

Issue 21 Summer 2025

DesignEd

A Central Region Schools Trust Publication



TABLE OF Contents

| | | | |
|--|--------|--|--------|
| A Note From Guy Shears | Pg. 4 | Personal Development Across CRST | Pg. 26 |
| Meet The Team | Pg. 6 | Charity Update | Pg. 34 |
| Sustainability of Our People Across CRST | Pg. 8 | Celebrating Collaboration Across the Trust | Pg. 36 |
| Sustainability in Our Places | Pg.10 | Articles by All Schools | Pg. 40 |
| Celebrating Creativity Across the Trust | Pg. 12 | Eat Them to Defeat Them | Pg. 56 |
| CRST Art Award | Pg. 16 | | |

A NOTE FROM Guy Shears

As we bring this academic year to a close and look forward to the well-deserved summer break, it is a pleasure to welcome you to the Summer 2025 edition of DesignEd. This edition celebrates a year filled with achievements, creativity, collaboration, and deep commitment to our shared mission: supporting social justice through exceptional schools.

Across our schools, colleagues have continued to embed Our Distinctive Culture, which centres on People, Places, and Processes. This framework guides everything we do – from the way we support and develop staff, to how we shape the learning environments our pupils experience, and the systems we build to ensure excellence and equity. It is through this shared culture that we create vibrant, inclusive, and high-performing schools where every young person can thrive.

Reflecting on the amazing activities highlighted in this DesignEd, it makes me feel very encouraged for the future of the young people that the Trust serves that the carefully selected activities align so closely with Our Distinctive Culture delivery strategy. I have been leading a DfE learning set for West Midlands CEO's of Multi-Academies Trusts on how to build a culture belonging and thriving across a group of schools. The group have identified the key provision, and priorities within the provision, to do this in a really intentional way – there are numerous examples of alignment to the findings of the group contained within this edition.

We identified the following as key:
The provision is in three significant areas:

- Irresistible curriculum
- Pastoral excellence
- Unstructured times

The priorities that, delivered through the above provision in a very deliberate, intentional way, create a sense of belonging, most especially for the disadvantaged and vulnerable are:

- Enrichment
- Attributes of character
- Oracy development
- Literacy development
- Careers/futures
- Deliberate friendship development
- Transition
- Social, emotional and academic inclusion for ALL
- Pupil leadership/service/agency

Our school leaders are focused on ensuring that the above are all as strong as they can be, of course deciding which priorities are to be focused on depending on context. The Trust enhancement of this work, through collaborative activities across our schools, supports all 13 schools we lead. For instance, the amazing CRST Athletics Games, of course, is a great enrichment activity; however, it was great to see how the event was able to enhance friendships, not only for the athletes with their own school colleagues, but also through the witnessing of cross-school friendships forming, which was tangible and can only further enhance the pupils' sense of belonging. This edition shines a spotlight on student agency and leadership, including updates on our charitable initiatives, enrichment activities such as an amazing art competition and subsequent virtual gallery, as well as the strength of our student voice across the Trust. The role our young people play in shaping their own education is fundamental to our culture, and something

we are proud to champion. As another example of establishing Our Distinctive Culture, with regards to excellence in pastoral provision, a particularly proud moment this term has been the launch of two transformative new facilities at Gospel Oak School, both funded by our Trust: the PARC (Pride, Aspiration and Respect Centre) and the NEST (Nurture, Encourage, Support and Teach). Opening officially on Wednesday 16th July, these purpose-built spaces provide tailored support for students with behavioural and SEMH needs, respectively. They represent a significant investment in pastoral care, inclusion, and academic achievement and they are already having a powerful impact on the students who access them daily.

As we go to press, we also await the GCSE and A-level outcomes in August. We know how much effort staff and students have put into preparing for these moments, and whatever the results bring, we remain deeply proud of the journey our pupils have taken and the support they've received along the way.

As we end the year, it is right to thank all of our people across the Central Region Schools Trust. The professionalism, creativity, and care that you all show continues to be transformative in shaping the future of the young people we serve. As you read through this edition, I hope you feel the same sense of pride that I do in what we continue to achieve together as a Trust.

Guy Shears
Executive Principal (CEO)

MEET THE TEAM

Trust Board

Orla MacSherry
Chair of Trustees

Eric Griffiths
Vice Chair of Trustees

Trustees

Gareth Bower
Nicholas Clifford
Claire Grainger
John Howard
Christopher Smith
Nasa Ahmed
Sam Harris
Richard Davies

Chairs of LAGBs

Sarah Perrett
Abbeywood First School and Church
Hill Middle School

Stephen Jackson
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

Sue Stokes
Oak Hill First School

Chris Passey
Waseley Hills

Executive Leadership Team

Guy Shears
Executive Principal (CEO)

Caroline Symonds
Chief Finance Officer (CFO)

Ian Mellor
Director of Education

Samantha McMonagle
Executive School Improvement Leader (DDoE)

Angela Crawley
Trust Primary Executive (DDoE)

Stephen Brownlow
Executive Principal

The Central Team

Guy Shears
Executive Principal (CEO)

Caroline Symonds
Chief Finance Officer (CFO)

Ian Mellor
Director of Education

Samantha McMonagle
Executive School Improvement Leader (DDoE)

Edward Cooper
Head of Operations (Interim)

Gerald O'Connor
CRST Operating Officer Consultant

Rita Patel
Head of Governance

Bryan Tait
Strategic Estates Lead

Matthew Purslow
Trust Lead for Staff Development (CPLR&D)

Chelsea Cafolla
EPA to the Executive Principal (CEO) & Office Manager

Joanne Clark
Central Office Administrator and Clerk

MEET THE TEAM

Principals

Sarah Callanan
Executive Principal of Arrow Valley First School

Stephen Brownlow
Executive Principal of Gospel Oak School

Sarah Callanan
Executive Principal of St Stephen's CE First School

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
Executive 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
Executive Principal of Sutton Park Primary School

Strategic Leads

Samantha McMonagle
Trust Lead for Secondary Co-Design, Disadvantaged and Vulnerable (including Pupil Premium), & Teaching and Learning

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

Angela Crawley
Trust Lead for Primary Co-Design

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 & Angela Crawley
Trust Leads for Reading

Scott Crane
Trust Lead for Safeguarding

Niall Brennan
Trust Lead for Digital Learning Network & Trust Attendance

Maryellen Homer & Francesca Stanley
Trust Leads for PSHE/RSE

Francesca Stanley & Daniel Wright
Trust Leads for Personal Development

Michelle Martin
Trust Lead for Creative Arts

Danielle Hale
Trust Lead for Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs)

Ellie Meredith
Trust Lead for Enrichment

Hayley Farnell
Trust School Improvement Lead (English)

