools can offer this valuable addition to the school day.

We are lucky to have such a supportive staff and community to enable us to fund this much needed daily event, which really does make a difference.

It's just breakfast! No, it isn't. It's nurture, it's social time and social justice, it's genuine care and servitude in action. And we love it!



## SUPPORTING SOCIAL JUSTICE AT SUTTON PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

### Sutton Park Celebrates Women in Construction Week 2025: Empowering the Future

Every year, during the first full week of March, we celebrate Women in Construction Week; a time dedicated to recognising the incredible achievements of women within the construction industry. It's not just about honouring their contributions, but also about shining a light on the many opportunities available for women in this field. The week traces the inspiring journey of women in construction, highlighting the challenges they've faced and the remarkable ways they've overcome them.

**I LEARNT THAT EITHER GENDER CAN DO ANY JOB, AND EVERYONE IS CAPABLE OF WORKING IN CONSTRUCTION**  
Summer B



**I LEARNT THAT IN ANY JOB, EVEN CONSTRUCTION OR MANUAL WORK, WOMEN ARE JUST AS EQUAL AS MEN**

Amelia H



### Why Women in Construction Week Matters

## CELEBRATING CONFIDENCE AND HARD WORK

Women in construction are trailblazers, known for their confidence and dedication. From designing iconic structures to leading groundbreaking projects, they prove every day that hard work knows no gender. This week, we appreciate and celebrate their strength and resilience.

### Opening Doors for More Women

Women in Construction Week inspires women of all ages to explore careers in construction. Seeing women share their success stories encourages others to follow suit, showing them that no dream is too big to pursue.

### Promoting Social Justice through Gender Balance

For years, there has been a misconception that construction is a “man’s job”. Thanks to initiatives like Women in Construction Week, that outdated view is being replaced with a recognition that women are more than capable in this dynamic industry.

As part of the Women in Construction initiative, Year 6 pupils from Sutton Park were invited to Kidderminster College’s Green Technology Centre. They participated in a series of hands-on workshops that let them explore different areas of construction, including vehicle spray painting, brickwork, and carpentry. The girls put their skills to the test with fun challenges. They used car paint sprayers to paint a wall, seeing who had the steadiest hand! They also became carpenters and took on the opportunity to build their own timber roof!

Pupils also had the chance to talk with the tutors about future career opportunities in construction, gaining valuable insights into the wide range of possibilities in the field. It was an afternoon filled with learning, creativity, and inspiration!



**CONSTRUCTION  
JOBS AREN'T JUST  
FOR BOYS!**  
Gracie W

## SUPPORTING SOCIAL JUSTICE AT WASELEY HILLS HIGH SCHOOL

### CULTIVATING CREATIVITY IN CERAMICS

Waseley's Year 7 and 8 DT students excelled in 3D Design this spring term, creating functional ceramic products. Year 7 students produced impressive, professional-looking cake slice money boxes using slab-building techniques and individual decorations. Year 8 students crafted nature-inspired tealight holders using pinch-pot methods, adding petal decorations and speckled glazes.

Both year groups enjoyed the creative process, transforming initial sketches into three-dimensional pieces. Their handcrafted creations are a testament to their skills and dedication.



### NURTURING THOUGHTS ON CAREER PATHS WITH FOOD PREPARATION

On February 25th and 26th, Year 10 Food Preparation students from Waseley School participated in a practical fish preparation workshop at Morrisons in Rubery. This valuable experience, arranged by Morrisons community champion Jane Williams, directly supported students' upcoming GCSE assessments. Working alongside experienced fishmonger Andy, students gained hands-on skills in preparing a variety of fish including monkfish, squid, mackerel, sea bass, and hake.

They also had the opportunity to sample unfamiliar fish products. The trip aligned with Waseley's commitment to social justice by integrating practical skills with theoretical knowledge of food provenance and safety, thus strengthening their understanding of the entire food chain.



