

# Our Community Matters

April 2021  
Issue One



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



#catschools

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**Welcome to the first edition of Our Community Matters, the termly newsletter designed to celebrate all that staff and young people are achieving within our trust schools.**

One of the ways we are embracing innovation is the way in which we communicate with the 18 schools across our trust. Not only are we going to be dropping into your inbox every half term, but you can keep up to date on what our schools are up to via our Twitter Feed. Type #catschools in the search bar and you'll find us. Similarly, if you post, include the hashtag and we'll retweet.

The aim of this publication is to give you a taste of the many positive and amazing things happening in the schools across our trust. As this is the first edition of Our Community Matters, it seems fitting to start off our regular schools feature **Head Space** with a spotlight on our most recent school, Kingsway Community Primary School in Leamington Spa. I'm also excited to be meeting new colleagues and to hear how some of the brightest minds across our trust are sharing their expertise through research and network groups, reaching out beyond their own school gates.

Because this is a digital publication, we are able to publish video and audio, so happy to accept anything, but please just ensure the usual permissions have been obtained prior to sending. We will assume that this has happened so will not be checking.

Looking forward to sharing the good news! Don't forget #catschools!

Michelle, Editor Our Community Matters



## Message from Philip Hamilton OBE, CEO



I am pleased to be writing to you in the first edition of our new newsletter. Our trust is entering a new phase of its growth and evolution. It is now 10 years (1<sup>st</sup> February 2011) since the first of our schools to become an academy did so. Some of you working in The Polesworth School may still have the commemorative pen and pencil set issued to all staff at the time to mark the occasion. For just over a year The Polesworth School Academy Trust existed in isolation and then through a partnership with Birchwood Primary School in November 2012, the Community Academies Trust came to life. Our family of schools now numbers 18.

The majority of schools in our trust joined as sponsored academies - they were, for various reasons, in extremely challenging circumstances and now are not. Along the way, other schools have chosen to join the family, and our trust has grown in both numbers, and crucially quality, throughout that time so that the leadership in all our schools is at least "good"(Ofsted).

This is why we are now in a different phase. The expertise and experience across all our schools of strong leadership at all levels and significant school improvement has built an enormous volume of knowledge and skills. This is ready for mobilisation in a systematic and general way to compliment the targeted and bespoke approaches that have been the norm to date.

Previously, the targeted and bespoke approach has impacted most significantly on the Headteachers, leadership teams and governors in our schools with indirect impacts for other colleagues and for the young people in our care. Now it is time to make sure membership of our trust family is even more meaningful for all our staff in a more direct way by providing new opportunities for professional growth and positive experiences. So....

- Growing Great People (GPP) is now ready for launch and the old ways of doing performance management and appraisal replaced by a determined focus on supporting your professional growth.
- You will have opportunities to apply to lead or join new professional networks and/or expert groups of staff from schools across the trust in the interests of sharing best practice and innovating.
- You will have an opportunity to apply to lead one of this year's Trust Development Projects which will in turn establish trust wide innovation in the areas of curriculum enrichment, staff well-being, provision for vulnerable pupils and community focussed action and advocacy.

This last 10 years, including the last COVID blighted 12 months, have highlighted how professionally agile and creative you, as a member of our trust staff, are. I am enormously proud of everything you have achieved and thank you for it. I also look forward with real optimism for what you can achieve next.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Philip Hamilton".

Philip Hamilton OBE, CEO

# Head Space

Schools in the Spotlight



## Introducing Kingsway Community Primary School

by Headteacher Sharon Byrne

To say that Kingsway Community Primary School has been on a journey would be an understatement! In June 2017, a month after I was appointed as Head, Kingsway went into Special Measures following eighteen months of extreme disruption which included two failed federations and ten Headteachers. The journey of repair started in September 2017 and throughout this time, significant positive changes to the school have been made, not least of which has been the embedding of an improved culture of partnership between staff, parents, and children.

Being placed in Special Measures meant a forced academy order, meaning that yet another separate journey began, with the school's transition into an academy. However, this proved to be a long, drawn-out process which ended up lasting over three years. Ongoing conversations between the trust and the local authority regarding the fate of the school's 'blue building' had been the focus, until finally on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021 the school successfully joined the Trust. We now embark upon the next stage of our educational journey, one which will include an exciting building project.

After an extremely busy two and a half years, the school successfully came out of Special Measures in January 2020, just before the first national lockdown in March of the same year. As is of course the case with all schools, we moved to a different way of life, and indeed schooling, and this has continued to evolve over the past year. The school's demographic provided a range of challenges which meant that we were supporting both families and children alike in more ways than we could have possibly imagined. By no means an exhaustive list, this included: 'Safe and Well' calls; socially distanced home visits; signposting parents to various organisations for additional financial support; and providing access to food bank vouchers and organising fresh fruit and vegetable deliveries. National lockdowns have strengthened the already firm bonds between the school and our families within the local community to the extent that we have become central to them obtaining relevant support when required.