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

Jenny Lewis & Hattie Hayhurst
Trust Leads for Science

Nick Whitehouse
Trust Lead for History

Hannah Weynberg
Trust Lead 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

Dawn Salter
Trust Lead for Food Technology

Michelle Martin
Trust Lead for Art

Chloe Burke
Trust Lead for Music

THINK PIECE

Sustainability of Our People Across CRST

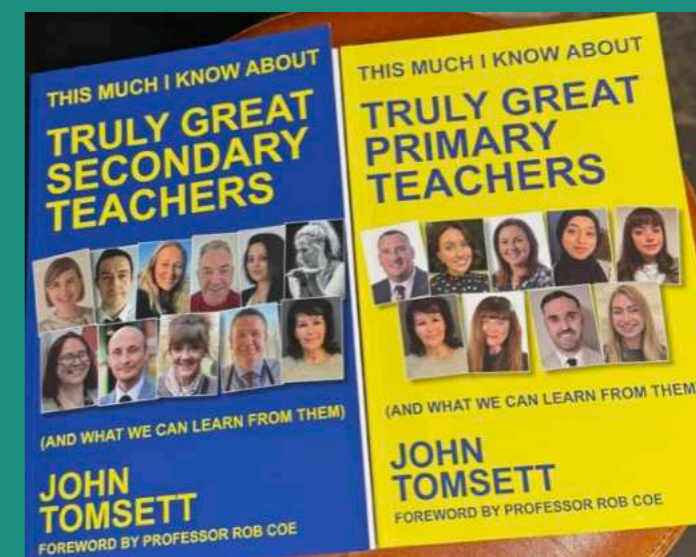
Our Continued Professional Development (CPLR&D) has been CRST's Continuing Professional Development provision for the last two years, and the title replaced what was formerly under the banner of Teaching Schools. From September 2025 the work will be rebadged under People Development Institute (thereby aligning with the focus on People from the 3Ps). Figures of retention of ECTs (early careers teachers) and numbers on programmes, accessing professional development are strong and will remain a key proxy for our work. We know that recruiting, developing and retaining strong teachers and AAs (Teaching/Achievement Assistants) is what makes the greatest difference to children and our core business of ensuring high quality education for all.

Working Collaboratively and Co-Design:

Working collaboratively through the vehicle of co-design is one of our key mechanisms at CRST to enable staff development. Subject groups meet 3 times a year twice online and once all day in development conferences. Primary year terms meet regularly and cross phase leaders such as with SEND, attendance and teaching and learning meet 3-6 times a year with conferences and work with external experts such as Marc Rowlands and John Tomsett.

This creates the mechanism for genuine collaboration and networking. CRST has invested in Trust leads for the following: CPLRD/Staff development (PDI) lead; ITT (Initial teacher training); SEND; Safeguarding; secondary English Lead; Primary SIL; EYFS lead; Primary Reading; PD; Enrichment; Creative Arts/Design; Central 6th and Attendance. Most are substantive within a school with a day/two a week to work across the Trust.

Strong partnerships is a key area we have worked to develop from 2022 to now. We are looking to extend our partnerships into



2025/26 working with Newman as well as Impact Ed to support work across other MATs as well as CRST on disadvantaged. We continue to work with BCU for lead partner (ex Schools Direct) teacher training, with a variety of providers for core training and for NPQs. This year we have successfully formed a partnership with Ogden Trust to support our science provision and CPD for staff as well as enhanced opportunities for children. Many of our primary schools work closely with Thrive and we have two Thrive ambassador lead schools (Sutton Park and Lickhill).

New Capabilities Programme:

Several of our Central Team Leads have taken part in the New Capabilities Programme, delivered in partnership with the University of Worcester. The programme is designed to strengthen leadership across the Trust by helping participants connect more deeply with CRST's mission, build confidence in their roles, and develop the collaborative skills needed for sustainable system leadership. We are running the programme again this year but with central hub leaders included also.

SUSTAINABILITY ACROSS THE TRUST

Towards a Greener Future: Embedding Sustainability in Our Places

By Bryan Tait, Lead Estates Manager

Sustainability is no longer a distant ideal – it's a daily responsibility. At Central Region Schools Trust, we are proud to be embedding sustainability at the heart of our operations, estate management and educational ethos. Our Trust-wide initiative brings together practical action with purposeful education, ensuring that we protect our environment while preparing our young people to be mindful citizens of the future.

A strong foundation: progress to date

The sustainability initiative began with a comprehensive audit across our schools, identifying areas that required immediate attention. This included evaluating the efficiency of lighting systems, insulation standards such as windows, and overall energy usage. Schools in greatest need were prioritised for urgent upgrades, creating the foundation for a greener and more efficient estate.

Building on this foundation, deep-dive energy audits were then conducted, shaping a robust three-year strategic plan. This long-term roadmap will guide improvements in infrastructure across CRST, identify opportunities for investment – providing a structure for continuous review and refinement.

Just as important as upgrading buildings is fostering understanding. Our students

have been actively engaged in the initiative, using a dedicated online learning platform to explore key topics like energy conservation, recycling, and responsible water use. Many schools have seen vibrant participation from eco councils, where pupils take genuine ownership of local sustainability efforts, modelling positive behaviours and championing new ideas.

Expanding our impact

Our sustainability journey is far from complete. The next phase of the initiative involves enhancing efficiency, reducing consumption, whilst also continuing to shift daily behaviours among both staff and students.

Smarter water use: We will closely monitor water usage through analysis of billing patterns, identifying peak usage times and potential areas of waste. Alongside technical reviews, we are encouraging behavioural changes such as not leaving taps running and promptly reporting faults. These simple actions, when adopted Trust-wide, can lead to significant reductions in consumption.

Energy efficiency: Controlling heating and lighting use is a key priority. By better regulating when systems are switched on and off, we can prevent energy being wasted when buildings are empty. Staff are being supported to adopt more efficient routines,

while sensor switches and automated timers are being explored for widespread installation.

Lettings and external use: Our responsibility extends beyond the school day. We are working closely with external lettings users to reduce unnecessary energy and material waste during out-of-hours building use, ensuring sustainability is a shared priority.

Investing in renewable energy and smart technologies: The Trust is planning increased investment in solar panels and LED lighting in key areas. Sensor-controlled lighting systems will reduce electricity waste, and awareness campaigns will continue to encourage everyone to turn off lights and devices when not in use.

Improving recycling infrastructure: We are increasing the number and visibility of recycling bins across all sites. By working closely with student councils, we are reinforcing the importance of correct bin use and aiming to reduce general waste across the board.

Sustainable procurement: Our procurement practices are being reviewed to ensure we partner with companies committed to reducing their carbon footprints. This includes everything from office supplies to uniforms, maintenance materials to classroom equipment.

We are also collaborating with our catering suppliers to ensure our menus meet nutritional standards while also reducing food waste.

Nature on our doorstep: Many schools across the Trust are exploring how to better use green spaces. From wildflower meadows that support biodiversity to growing trees and school vegetable gardens, our aim is to foster a deeper connection to nature and maximise the ecological value of our estates.

Culture change through education

The success of this initiative lies in culture change. By empowering students to think sustainably, we are nurturing environmentally conscious behaviours that will last a lifetime. Eco councils continue to be a driving force for student-led action, and we are committed to expanding their role and reach in the months ahead.

Sustainability has to be viewed as a continuous project, and not a one-time project or 'tick-box' exercise. Through collective effort and innovation, we are not only improving the efficiency of our buildings but also instilling a legacy of environmental stewardship across the Trust.

Let's continue to work hand in hand to build a greener, cleaner future for our communities and our planet.



CELEBRATING CREATIVITY ACROSS THE TRUST

An Explanation of the CRST Arts Award

This year, we've taken an exciting step forward in our commitment to the Arts with the launch of the very first CRST Arts Award; a Trust-wide creative competition designed to spotlight the extraordinary talents of our students and celebrate the value of artistic expression in all its forms.

