Our Community Matters

November 2024 Issue 22



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



#catschools/#schoolscat

Editor: Michelle Borders communications@catschools.uk www.thecatinstitute.org

INSIDE

Message from Philip Hamilton OBE, CEO

Headspace

Join us in welcoming new Head to Woodloes Primary School, Sharon Byrne

Ensuring Excellence

Snapshots of School life across our trust

Introducing

Gaby Lander and Michelle Whittaker, Chairs of , Finance and Operations Professional Network

Education Matters

Check out our new podcast Teacher Talking

CAT Institute of Education Matters Message from Director Of IoE, Alexis Rickus

Expert/Network Group News

Events, competitions, workshops As we navigate through this autumn term, it's fast becoming clear that our Trust continues to thrive in its mission to deliver excellence in education.

From welcoming new colleagues and children to celebrating the tremendous achievements of our



Y11 Polesworth Pupils looking at Career Pathways

pupils, this term is already filling up with exciting events.

Looking ahead, we're excited about the opportunities for professional dialogue that are available this term. From the Finance and Operations Network, the first in our Introducing series to focus on our network groups, which promises to combine expertise across our schools, to the upcoming Specialist Network meetings due to take place later in November, our trust continues to be committed to encouraging environments of collaboration and shared knowledge.

These network groups not only empower colleagues but also enhances the experiences of our pupils.

Finally, we encourage everyone to take part in the many enrichment events planned throughout the remainder of the year. Whether it's the festive **Trust Christmas Music Extravaganza** or the intellectually stimulating **Big CAT Science Quiz,** these events serve as reminders of the vibrant, supportive, and engaged community we are building.

With your ongoing energy and commitment, we will continue to inspire success in every pupil, every day.

Michelle Borders Editor 1



Message from Philip Hamilton OBE, CEO

I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Ed May who is leaving us at the end of December. Ed is retiring after a long and enormously impactful career in education.

Ed and I founded this trust in November 2012. At the time he was Headteacher at Birchwood Primary School. I remember first meeting Ed when he took the reins at Birchwood and being struck by his passion, presence, optimism and attention to detail. When the opportunity arose for us to work together in a more structured way and start to build this trust I jumped at the chance.

It is very difficult to sum up a career so full of achievements - however I will give it a go: Ed is:

- An outstanding headteacher with a peerless track record in multiple schools and a determined and relentless focus on excellence.
- A transformational executive headteacher
- A leader whose approach to leading other leaders has made a difference on a grand scale
- A consummate executive and system leader with an enormous capacity for work.
- A skilled coach, mentor, governor and a true counsellor of perfection

Ed leaves a powerful legacy of success over time and with many communities, groups of staff and individuals having benefitted from his work.

Given that this is early retirement, Ed is now pursuing other interests and professional work. His influence is now being felt beyond the education sector.

I know you will join with me in wishing Ed a long and happy retirement.

Very best wishes for the term ahead.

Philip Hamilton OBE, CEO



Head Space

A familiar face takes on new role at Woodloes Primary School. Let me reintroduce you to Sharon Byrne, who we met in our very first edition of OCM as headteacher at a new school to our trust.

Navigating Leadership Transitions: My Journey in Headship by Sharon Byrne



Taking over as Headteacher within our trust has been a transformative experience, both personally and professionally. As an existing Headteacher, the opportunity to lead a large primary school characterised by a changing demographic has presented its own unique set of challenges and rewards. Transitioning from another primary school into this new role after a successful tenure in my previous school was not solely a matter of adapting; it required a deep understanding of the context in which I would be working.

Transforming a school from special measures to achieving a 'Good' rating is a daunting task, especially within a challenging demographic. It demands a nuanced approach to leadership, a clear vision, and an unwavering commitment to fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment. This has equipped me with essential leadership skills - resilience, empathy, and strategic planning - all of which have been paramount in my approach to driving positive change. It has also prepared me for the next phase of my career, as I reflect on the myriad of learning experiences I have encountered along the way. I learned that genuine transformation stems from collaborative efforts; involving staff, parents, and children in shaping our educational ethos is imperative.