## UNLEASHING THE POWER OF ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

Music to our ears.... We enjoy exciting and engaging music lessons in school and we want to spread this wider into our community. We like to look after our students before they even join us so on Thursday 27th February, Mrs Edwards arrived at one of our feeder schools with 30 Djembe drums and delivered a workshop to key stage one children celebrating culture and difference through the arts.

Performing Arts is central to the calm, inclusive culture at Waseley Hills High School. We are proud to promote and celebrate Dance, Drama and Music through curriculum time but also through the enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities we offer. We believe all students should experience the performing arts and we have a pledge to ensure this happens at school and in the community.



## LOOKING AFTER THE MOST VULNERABLE

Student Welfare Officers are the glue that keep us all together at Waseley. There isn't anything too big or too much trouble for the team to ensure the students at Waseley get the best deal every day. Whatever things look like at home for individuals when we walk through the doors at school, we all have a place in the Waseley family and the SWO's embody that sense of belonging. They really are the champions for the students!



## BLOOD BROTHERS

In January, we took 50 students ranging from Years 9-11 to watch Blood Brothers at the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre. This is a text we study for GCSE so excellent revision for our GCSE cohorts but also open to those interested in theatre or those showing aptitude in drama in Year 9. Some of these students have never been to the theatre before so this was a first for some and lots said how much they loved it and can't wait to go to the theatre again! Students were congratulated on being the best behaved school by the theatre and the show was loved by all, with a few jumps and screams during the ending! A fantastic evening.

# WASELEY HILLS

In March, our annual musical Matilda Jr took place. This is only the second time Waseley have put on a musical so we knew we had to do it justice! We have been rehearsing Matilda since October with rehearsals three times a week where students blocked scenes, practiced songs or dances. Students worked very hard on this production to rave reviews, with some people coming twice! We also performed to primary schools who had a wonderful time. We are very proud of the children for their hard work and dedication and look forward to the next show!

Waseley Hills believe that everyone should have access to live music and enjoy the experience of a 'gig' during their teen years and so we had the privilege of inviting The Entitled Sons in to perform for us. Four of the band members have dyslexia and were able to talk about how they overcome barriers to achieve their dreams and how they see music as a way to help their mental health. Students were encouraged to ask questions, some were lucky enough to be invited up to perform with the band and be part of the special day!

Student voice at Waseley Hills is really important in order to meet the needs of the pupils. Following a unit in the PSHE curriculum Y10 and 11 in particular were keen to look further into the world of finance and so we invited HSBC in to lead an interactive workshop about banking, saving and talking all things money. Some great take aways from the sessions for pupils and some staff too!

Longbridge is lovely but Stratford opens up a whole new experience as some of our students have never been there. People need to see and experience where Shakespeare was born and lived and just on our door step it is something we at Waseley feel strongly about. In the week leading up to the 28th of February everything seemed to be going well weather-wise: high pressure, meaning clear skies and some crisp winter sunshine. The umbrellas would not be required! So the Waseley Hills Geography Department was satisfied that the gamble of taking 60 Year 11s for their human fieldwork to Stratford-upon-Avon had paid off. And paid off it was, as the students performed admirably in collecting their data to answer the question "Has the regeneration of Bell Court been successful?". They left no pedestrian uncounted, no piece of land-use uncategorised, and no environment un-surveyed. Behaviour was impeccable, and the morning group even had the experience of meeting a knight. The fact that Stratford seemed to be the only place in the country experiencing persistent fog couldn't dampen the spirits.









# EMPOWERING

## Empowering Students to Reach New Heights

On Friday 14th March staff from Aimhigher West Midlands came into school to deliver an aspiration and attainment-focused workshop for our Year 7 and 9 high prior attaining pupils. The 50-minute session focused on the importance of 'Aiming Higher' and exploring future pathways to success. Students charted their journey from KS3 to GCSE, A-Level and beyond to explore how university degrees can be pivotal in successfully achieving their goals.