Initially open to students in Key Stages 3, 4 and 5, the competition has provided a platform for young people across our middle and secondary settings to explore the theme "Our World, Our Future", a powerful and timely invitation to reflect, respond and reimagine. We're thrilled to share that next year, the award will also be open to primary pupils, giving even more learners the chance to share their creative voices.

Whether considering climate change, personal identity, future technologies or cultural heritage, students have embraced the opportunity to respond to this year's theme in ambitious and imaginative ways. The result has been a truly inspiring range of creative work that reflects both the diversity of our learners and the strength of artistic education across the Trust.

From detailed drawings and experimental mixed media to sculptures, photography and fashion concepts, the entries reveal not only impressive technical skill, but a depth of thought, emotion and curiosity. Some works are deeply personal, while others take on global issues, all showing a clear sense of ownership, purpose and student voice.

A Whole Trust Celebration

The enthusiasm across our schools has been remarkable. Teachers, tutors, subject leaders and senior staff have supported students throughout the creative process, encouraging them to think deeply, experiment boldly and share their ideas with pride.

Submissions have been promoted through assemblies, tutor time, newsletters and social media, with our Instagram account @CRSTArtsAward becoming a vibrant gallery of the imagination and skill we have across the Trust.

Over the past few weeks, we've been privileged to receive a huge variety of entries exploring the digital age, climate justice, and the future of our communities. Each entry contributes to a growing culture of creativity, collaboration and critical thinking.

Why This Matters

At a time when the Arts are under increasing national pressure, the CRST Arts Award is a clear and confident statement of our belief that creativity matters. The Arts are not just about making things – they're about making meaning. They help young people process the world around them, build empathy, develop resilience and grow in confidence.

The CRST Arts Award is about recognising and celebrating that process. Every student who has taken part will be acknowledged, and awards given recognising both individual excellence and collective engagement.

This is about more than one competition. It's about valuing the Arts as a vital part of education and embedding them into the life and culture of every school in the Trust.

SAVE OUR SEAS



Looking to the Future

The CRST Arts Award has been designed as the beginning of something lasting. We are committed to making it an annual celebration of creativity and student voice, and we're excited to expand the opportunity to our primary schools next year.

By embedding this award into our schools, we're building a stronger foundation for the Arts across the Trust; one that encourages curiosity, champions inclusion and celebrates every learner's unique perspective.

As we prepare to announce this year's winners, we want to extend our heartfelt thanks to the students, staff and families who have brought this idea to life. The standard of work has been outstanding.

Watch out for the next edition of Design Ed, where we'll be sharing photographs of the proud winners, highlights from across our schools and reflecting on the creative journeys our young artists have taken.

Michelle Martin
Trust Director of Art and Design



CRST Art Award

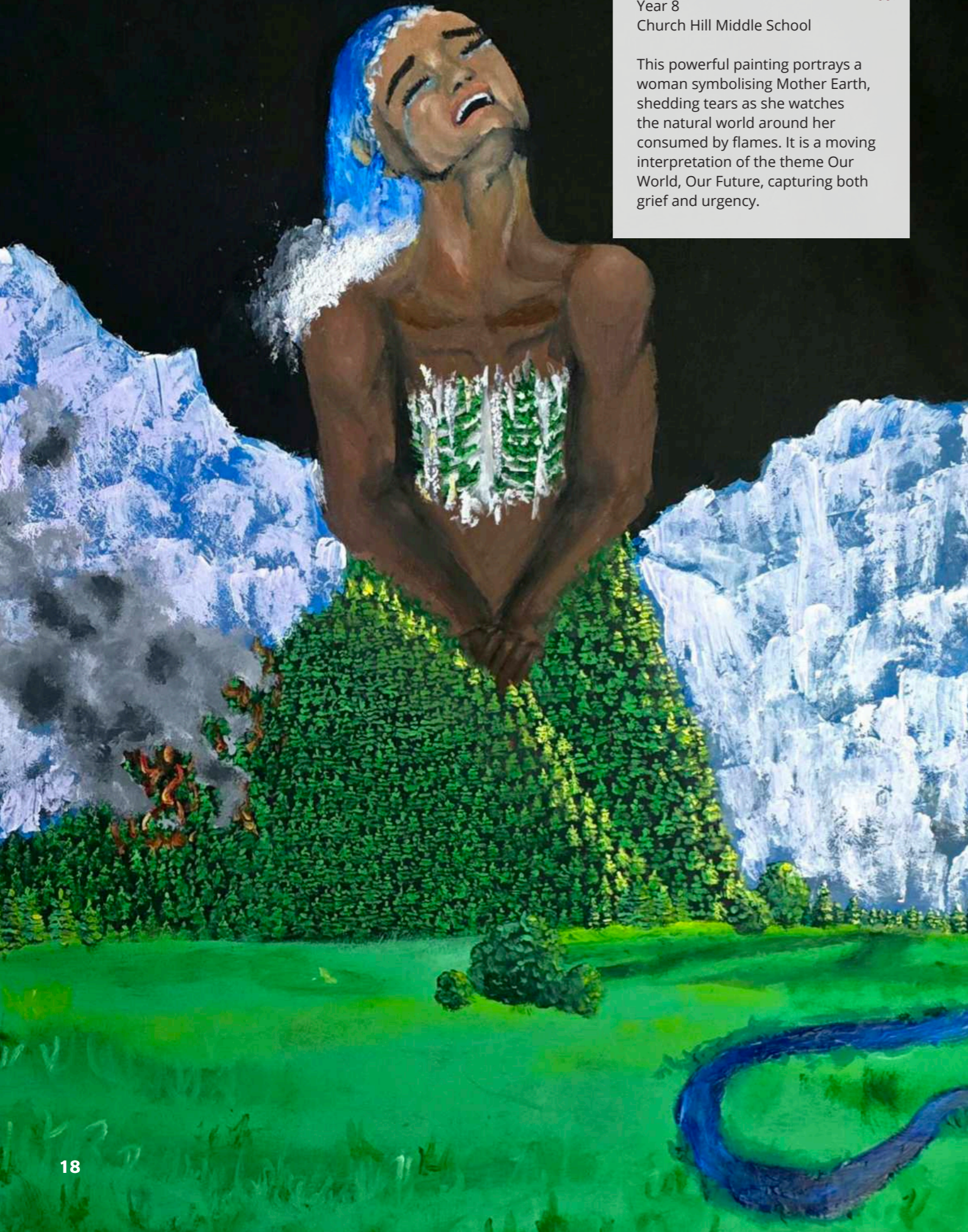
STUDENT THOUGHTS ON SUSTAINABILITY

The CRST Arts Award has been a new and exciting Trust-wide initiative, designed to celebrate creativity and provide a platform for students to showcase their artistic achievements beyond the classroom. This year's theme, 'Our World, Our Future,' invited students to reflect on the environment, sustainability, and the world around them through a range of creative disciplines including art, photography, design, and food art.

We were thrilled to receive over 150 entries from our middle and secondary schools, reflecting the imagination, commitment, and talent of our young people across

the Trust. The incredible range of work submitted demonstrates the importance of the Arts in developing our students' voices and their ability to engage with the world creatively.

We are excited to roll this award out to our other schools next year with a new theme, allowing even more students to take part. The CRST Arts Award is getting bigger and better each year, and we look forward to seeing this celebration of creativity continue to grow across our Trust.