At the heart of my leadership philosophy is the belief that relationships are foundational to all aspects of running a school. Building rapport with staff, children, and the wider community has been a priority since my arrival at Woodloes. Establishing trust and open lines of communication has fostered a positive culture in which collaboration flourishes. I have observed that strong relationships enhance not only morale but also the overall educational experience for children.

We have placed significant emphasis on a new behaviour policy that promotes positive conduct and mutual respect, possibly implementing this on the morning before the Ofsted call bought its challenges! Developing consistent expectations within our classrooms, corridors, and playgrounds has led to an environment where children feel safe and valued, thus enabling them to focus on their learning. Coupled with this, the introduction of a new marking policy has streamlined feedback processes, enabling teachers to provide consistent and constructive support that meets the diverse needs of our children. Furthermore, we are in the process of enhancing our 'Cosy Corners' within classrooms, making sure they are not only inviting but also consistent across the school. These designated areas allow children to retreat and engage in self-reflection or relaxation, vital components of their emotional well-being. By refining these spaces, we aim to create an atmosphere conducive to both social-emotional learning and academic engagement.

The initial five weeks of my headship were particularly engaging, yet they presented a whirlwind of challenges, especially with the impending visit from Ofsted. This unexpected scrutiny allowed me to quickly evaluate the progress we were making and to ensure that our ethos and expectations were firmly established. The Ofsted visit served as a catalyst to galvanise the staff, as we collectively prepared to demonstrate the strides we had already made. Exciting developments have undoubtedly occurred since I commenced my role. One of my key initiatives is the creation of the 'Woodloes Way', an integral framework that encapsulates our school's values, vision, and expectations. Developing this culture has been instrumental in enhancing our school environment and promoting a sense of belonging among children and staff alike.

OCM Issue 22 November 2024

In summary, my journey in taking over the Headship at Woodloes has been underpinned by a commitment to forging relationships, cultivating a strong school culture, and implementing impactful policies. The challenges ahead are undoubtedly great, yet they are eclipsed by the excitement of fostering an environment in which every child can succeed. My experiences thus far have solidified my resolve to continue pushing the boundaries of educational excellence within our trust.

Ensuring Excellence

Snapshots of what our schools have been up to this half term.

Stratford-upon-Avon's Primary School supports Roald Dahl's Marvellous Children's Charity By Gill Humphriss



On Friday, 13th September, Stratford-upon-Avon Primary held a special fundraising event in support of Roald Dahl's Marvellous Children's Charity

Both children and staff arrived at school dressed as favourite characters from Roald Dahl's iconic books, celebrating reading while contributing to an important cause.

Roald Dahl's Marvellous Children's Charity funds specialist nurses who provide vital care and emotional support for children across the UK facing serious and complex health conditions. These nurses are a lifeline for families, offering both clinical expertise and comfort during challenging times. Since its founding, the charity has helped over 36,000 children with lifelong medical needs, a legacy inspired by Dahl's belief in empowering children to overcome life's difficulties.

"At Stratford Primary, we wanted to show our support for this

amazing charity," said Mrs. Humphriss, Head Teacher. "The children loved dressing up, and our school was filled with Fantastic Mr. Foxes, BFGs, Willy Wonkas, Enormous Crocodiles, and more. Our students show compassion and a strong sense of care for others every day, and this event was a wonderful reflection of that."

Thanks to the generosity of the school community, nearly £200 has already been raised through the JustGiving page. A huge thank you to all who have contributed so far!



Don't forget to join Vivup – huge savings just in time for Christmas!

Your lifestyle rewards scheme includes home and electronics savings with top retailers like Currys and John Lewis, discounted gym memberships at over 3000 locations nationwide. Sign up now!

The Wilnecote School shines a light on Mental Health

Awareness by Carl Savage

Students at The Wilnecote School recently took part in a special initiative to raise awareness around



mental health and well-being. As part of the event, students wore yellow ribbons to symbolize their support for positive mental health and to remind each other of the importance of self-care and kindness.