Going to University should be a choice for all and Waseley believes in offering students the opportunity to aim high and see what is out there. The Higher Prior Attainment programme ensures that this dream is a reality for some of our students. The Year 8 pupils were taken to Oxford University where they got to participate in an Oxplore workshop, see the facilities and obtain advice on how to take part in super-curricular opportunities to boost their personal statements for the time when they need to apply. The group tasks set were challenging students to think creatively and start the process of building themselves as well-rounded individuals to hopefully give them the chance to study at one of the world's best universities. Year 7 and Year 9 have also got big plans afoot in an HPA workshop with Aston University to raise aspirations and start the process of building career goals.

Waseley Hill's Year 8s all got to experience an AI, interactive event looking at how it can help but also how it may threaten or challenge us as humans. The star of the show was definitely the robodog but the students also enjoyed creating their own song using just a few words and the help of the AI programme.

### Fuelling an Obsession with Written Words

The Year 10 Boys Literacy Focus Group has produced a phenomenal amount of effort in such a short amount of time. This small intervention group will benefit learning in lessons and establish a foundation of knowledge for the upcoming mocks. All members of the group should be commended for their hard work and dedication. Removing barriers for learning and better life chances for all!

# SUPPORTING SOCIAL JUSTICE AT OLDBURY PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL



**Oldbury Park**  
Primary School

In the spring term of 2024 Oldbury Park Primary School made the decision to introduce Talking Pegs as part of our pastoral offer. Talking Pegs are a powerful and effective tool that offer every pupil in our school the opportunity to access timely and discrete support from their teacher (or another of their trusted adults). Our Talking Pegs support our commitment to promoting social justice by adding another dimension to our work on teaching and encouraging our children to have, and use, their voice to access help and support.



The method behind our Talking Pegs is quite simple, by design. On joining our school community, no matter when this happens, every pupil is given their own wooden clothes peg with their name on it. Our pegs are kept in a known location in the classroom, and should any child want to speak to their teacher (or another of their trusted adults) then they simply move their peg to another agreed place to indicate that they would like the opportunity to talk. Most pegs are arranged around the rim of a pot and placed into that pot if a child wants help (as pictured). On seeing that a peg has moved, our staff acknowledge this with the child and then find an opportunity to hear their concerns – applying all the principles that come with listening to pupils attentively. Given that our Talking Pegs are a tool, our staff are required to actively teach the children how best to use them effectively.

Perhaps the most powerful attribute of Talking Pegs is that they are a non-verbal tool. At Oldbury Park we are attentive to our school demographic and, as such, we wanted to ensure all children had an inclusive and simple method for getting help. Our Talking Pegs are for everyone to use, but they are also particularly powerful for children who have additional or complex needs, for children for whom English is an additional language and for children who may not yet have acquired the language skills or emotional confidence to get help in a conventional 'asking for help' way. In addition, even the most confident and eloquent pupils may find it hard to get help when they are upset, in crisis or feeling uncertain about something they are experiencing.



We do not have a defined use for our Talking Pegs, that is to say that our children can use them to initiate conversations (and ultimately support) in relation to any aspect of their lives. Talking Pegs have enabled our children to express their concerns about such diverse topics as: learning, friendships, moving house, worries about their families and bereavement, to give just a few examples. Further to this, our Talking Pegs have given pupils the confidence to start conversations which have then helped them to access support from our Thrive practitioners, Safeguarding Team or SENDCO.

As with any tool in school, the effectiveness of our Talking Pegs requires careful implementation and management by well-trained, skilled and attentive staff, which is why they are already (after less than a year) a valuable and effective part of the culture of Oldbury Park Primary School.



# MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKERS HIT THE MARK AT WASELEY

Waseley students don't just want to hear their own teachers and staff give them advice about life chances and ways to ensure they get the best out of their time at school, we believe that our pupils should have access to the experts that have lived and made real their dreams. So, on Thursday 27th February we welcomed Cameron Parker, an internationally recognised motivational speaker, to hold sessions with our Year 10, 11 and 13 cohorts. These assemblies in developing resilience for academic success always go down well with students and leave them motivated to make the best out of the opportunities offered to them.