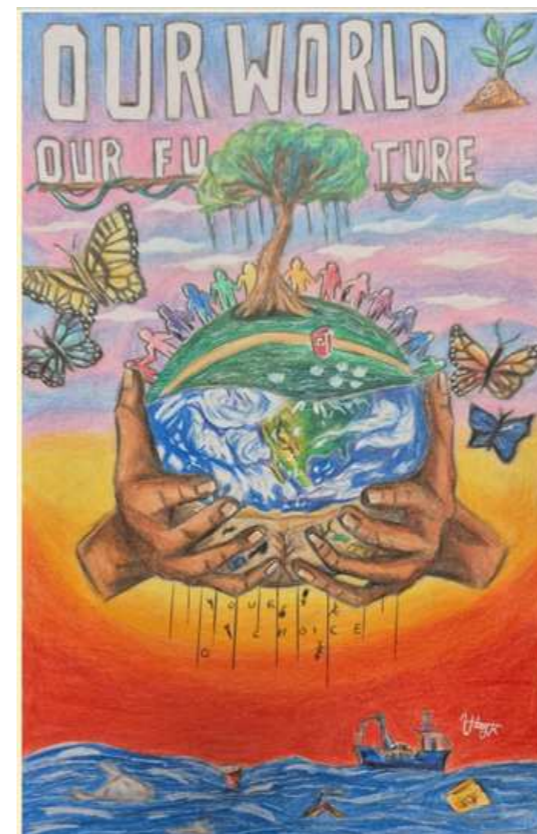
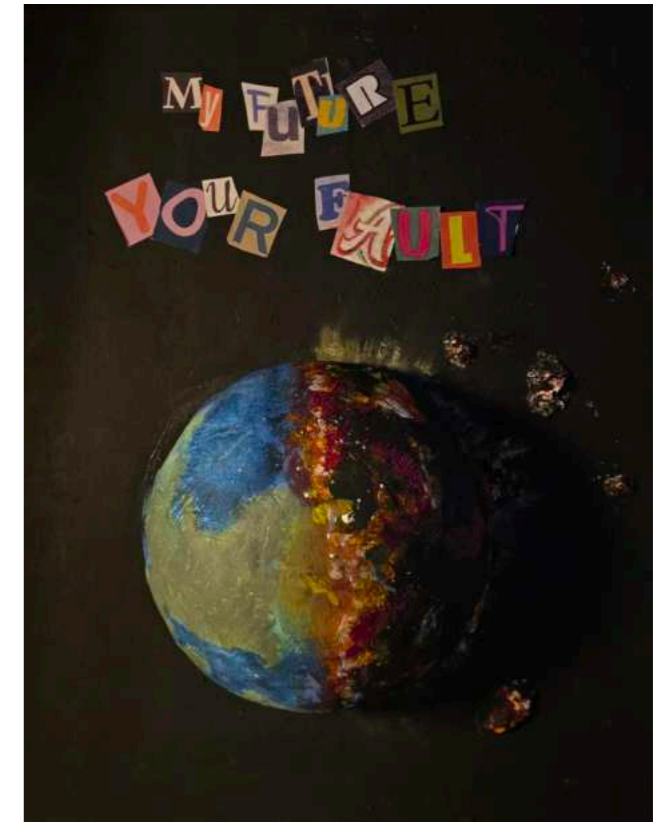
Vanessa Wloch
Year 8
Church Hill Middle School

This powerful painting portrays a woman symbolising Mother Earth, shedding tears as she watches the natural world around her consumed by flames. It is a moving interpretation of the theme Our World, Our Future, capturing both grief and urgency.

Amber McIntyre
Year 8
Church Hill Middle School



This striking painting depicts a world half engulfed in flames. Through bold contrast, it powerfully reflects the theme Our World, Our Future, highlighting the urgent threat of climate change and the fragile balance between destruction and the hope for a greener future.

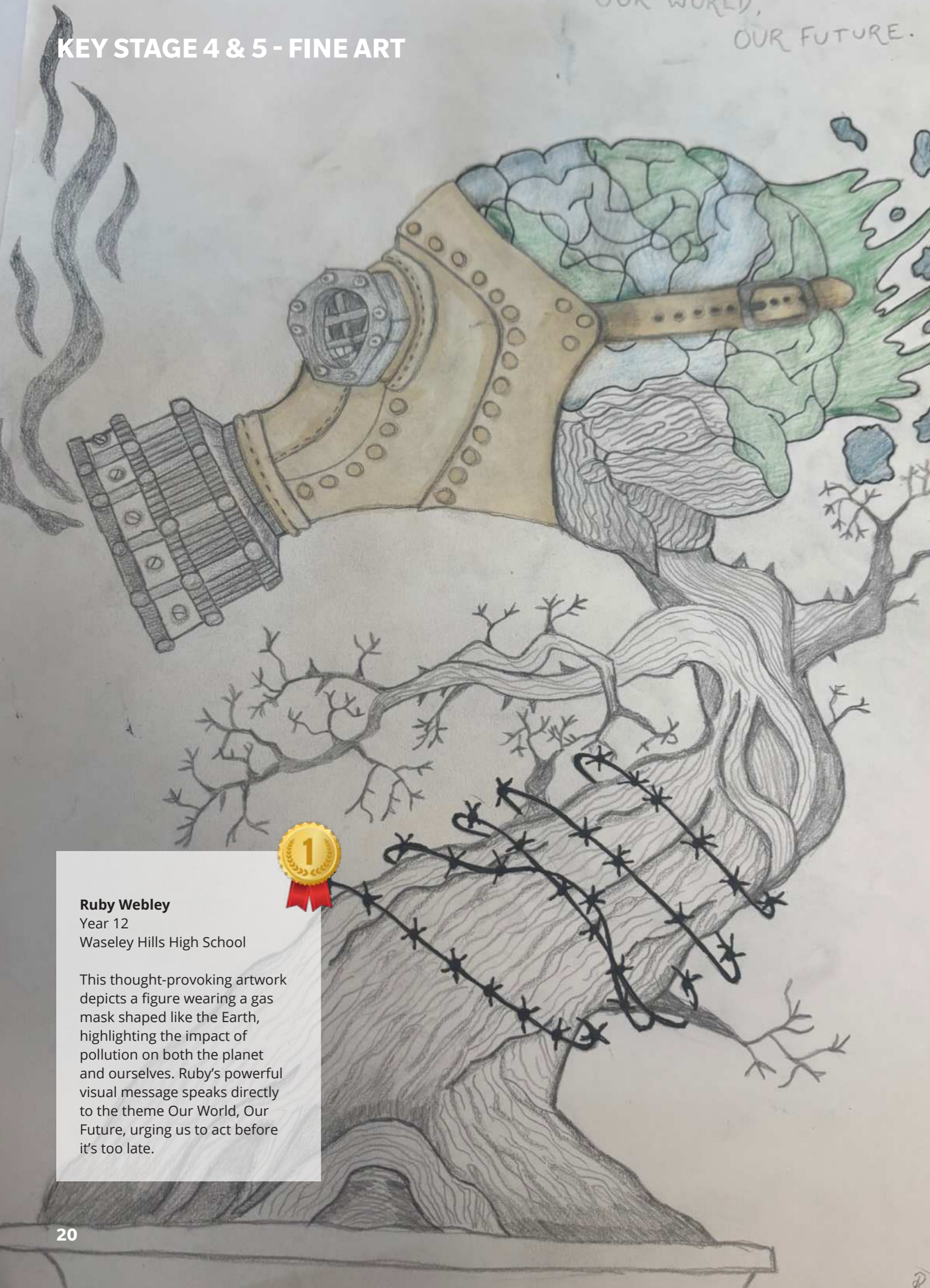


Udey Kumar
Year 9
Holyhead School



This vibrant and eye-catching poster features hands gently holding the Earth, delivering a powerful message about care, unity, and the importance of protecting our planet. It beautifully reflects the theme Our World, Our Future.