The day featured a range of activities designed to promote mindfulness and relaxation. Students engaged in mindful coloring, completed jigsaw puzzles, and wrote on yellow pennants, sharing the things that bring them happiness. These activities encouraged students to take a moment to reflect on their mental health and embrace strategies that support emotional well-being.

Chloe and Polly, representatives from the School's Educational Mental Health team, were present throughout the day to provide guidance and to speak with students about mental health. They offered valuable advice and resources to those seeking support. In addition, assemblies, led by Mrs. Marsland, focused on the importance of mental health, providing students with information on who to talk to if they have concerns and highlighting the activities available.

The yellow ribbons, worn by both students and staff, served as a visible reminder of the significance of mental health, encouraging everyone to consider how they can support their own well-being and that of others. This initiative marks the beginning of a wider campaign at The Wilnecote School to further develop mental health support and enhance students' understanding of this critical topic.

Did you know you can have a Blue Light Card?!

Regardless of your role in a school, you can now apply for a blue light card. For even more savings just before Christmas, this is the site for you. I've joined, and I've already benefitted from some great savings on meals out that don't appear on other similar schemes. It costs £4.99 for two years. Apply here: <u>Blue Light Card Teachers Discounts</u> There may be a waiting list, but they do get to you in the end... Enjoy!



Renowned Chef Idris Caldora Visits Year 3 for a Hands-On Hospitality Workshop by Mark Gibbons



As part of our ongoing commitment to providing "Deep and Diverse Experiences", Idris Caldora from the prestigious Royal Society of Culinary Arts visited Year 3 classes for a special hospitality workshop. The visit aimed to introduce students to the art of hosting and the formalities involved in restaurant service, providing them with a unique and practical learning opportunity.

During the session, students participated in a "front-of-house" activity where they explored how a restaurant operates and what it takes to deliver exceptional service. The hands-on experience allowed children to gain valuable insights into various aspects of hospitality, including:

- **The Importance of Presentation:** Students learned about the significance of appearance and body language when greeting and serving guests, emphasizing the role of the host in creating a welcoming atmosphere.
- **Table Setup and Etiquette:** Students practiced the key elements of preparing a table for formal dining, from placing napkins and folding them creatively to arranging cutlery according to its specific use.
- **Role-Playing as Servers:** To bring the experience to life, the children engaged in role-play exercises, simulating real-life customer interactions, and learning how to serve guests in a professional manner.

This session not only helped students understand the practicalities of running a restaurant but also reinforced the values of courtesy, attention to detail, and teamwork–skills that are transferable beyond hospitality and are key to their personal development.

Mr. Caldora's visit is part of our school's wider SMSC curriculum, which focuses on Social, Moral, Spiritual, and Cultural development. We aim to provide enriching experiences that equip our students with life skills and broaden their perspectives. By offering a range of "Deep and Diverse Experiences," we encourage students to explore different industries and professions in engaging, hands-on ways.

We're grateful to Idris Caldora for inspiring our Year 3 students and helping them build confidence through this unique learning opportunity.



SAFER Recruitment Training

Accredited by the Safer Recruitment Consortium, , this course supports the requirements in KCSiE. Suitable for anyone involved in interview planning, advertising, interviewing and decision making.

Led by CAT Director of Behaviour and Safeguarding, Jo Howell and CAT Human Resources Officer, Sam Sweet

TTHURSDAY 14 JANUARY 2025 Thursday 21 January 2025

ONLINE

9.00 AM - 1.00 PM TO BOOK: IOE@CATSCHOOLS.UK

Safer Recruitment Training - online

For anyone involved in planning interviews, advertising or decision making, who hasn't undertaken the training or it has been a significant time since last you undertook the training, you should consider booking onto our next full two day course due to take place 14 and 21 January - this will be an online event via Teams. A link to join the session will be sent out the week prior to the event.

Open to anyone from our trust community, this course is accredited by the Safer Recruitment Consortium and supports the requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

If you wish to book onto this session, or the ones detailed below, please email *ioe@catschools.uk*.