Cameron's vision aligns with our Trusts, with social justice at the heart of what he shares with the young people he meets. He promotes having ambitious goals and putting the effort and work in to achieving them, as he puts it, we can't achieve 'Champion's League goals with Sunday League behaviours' – essentially aim high, but expect to work hard! He also mentored individuals and small groups to break down the

specific steps they need to take in order to achieve their specific ambitions and goals.

Students said that 'Cameron was really inspiring' and 'it's given me a push to start doing more revision towards my GCSEs'.

RSA8 2025 sprang into action as Waseley Hills hosted all the Y8 students from the Trust for the Launch event on 5th March. The students had the opportunity to listen to the experience and journey of an active charity worker, Alexis Cowie, who has been pivotal to making a huge impact to the lives of young people in Mwali. They were then given the time to think about what their own school community was like and what they could do to make people's lives better. The students were keen to get into their social action projects and left the day feeling driven by "social action for change". Watch out for the sharing event and final pitch of the projects in the summer edition.



## ENERGISING STUDENTS WORKOUT JOURNEY

Waseley Hills Gym is open and the Girls Enrichment club have been enjoying creating and completing their personal exercise programmes every week. Jogging beach side using the scene view option on the treadmill is a real hit.

Our students and our community spoke out about having access to a local fitness suite and the authority responded and delivered! Not only can Waseley pupils access this provision through our curriculum but students that work hard and embody our values can exchange their positive ethic points for a session in the gym, synergising mental health, well-being and hard work all round! This is proving so successful there is a waiting list! Healthy mind, healthy body allows for better outcomes for all.

# AND FINALLY...

## EXTERNAL RECOGNITION GIVEN FOR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION IN THE NAME OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

Central Region Schools Trust CEO Guy Shears awarded honorary fellowship by University of Worcester.

Celebrations have been taking place at the Central Region Schools Trust following the conferral of an Honorary University Fellowship from the University of Worcester to the Trust's CEO, Guy Shears.



The Central Region Schools Trust is a family of 13 schools in the West Midlands, across Worcestershire, Staffordshire and Birmingham. Guy has led the Central Region Schools Trust for the past 13 years, since its original founding by the Royal Society of Arts.

He was given the honour in recognition of his outstanding contributions to education.

The accolade was presented to Guy during a ceremony at the historic Worcester Cathedral, where excerpts from the official citation were read by Professor Lisa Stansbie, the university's Pro Vice-Chancellor for Education, Culture and Society.

In her speech, Professor Stansbie highlighted Guy's unwavering commitment to transforming educational experiences for young people and his dedication to ensuring 'opportunities for all' within the Trust's schools.

"Guy's passion for making a difference to the school experience runs through everything the Trust does, and his drive to ensure 'opportunities for all' is reflected in the Trust's track record in improvement of educational outcomes," Professor Stansbie remarked. "In Worcestershire alone, Guy has led seven intervention projects, taking 'inadequate' and 'requiring improvement' schools to 'good' and 'outstanding' Ofsted judgements."

Commenting on the award, Guy Shears said:

**"I AM TRULY HONOURED TO RECEIVE THIS RECOGNITION FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF WORCESTER. THIS FELLOWSHIP IS A REFLECTION OF THE INCREDIBLE EFFORTS OF ALL THOSE WITHIN THE CENTRAL REGION SCHOOLS TRUST WHO SHARE THE SAME VISION AND COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING EDUCATION FOR ALL."**

Orla MacSherry, Chair of Trustees at the Central Region Schools Trust, added:

"Everyone at the Trust is very proud to see Guy receive this well-deserved recognition. His ability to navigate complex educational challenges with a collaborative and proactive approach has garnered the trust and confidence of pupils, staff and communities alike.

"We'd like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to him – this is a testament to his authentic leadership, commitment to social justice and passion for creating lasting positive change in the lives of young people. Guy's leadership has been pivotal to the Trust carrying out our mission of supporting social justice through exceptional schools."



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