OUR WORLD,
OUR FUTURE.



Ruby Webley
Year 12
Waseley Hills High School

This thought-provoking artwork depicts a figure wearing a gas mask shaped like the Earth, highlighting the impact of pollution on both the planet and ourselves. Ruby's powerful visual message speaks directly to the theme Our World, Our Future, urging us to act before it's too late.



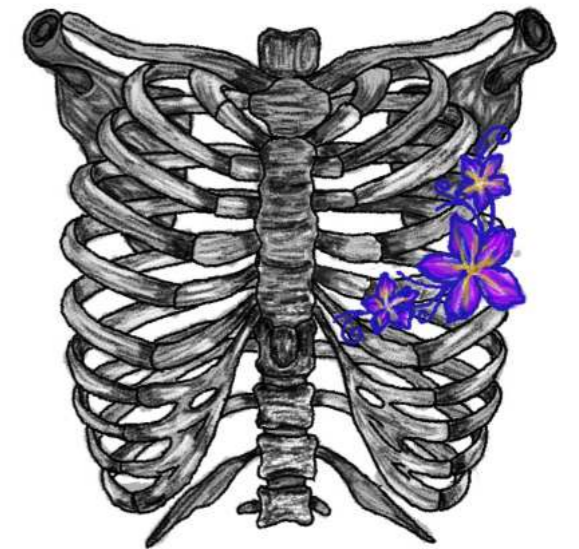
Maisie Gauntlett
Year 10
Waseley Hills High School

This expressive painting explores themes of self-image and identity. Through bold composition and personal symbolism, Maisie reflects on how we see ourselves and how identity shapes our place in the world, linking meaningfully to the theme Our World, Our Future.

Amelia Guest
Year 10
Arrowvale High School



This striking drawing features a detailed skeleton adorned with flowers. The contrast between life and death is thoughtfully explored, symbolising renewal, fragility, and the cycles of nature. It beautifully reflects the theme Our World, Our Future through a powerful meditation on growth and resilience.



3D ART & DESIGN



Sienna Phillips
Year 9
Holyhead School



This powerful 3D sculpture features expressive figures supporting a globe above them. The lower layer represents the struggles and challenges humanity faces without change, while the upper layer depicts a hopeful transition toward a brighter, more sustainable future. Sienna's piece connects deeply to the theme Our World, Our Future, highlighting both the weight of our current reality and the possibility of transformation.

FOOD ART



Ilyah
Year 9
Holyhead School



This beautifully crafted cake takes the form of a vibrant allotment. Through intricate detail and thoughtful design, it celebrates sustainability, growth, and our connection to nature - perfectly capturing the theme Our World, Our Future.



Ronan Wilkes
Year 8
Church Hill Middle School



This creative painted T-shirt explores upcycling and repurposing as a form of sustainable making. Through thoughtful design, Ronan powerfully expresses the theme Our World, Our Future, embracing both creativity and environmental consciousness.



Leighton Morris
Ipsley Middle School



This eye-catching 3D mixed media sculpture features wind turbines alongside a bold slogan about changing the climate. Leighton's piece creatively combines form and message, powerfully linking to the theme Our World, Our Future by promoting renewable energy and the urgent need for environmental action.



Maja Jezieiska
Year 8
Church Hill Middle School



This striking cake presents a powerful and original interpretation of the theme Our World, Our Future, drawing attention to key environmental issues such as deforestation, littering, and plastic pollution in our oceans.



Andrei Nitrean
Year 10
Gospel Oak School



This imaginative bread sculpture, shaped like a fish, highlights the issue of ocean pollution. By combining food art with environmental messaging, Andrei offers a creative response to the theme Our World, Our Future, drawing attention to the impact of human activity on marine life.



Jack Barnett
Year 11
Gospel Oak School



This imaginative edited photograph, inspired by the work of David Copithorne, explores the idea of alternative worlds and how they are perceived. Using digital layering and visual distortion, Jack challenges our view of reality, linking powerfully to the theme Our World, Our Future.



Noah Tomlinson
Year 7
Ipsley Middle School

This thoughtful photograph captures a quiet moment on a beach, with a lone figure in focus. Through careful composition and close-up detail, Noah explores themes of reflection, solitude, and our relationship with nature - beautifully linking to the theme Our World, Our Future.



Oliver Eliss
Year 7
Ipsley Middle School

This striking photograph captures fighter jets in motion, evoking themes of power, conflict, and protection. Oliver's image links to the theme Our World, Our Future by prompting reflection on peace, defence, and the role of technology in shaping our world.

PLEASE USE THIS LINK FOR A
COMPREHENSIVE TOUR THROUGH
THE VIRTUAL GALLERY.



SCAN ME





**PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT
ACROSS CRST**

Sports Day

The CRST Athletics Games were held at the Abbey Stadium in Redditch for the second time in its history. Over 250 Y7, Y8, Y9 and Y10 students from Arrow Vale, Church Hill, Gospel Oak, Holyhead, Ipsley and Waseley Hills took part in various track and field events.

A fantastic day was had by all and we saw multiple communities come together. From the first race to the last jump there was a healthy feeling of competitive spirit and excellence from all competitors looking to gain one of the coveted Gold, Silver or Bronze medals on offer.

During the day, each school proudly waved their flags and created to cheer on their teammates.

Once all the accumulated points that had been won during the day had been added up, the winners were as follows:

Y7 WINNERS
Waseley Hills

Y8 WINNERS
Ipsley

Y9 WINNERS
Holyhead School

Y10 WINNERS
Gospel Oak

These names will be etched into history on the shields and can be the face of the Trust for Athletics until next year.

The event hosted a return for our VIP Guest Dom Tripp (England Touch Rugby Captain), who gave an inspiring speech to all of the student athletes on perseverance, excellence and wanting to always be better. Also in attendance was Jess Duncton (U20 British record holder for 60m hurdles). Both Dom and Jess presented the medals and celebrated everyone's success during the day.

Thank you to everyone who took part, be that the Athletes, Staff or Sixth Form Students. All played an integral role during the day making it a fantastic event and one to remember and build up excitement for what next year could bring.

We would like to thank all staff and students who have been involved in the Inter-Trust competitions across the year.

OUR WINNERS WERE AS FOLLOWS:

Football

Girls
Church Hill Middle School
Boys
Arrow Vale High School

Handball

Girls
Holyhead Secondary School
Boys
Holyhead Secondary School

Rounders

Holyhead Secondary School







CHARITY UPDATE

Student Agency



We have raised over
£20,000
for BCH since 2024!

This year saw the development of our CRST Student Council, with schools introducing committees and teams to empower young people in making real change. Student council Lead Ambassadors have led half-termly meetings and spearheaded whole school events across the Trust.