UPCOMING Safer Recruitment Training Sessions:

Refresher Training: Tuesday 10 June 2025: Online 9am-1pm

Safer Recruitment Full Course: 1 July 2025 and 8 July 2025, IoE Training Centre, Dordon Primary School Face to Face 9am -1pm both days.



Introducing....

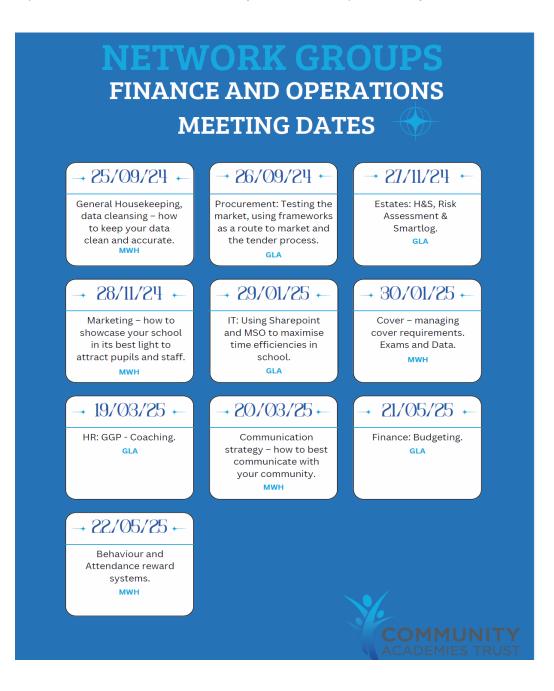
Our Network Groups..... First in the spotlight is the newly formed Finance and Operations Professional Network... **Unifying Strengths for Enhanced Inclusion and Collaboration**.... By Gaby Lander and Michelle Whittaker, The Telford Langley School

In a significant step forward, that aims to enhance our financial and operational networking, the School Business Manager Network and the Admin Network are merging to create the Finance and Operations Network. This strategic fusion is designed to foster inclusivity, heighten collaboration, and capitalise on our members' collective expertise. The merger decision was influenced by feedback from support staff throughout the trust, seeking more inclusive support for our members. By integrating the resources and expertise of business and administrative professionals, we can extend more opportunities for all operational staff to engage. This unification is about creating a platform that reaches a broader audience, not just blending two groups.

2pm - 3pm Via Teams	Chair - Gaby Lander		Chair - Michelle Whittaker
Aut 1 26/09/24	Procurement: Testing the market, using frameworks as a route to market and the tender process.	Aut 1 25/09/24	General Housekeeping, data cleansing - how to keep your data clean and accurate.
Aut 2 27/11/24	Estates: H&S, Risk Assessment & Smartlog.	Aut 2 28/11/24	Marketing - how to showcase your school in its best light to attract pupils and staff.
Spr 1 29/01/25	IT: Using Sharepoint and MSO to maximise time efficiencies in school.	Spr 1 30/01/25	Cover - managing cover requirements. Exams and Data.
Spr 2 19/03/25	HR: GGP - Coaching	Spr 2 20/03/25	Communication strategy - how to best communicate with your community
Sum 1 21/05/25	Finance: Budgeting	Sum 1 22/05/25	Behaviour and Attendance reward systems
Sum 2	Conference	-	· · · ·

The Finance and Operations Network will serve as a platform for professionals to exchange ideas, share best practices, and access resources. The network will hold 10 meetings annually, each focusing on different aspects of finance and operations, as detailed in the attached flyer! There are numerous benefits to joining the Finance and Operations Network. Members will have access to an extensive support system, opportunities for professional growth, and a platform to express their ideas and concerns. This is a prime opportunity to become part of a community that nurtures growth and collaboration.

The network is member-driven, so please feel free to reach out to either Michelle or myself if you have specific items you'd like included on the agendas-they are designed to be adaptable to your needs! We also welcome guest speakers! If you have a passion, a success story, or good practice you'd like to share, please let us know-we want to hear from you! I have dedicated fifteen years to the educational sector as a school business manager, specialising in school financial and operational leadership. My career has always been guided by a commitment to excellence and making a positive impact to the communities we serve. I chose to become a network chair because I firmly believe in the power of collaboration and its potential for positive outcomes-come and join us, we hope to see you soon!



Education Matters



If you would like to submit an article, we would love to hear from you. Email: <u>communications@catschools.uk</u>

Introducing our new Pod Cast: Teacher Talking

We are thrilled to announce the launch of a brandnew podcast series, aimed at aspiring teachers and those passionate about education.

This brand new podcast offers valuable insights into teacher training, providing listeners with expert advice, real-life stories from trainee teachers, and guidance on navigating the journey to becoming a qualified teacher.

This launch comes at the perfect time as we kick off the new recruitment year, aligning with a series of recruitment events being attended by CAT IoE at university and national train to teach events. Whether you're considering a career in teaching or want to learn more about the training pathways available, this podcast is a fantastic resource to explore your options.



To listen to the series and stay up-to-date with future releases, follow it on <u>Spotify</u>. If you are interested in teacher training, or you know someone who wants to become a teacher, why not share the pod with them? For more information on our teacher training programs, visit the CAT IoE website <u>www.thecatinstittue.org</u>.

CAT Institute of Education Matters

A spotlight on the trust's Centre for Teacher Training, Professional Development and school improvement by Alexis Rickus, Director of Institute of Education

As we move towards the Spring Term, I am thrilled to share some exciting developments and plans for the months ahead.

Our NPQ programmes continue to grow, providing vital professional development for leaders at all levels. Additionally, we have the Enrichment Competitions from our Network Groups coming up-these will be a fantastic opportunity for students to showcase their skills and creativity across a range of subjects.

Our new cohort of beginning teachers, who joined us in September, have already made a strong start, settling well into their schools and having a positive impact on students. Their energy and commitment are truly commendable, and I look forward to supporting them as they progress in their careers.

Recruitment for our next intake of trainee teachers is now in full swing, following the October opening of our recruitment window. We're actively seeking passionate individuals who are eager to make a difference in education. In addition, recruitment has begun for our summer internship programme aimed at MFL and STEM undergraduates. This year, the DfE has increased the weekly pay to £425, making it an even more attractive opportunity for potential future teachers. If you know anyone who is interested in training to teach, why not share our new podcast with them - there's absolutely masses of information on there about routes into teaching, the application process, the internship programme and life after teacher training. It's a one stop shop for everything ITT.

I am also excited to begin my visits to schools across the Trust this term, where I'll be focusing on our Growing Great People (GGP) programme. It will be great to see firsthand how this is supporting staff development and driving school improvement.

I look forward to meeting many of you during these visits and hearing about the excellent work happening across our Trust.

Alexis Rickus Director of the CAT Institute of Education COMMUNITY ACADEMIES TRUST

Institute of Education



Network and Expert Group News

Joining Link for the next Curriculum Groups' Meeting on Wednesday 27 November 2024 at 3.40pm is <u>here</u>. Please register, then join your session.

Network Groups Update by Neil Coleman

On Wednesday, 25th September, 140 colleagues from across the Trust came together for the first set of Curriculum Network meetings of this academic year. A further 34 colleagues joined the three Specialist Network meetings that also took place that week.

Unfortunately, colleagues from Woodloes Primary had to send their apologies due to their involvement in what was a very successful inspection, and the P.E. Curriculum meeting was postponed until Autumn 2 due to staff illness. Despite this, the turnout was fantastic and provides a solid platform for the Networks in the year ahead.

Curriculum and Specialist Network meetings will now be held once a term. To ensure that communication, support, and shared practice continue between meetings, the contact details of attendees at each of the meetings were collected and shared among the networks and the IOE. If you were unable to join the meetings this half-term, please visit the IOE website for agendas, minutes, and contact details for each Network.