Our Eco Committees focused on reducing energy consumption, introducing recycling systems and walk-to-school initiatives. Civic Committees supported local communities through community cafes, tea parties and Christmas dinners for elderly neighbours. Diversity Committees raised awareness on inclusivity through events celebrating Black History Month, Ramadan, Eid, Autism Awareness and PRIDE. Sport Committees planned sporting events and fixtures, demonstrating real leadership skills.

Our Charity Committees have continued in their work to raise money for Birmingham Children's Hospital, organising some incredible fundraising activities within their schools.

We have seen tuck shops, fun fairs, disco parties, raffles, staff car washes, bake sales, hot chocolate sales, face painting, dress up days and even covering their teachers in gunge! Together the charity committees from across our 13 schools have raised over £10,000 for the charity this year, meaning they have raised over £20,000 for Birmingham Children's Hospital in the last two years. This incredible achievement will have a huge impact on the lives of poorly children in our local area and their families and our Sixth Form Charity Leaders from Gospel Oak School will have the pleasure of presenting this year's cheque to the hospital later this year.

The leadership demonstrated by our CRST Student Council has been outstanding. We can't wait to welcome our newly appointed Lead Ambassadors to their inaugural Council Conference in the new year and see what they plan to achieve next!

CO-DESIGN

Celebrating Collaboration Across the Trust

This summer term has marked a period of exceptional growth and innovation across the Central Region Schools Trust, as we continue to embed our co-design model that unites primary and secondary colleagues in a shared mission of excellence. This collaborative approach to professional development has enabled educators across all phases to engage in meaningful dialogue, share best practice, and co-create strategies that are transforming teaching and learning across our schools.

Integral to this transformation are our strategic groups, which focus on key priorities including teaching and learning, safeguarding, SEND, and supporting children from disadvantaged backgrounds. These groups are not only shaping policy and practice but are also a powerful expression of our Trust-wide commitment to social justice. By working together across schools and phases, we are ensuring that every child, regardless of background, has access to exceptional education and the opportunity to thrive.

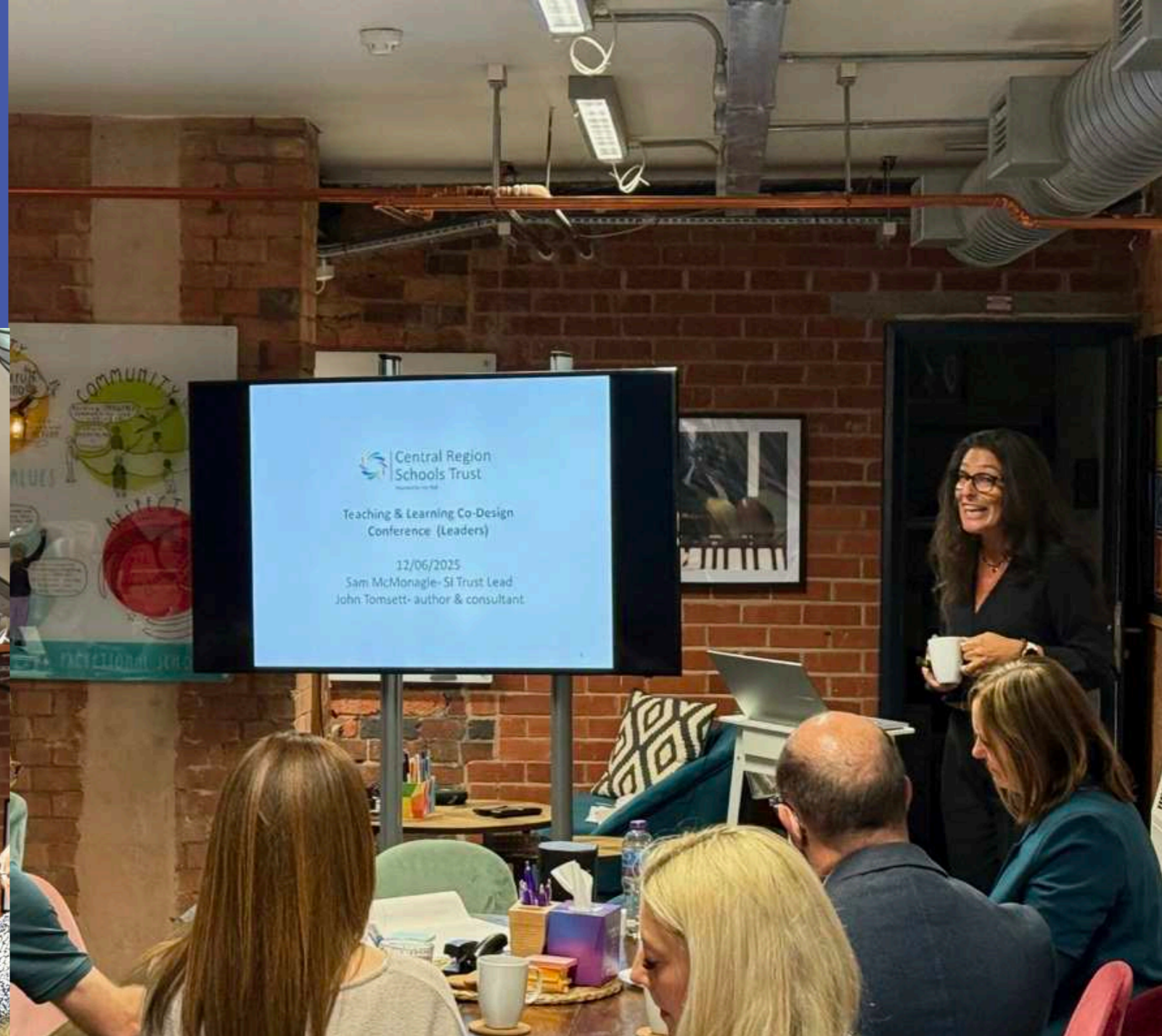
This term alone, we have hosted over 20 conferences and additionally, multiple leadership and teacher development events, each designed to inspire, challenge, and develop our staff. Across these activities, we have welcomed a range of nationally recognised keynote speakers and specialists, including Hannah Hall, John Tomsett, Marc Rowland, Charlotte Carter-Wall, and STEM experts. We've also benefited from the expertise of our own School Improvement Partners, Mark Rhatigan and Caroline Hoddinot, whose deep understanding of our context has been invaluable. Sharon Gray from Thrive delivered a powerful session on emotional wellbeing, reinforcing the importance of nurturing both staff and student mental health.

Our commitment to professional growth extends beyond events. We are proud to be actively engaged in the full suite of National Professional Qualifications (NPQs), which are having a measurable impact on both staff development and pupil outcomes. These qualifications are equipping our educators with the leadership skills needed to drive sustained improvement. Looking ahead, we are excited to be working in close partnership with Teaching School Hubs to deliver more NPQs, further developing our own leaders of teaching, and teacher development from within the Central Region Schools Trust.



In parallel, we have significantly expanded our professional development offer through the apprenticeship levy. Staff across all functions of the Trust now have access to Level 3–7 apprenticeship opportunities, supporting career progression in teaching, leadership, business operations, and beyond. This investment in people reflects our belief that empowered, well-supported staff are the foundation of exceptional schools.

Together, these initiatives are not isolated efforts - they are part of a coherent, strategic



approach to school improvement that places collaboration, equity, and excellence at its core. By fostering a culture of shared learning and mutual support, we are not just improving individual schools - we are building a legacy of outstanding, inclusive education across the Central Region Schools Trust.