For the first time, separate Primary and Secondary meetings were held for English, Maths, and Science. This enabled the main focus of the meetings to target phase-specific requirements. Network Chairs are still keen, however, to work collaboratively and share good practice across both Primary and Secondary schools. Standing agenda items at the meetings included reaffirming the purpose and rationale of the Professional Networks, sharing a Trust video short on the Professional Networks, a tour of the IOE website showcasing Network pages and available content, and reminding staff of the Teacher Toolkit and the resources available in Domain 1 to support subject areas.

Network Chairs also introduced a new 'Add and Share' element, where members are encouraged to share good practices from their schools. Chairs brought a first item to their meetings and made plans for future contributions.

The next round of network meetings will take place on Wednesday, 27th November. These will include Assessment, Attendance, Behaviour for Learning, Leadership and Coaching, Office/Data Manager, School Business Manager, SEND, and the rescheduled P.E. Network meeting. These meetings are open to any staff who have an interest or responsibility in any of these areas.

The link for the meetings is available on the IoE website and at the top of this page. As this is a secure link, please ensure that you register before joining the sessions. We look forward to meeting you all again then.

'Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success' - Henry Ford

Enrichment Events: Dates for your diaries....

The Big CAT Science Quiz!

Is your school ready to put its science knowledge to the test? Join us for **The Big CAT Science Quiz** as part of **British Science Week 2025!**

When: Tuesday, 11th March 2025, from 1:30-2:30pm

A Where: The Polesworth School Science Department or virtually via Microsoft Teams

B Who: All primary schools across the Community Academies Trust (CAT) are invited to participate by sending a team of four Year 4-6 pupils.

Whether attending in person or virtually, this is a fantastic opportunity to engage your students in a fun and interactive challenge that celebrates science!

How to Enter: To secure your spot, please contact Becks Wilkinson at <u>r.wilkinson@thepolesworthschool.com</u>).

Don't miss out on this chance to inspire young minds and foster a love of science-register your team today!



When: Tuesday 11th March 2025 - 1.30-2.30pm Where: The Polesworth School Science Department or online via Microsoft Teams Who: All primary schools across the CAT are invited to bring a

team of four Y4-6 pupils/attend virtually Please contact Becks Wilkinson if you are interested in taking part r.wilkinson@thepolesworthschool.com





Trust Christmas Music Extravaganza

locale constraints and afternoon of festive cheer and beautiful music! 🛺 🛕

Join us at Wilnecote High School for the **Trust Christmas Music Extravaganza,** taking place on:

Monday, 9th December at 1:30 pm.

This is a wonderful opportunity for our talented students across the Trust to showcase their musical skills in a heartwarming celebration of the holiday season. Expect a magical performance featuring choirs, orchestras, and solo acts, guaranteed to get everyone in the Christmas spirit! Contact Laura Fiu to join in or more info: <u>slater.l@welearn365.com</u>

Don't miss out on this festive musical showcase. We look forward to seeing you there!

Our Half Term in Pictures



And finally.....

...

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

Grange Park PE @Grange_Park_PE · 6m This Girl Can

Well done to our Year 5 girls who attended the @EnergizeSTW 'This Girl Can' event at @LilleshallNSC this morning.

The girls had a fantastic time taking part in Kwik Cricket and Squash workshops.

#TeamGP #SchoolSport



Millfield Primary School @MillfieldPS · Oct 10 Search and rescue. We learned some first aid then rescued a casualty from the woods



Birchwood Primary School @BirchwoodPrim · Oct 17

Well done Redwood 4, who were treated to their first tea party of the year to celebrate meeting their reading target as a whole class. Thank you to Mrs Webb for entertaining us with extracts from the book 'The World's Worst Children' @davidwalliams





thewilnecoteschool.com **3d Printers**

The Wilnecote School has received a generous donation of two 3D printers from Scruffy Dog ...



Stoneydelph Primary School @StoneydelphPS · Sep 12 Caving, shelter building and fire making with a toasted marshmallow treat.

14



Dordon Primary @DordonPrimary · Oct 15 Well done Dordon! Runners up in the West Midlands!!! 🐝 🤎

Fonetti @FonettiApp · Oct 15 ✗ **BIG NEWS!** Ď The **WINNER** of the



The Wilnecote School @wilnecoteschool · Sep 22

...