As we look ahead to the next academic year, we do so with confidence, knowing that our collective efforts are making a real difference. Through collaboration, innovation, and a relentless focus on social justice, we are shaping a brighter future for every child in our care.

Articles by all schools

Celebrating the year in our schools



Arrow Valley First School

A Year of Celebration at Arrow Valley First School: Learning to Feel, Speak, and Succeed

- At Arrow Valley First School, 2024–25 has been a year of transformation - a year where children not only learned to read and write, but also to recognise, name, and regulate their emotions. Through the implementation of the Zones of Regulation, our pupils have developed the emotional toolkit to ensure that feelings don't become barriers to learning, but stepping stones to growth.
- One child, Jason, found himself in a very rough game of tag. Emotions were high, and frustration bubbled over. But instead of letting it take control, Jason paused and said, "I do get angry, but I take a breath. Sometimes that helps." His words reflect the heart of our approach - acknowledging emotions without letting them define our actions.
- This year, we saw the power of adapted provision. One determined pupil, returning to school after a challenging period, declared: "I will get angry, but I will not let it affect others." That kind of self-awareness and commitment to community is something we are incredibly proud of.
- Playtime became a powerful learning ground. When a group of children repeatedly played rough, one wise five-year-old said, "We just don't know what to do." That moment of honesty sparked a series of assemblies where children themselves shared games they knew and loved. These peer-led moments empowered pupils to take ownership of their play and introduced new, inclusive ways to have fun together.
- Our Talk Assemblies became a vital space for reflection and dialogue. Whether it was a disagreement in class or a lunchtime misunderstanding, we brought real incidents into a safe, structured space where children could explore different perspectives, debate respectfully, and learn from one another. These assemblies helped build empathy, communication skills, and a deeper sense of community.
- Football, a beloved but emotionally charged activity, brought its own lessons. Older pupils struggled with fairness and frustration. One memorable quote, "If you want to be a fan of football, you need to be a fan of bad referees... and Mrs Allen is the worst!", was met with laughter and learning. It became a springboard for conversations about resilience, perspective, and sportsmanship.
- Behind all of this is a dedicated team of staff who support play and emotional development every single day. Their presence outside, their patience, and their passion have created a culture where children feel safe to express themselves and supported to grow.
- This has been a year where our children have learned to say, "I'm in the red zone," and then choose a strategy to move forward. A year where emotional literacy became as valued as academic success. A year where we celebrated not just what our children achieved, but how they achieved it.
- At Arrow Valley First School, we are proud of every child who took a breath, used their words, and chose kindness. And we are proud of the team who made that possible.

Holyhead School

At Holyhead School, our mission to “Open doors and inspire futures in the heart of Handsworth” drives everything we do. This year has been marked by pride, progress, and a deep sense of community.

Ofsted and School Culture

While the outcome of our recent Ofsted inspection is pending, the process highlighted our strong culture - summed up by the word “family” being used repeatedly by the Inspection team. This reflects the supportive, inclusive environment we’ve built together.

Attendance and Inclusion

Holyhead’s attendance rates remain well above the national average, thanks to the dedication of our staff and Attendance Team. Our efforts ensure that students and families feel safe, supported, and valued, and the Fisher Family Trust awards and certificates achieved from both the Autumn and Spring terms provide the recognition for this.



Academic Excellence and Maths Innovation

The Maths Faculty has led the way with enrichment and academic initiatives:

- Participation in two 5-year pilot programmes to close the attainment gap through Axiom Maths Circles and the MEI’s Maths Progression Programme.
- Engagement in UKMT Maths Challenges at Junior, Intermediate and Senior levels with record-breaking results - our first Gold Awards!
- Upcoming collaborations with the Education Endowment Foundation and Sparx Maths.

Diversity and Community Engagement

Our “Teach What Matters” curriculum celebrates diversity through Heritage Days, interfaith events, and Pride Filmfest. The Black History Club and SEND Community Café foster inclusion and support.

Character and Careers

We build character through our 4 CORE values and initiatives like Talk the Talk and guaranteed 1-1 interviews, preparing students for life beyond school.

Community Support

Led by many staff including Miss Khatun, our outreach includes:

- Free Breakfast Club and food drives with Langar Aid and Trussell Trust.
- A Christmas meal for the homeless and a new partnership with Fareshare.
- Installation of an emergency bleed kit with the Daniel Baird Foundation.





Student Experience and Enrichment

We continue to close “experience gaps” through our Enrichment PLC. Highlights include:

- Trips to Birmingham Bears matches and a range of theatre productions.
- Our first-ever ski trip to Piancavallo in February, overcoming financial and logistical barriers.
- Student leadership opportunities and sustainability-themed events, including representation at the Blue Earth Summit and success in inter-school competitions like Envision and Micro-Tyco.

Ipsley CofE Middle School

This year at Ipsley has seen us have some amazing experiences inside and outside of school, push ourselves as learners in our lessons and have some incredible times working together to help others.

We have visited so many places: The Opal Coast in France, the Houses of Parliament, Pioneer Outdoor Education Centre, Chester, Habberley Trail, Dudley Zoo, St Peter's Church, the Gurdwara and Cadbury World to name just a few!

We have had visits from cute – and scary - wild animals, the Guide Dog Association, Maz Evans (author of 'Who Let the Gods Out!'), Morgan Stanley, Redditch Library and our local MP.



Our Winter and Summer Community Café events have brought our local community together and our school community has supported Birmingham Children's Hospital, Comic Relief and Children in Need by raising huge amounts of money for these amazing charities.

We have seen chicks hatch in front of our eyes, learned to play musical instruments and ride bikes, read amazing books, learned to make our own pasta, pizza and bread, held snakes and spiders and presented Collective Worship in front of hundreds of pupils.

Just a few of the things that have made this a brilliant year at Ipsley!

Oak Hill First School

Beyond the Bell: Celebrating the Success of After-School Clubs

As the final bell rings, many schools empty, leaving corridors quiet and playgrounds still. But at Oak Hill, the end of the academic day signals a different kind of energy. Classrooms and outdoor spaces transform into hubs of creativity, discovery, and laughter as after-school clubs spring to life - run primarily by our dedicated teaching staff who give their time, expertise, and good will to enrich the lives of our pupils.

These clubs are more than a way to fill the hours before parents collect the children; they are a testament to the commitment of teachers who believe in education beyond the curriculum. Whether it's the noise of wonderment in the animation club seeing what they have created, or the quiet focus of the art club as pupils explore marbling techniques, or the confident voices of the performing arts club polishing their latest Broadway number, each club offers opportunities that ignite passion and curiosity.

In the past two years, the number of clubs offered has risen from 28 to an impressive 48, and pupil places have grown from 550 to 804 - a reflection of the growing appetite for enrichment and the determination of staff to meet it. This expansion means more pupils than ever before are accessing opportunities to discover new interests, develop skills, and build friendships outside the classroom.

At the heart of this success is sustainability. Unlike short-term initiatives, our after-school clubs are now thriving because they are rooted in our school's culture of care. Teachers, Teaching Assistant, Admin and Estates staff volunteer their time, not because they are required to, but because they see the value in providing children with space to develop confidence, friendships, and skills that extend beyond academic performance.

The good will of staff has been instrumental. These clubs exist because staff see a need and step in to fill it, often using their personal interests to shape clubs that feel unique and engaging for pupils. A teacher's passion for craft becomes a crochet club, while an Attendance Officer's desire to spend quality time with our children, becomes a mindful colouring club encouraging children to be relaxed and carefree for a "chat and chill". The human connection, where staff share their enthusiasm and time, creates experiences that pupils carry with them, often citing their club memories as some of the most influential moments of their school years.



Parents have expressed how these clubs provide a safe, welcoming space for their children to discover who they are and what they love. For many, these clubs are where they find their voice, develop resilience, and feel truly seen within the school community.

As schools across the country look towards creating sustainable models of enrichment, our after-school clubs demonstrate what is possible when a community values the whole child. They remind us that education is not confined to lessons and academic outcomes but flourishes in spaces where children are encouraged to explore, create, and collaborate.

St Stephen's CofE First School

A Year of Wonder and Enrichment at St Stephen's CofE First School

At St Stephen's Church of England First School, 2025 has been a year to remember - brimming with learning, and powerful experiences that brought the curriculum to life. From forest trails to London landmarks, our children have explored, questioned, and grown through an inspiring blend of education and enrichment.



Learning Through Lived Experience

Our pupils haven't just learned from books - they've built memories through real-world adventures. Early Years children wandered through The Gruffalo Trail, letting imagination lead the way before snuggling up with a book to bring stories to life. Year 1 and 2 zoomed into winter wonder at the SnowDome, combining physical fun with seasonal science. And our Thrive children shared a magical encounter with alpacas and not forgetting our special Family Forest School organised by Mrs Cullen, our Forest School Lead.

Bringing Visitors and Voices into School Life

Throughout the year, we welcomed brilliant visitors who sparked curiosity and confidence in our children. Magic Russ wowed with his sense of fun and wonder. Kurly the Performance Poet inspired our Key Stage 2 pupils to write and perform powerful poetry - culminating in a moving joint performance at St Stephen's Church, alongside seven other Pyramid schools. It was a celebration of voice, identity and collaboration.



Fundraising Fun and Memorable Moments

Movie nights brought smiles and popcorn - and raised vital funds to support our trip programme, including an extraordinary journey to The Tower of London. There, children explored history through a dynamic workshop tied to their topic on The Great Fire of London, embedding knowledge through hands-on learning in one of the UK's most iconic settings.

A Trust That Champions Social Justice

As part of our commitment to excellence and equity, pupils joined Trust events that widened horizons. A visit to The Science Museum in London thrilled budding inventors and thinkers, while a day at Newman University gave pupils the platform to speak passionately about their charity work - including setting up a food bank to support our local community.



Fuel for Learning: Our Charity Breakfast Club

Each morning at St Stephen's starts with warmth, nourishment, and connection - thanks to our thriving Charity-Run Breakfast Club. Recently recognised as a DfE Early Adopter, and proudly the only school in Redditch to become one, the club now welcomes over 60 pupils regularly. It's a hub of energy and togetherness, offering not just breakfast, but a calm and welcoming space that sets the tone for a successful day of learning.

This remarkable success is made possible by the generosity and kindness of our community, and Trust whose support ensures that no child starts the day hungry or disconnected. It's yet another example of how, at St Stephen's, we come together to uplift every member of our school family.

Enrichment That Matters

At St Stephen's, enrichment isn't an add-on - it's integral to who we are. We go the extra mile to make these transformative moments possible, because we believe that every child deserves access to powerful, joyful experiences that help shape their learning and their lives. With the support of our school community and Trust, we continue to enrich lives and nurture changemakers - young people ready to flourish and make a difference.

Creative Celebrations and Community Concerts

Music and performance took centre stage this year. Our pupils proudly represented St Stephen's in the Trinity High School Summer Pyramid Concert, showcasing talent and teamwork. The festive season shone with our traditional St Stephen's Church Carol Service - an atmosphere full of candlelight, carols, and heartfelt readings. And who could forget the energy and excitement of Trust Fest '25 - a dazzling concert that brought together pupils from across our Trust to celebrate creativity, unity, and joy through music and dance.

Spectacular Sports Event: Learning Through Movement and Challenge

Our Spectacular Sports Event wasn't just action-packed fun - it was a dynamic celebration of physical education, personal development, and learning in motion. Children challenged themselves on a thrilling assault course, building core strength, resilience, and problem-solving as they navigated climbing, crawling, and balancing tasks. The human table football station reinforced teamwork, spatial awareness, and communication in a wildly entertaining format. Pupils learned focus and coordination with a supervised (and strictly safe!) axe throwing activity, developing fine motor skills and self-discipline through guided instruction.

Exploring the giant inflatable maze tested memory, orientation, and strategic thinking, transforming exercise into an engaging puzzle-solving experience. These hands-on challenges gave children real-world opportunities to practise perseverance, overcome fears, and support one another - skills that are just as vital in the classroom as on the field.



Church Hill

The Junior Sewing Bee: Threads of Expression

Inspired by the abstract embroidery work of contemporary textile artist Elizabeth Pawle, students in the Junior Sewing Bee were challenged to create their own embroidered pieces. Using a combination of back stitch, running stitch, and satin stitch, each participant crafted a unique interpretation of Pawle's style, focusing on their personal hobbies and everyday joys.

The results were nothing short of spectacular. From vibrant depictions of footballs and musical notes to whimsical shapes representing time spent with pets or immersing themselves in the wizarding world of Harry Potter, the students poured their personalities into their work. Colour, symbol, and shape were used thoughtfully to convey emotion and meaning, echoing Pawle's abstract aesthetic while adding a deeply personal twist.



The Junior Bake Off: Mixing More Than Just Ingredients

Meanwhile, the Junior Bake Off brought together a select group of Year 8 students from Church Hill and Year 4 pupils from Abbeywood in a heartwarming display of teamwork and transition support. Designed to ease the younger students into the Middle school environment, the event paired them with older peers to bake and decorate Easter-themed cakes.

Working in pairs, the students measured, mixed, and baked their creations, learning the importance of accuracy and timing in the kitchen. Once the cakes were out of the oven, the real fun began - decorating! From brightly coloured icing and chocolate eggs to fondant bunnies and edible glitter, the cakes became canvases for the students' imaginations.



Eat Them to Defeat Them

The Trust has engaged in a project with 'Eat Them to Defeat Them', a national campaign designed to encourage children to consume more vegetables by presenting healthy eating as an engaging and enjoyable challenge.

The initiative utilises a creative approach, where children are motivated to "defeat" vegetables by eating them. Supported by schools across the UK, the programme provides a range of resources, including posters, lesson plans, and reward charts, to promote positive dietary habits, ensuring that students benefit from interactive activities that support their health and wellbeing in an innovative and impactful manner.

Growing to Love

Also run by VegPower, our Trust has registered 14 Year 3 classes to participate in the 'Growing to Love' programme, part funded through a collaboration with an Evesham (Worcestershire) farm. The programme is designed to enhance the Year 3 science curriculum, where pupils nurture and grow their own tomato plant, and take it home. Evidence points to, having grown the tomatoes, they cannot do anything but like them!

Abbeywood First School: 2 groups

Arrow Valley First School: 1 group

Lickhill Primary School: 1 group

Matchborough First School: 3 groups

Oak Hill First School: 3 groups

Oldbury Park Primary School: 2 groups

St Stephen's First School: 1 group

Sutton Park Primary School: 1 group



**Scan to watch
the video!**





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