We have continued to provide provision for critical workers and vulnerable children which has fluctuated in numbers due to changes in circumstances and needs. Throughout, we have endeavoured to ensure that we are continually flexible in our approach to the needs of the wider community.

As with all schools nationally, we have welcomed children back from March 8<sup>th</sup> and they have continued to prove their resilience and adaptability to change, settling into school life calmly and confidentially. Kingsway parents have been highly supportive of the measures taken by the school, demonstrated both by their actions and words. We in turn have recently given tokens of our appreciation to them in the shape of tea and coffee gift bags – just to serve as a reminder that they too need a break from these challenging times. We are all looking forward to a sustained period of time in which children are back in school and we are as committed and proud as ever to serve our local community in the ways that we do.

# Ensuring Excellence

News and stories from across our trust

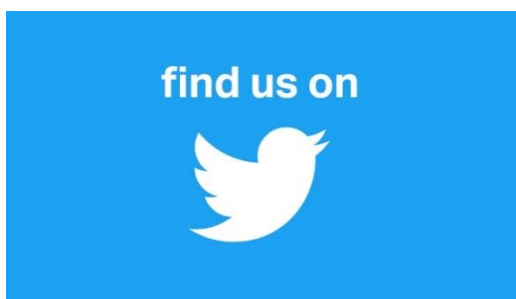
**Lillith at Birchwood is out of this world!** Michelle Day, Associate Head and SENDCo, Birchwood Primary School

## Welcome Back to Everyone



As we settle back into the new way of doing things, it's a very different term indeed. It almost feels like September all over again. Parents have been checking that school uniform still fits, buying new shoes and waving loved ones off in the knowledge that they are going back to friends and teachers, and frequent lateral flow tests, whilst teachers have been looking forward to being back in their classrooms and seeing their students face to face.

This section of Our Community Matters looks at the stories and the people across our trust. If you have a story to share, please send it to Michelle at [communications@catschools.uk](mailto:communications@catschools.uk).



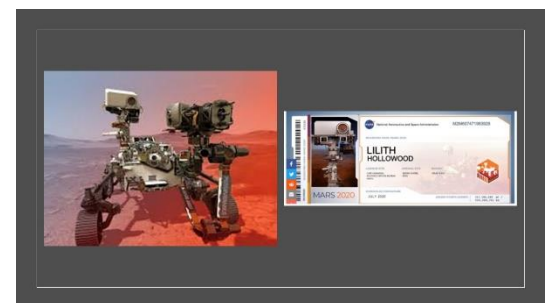
Follow [@SchoolsCat](https://twitter.com/SchoolsCat) and mention [#catschools](https://twitter.com/catschools) when you tweet

**Cast your mind back to 18<sup>th</sup> February 2021. NASA's Rover, "Perseverance" touched down on Mars, bringing with it some incredible footage as it started its mission collecting samples.** We all held our breath in anticipation as Perseverance, landed on the surface of the Red Planet, complete with a Birchwood Y1 pupil on it!

Lilith, Hazel 1, signed up to NASA's "Send your name to Mars" campaign and was one of the lucky pupils whose name was stenciled onto the Rover. As Perseverance plummeted, parachuted, and rocketed towards the Jezero Crater on the surface of Mars, Lilith received her very own Boarding Pass for the rocket.

To be on the next landing in 2026, tune in to NASA's exploration program, where reservations are now being taken, so you too can sign up to be part of the next exploration.

<https://mars.nasa.gov/participate/send-your-name/future>



**FESTIVAL OF  
EDUCATION**

Free to attend, this online event runs from 16-30 June 2021. Hear from leading educationalists, benefit from CPD opportunities and network with educators from across the globe. Usually, this event takes place at Wellington College but due to covid's rules on social distancing, the organisers are offering this online event free of charge. Find out more via the website here: <http://educationfest.co.uk/>



## Safeguarding in our Trust Schools

By Jo Howell, Strategic Leader of Education

Well, it has been quite the year, hasn't it, in all aspects of school life in each of our various remits? And as we finally hit a year since the first lockdown it is worth mentioning how impressively our schools have worked to safeguard the children in our care, while at the same time ensuring they also have access to ongoing learning.

From the very start of last year's lockdown school staff with responsibility for leading safeguarding worked rapidly and tirelessly to ensure the most vulnerable students in our Trust schools remained safe and well. Within days of lockdown every school had created RAGed lists to ensure those most in need and most at risk of harm were identified and fully supported and despite a common misunderstanding in the press that schools were closed, our staff were constantly making contact with our children and their parents, ensuring needs were met, even at weekends and in 'holidays'.

Whether staff were making home visits, preparing and delivering packed lunches for those on free school meals, providing additional support for those with special educational needs and disabilities, sourcing computers and portable Wi-Fi for those without ICT access, cleaning our premises to continue to protect all those still in schools, continuing to ensure that bills and wages still got paid and crucially, just being there to listen to the wealth of stressed out and sometimes even angry parents who have struggled to cope - the list is endless - our staff have done this and in so doing have kept our children and young people safe.

And now as we start to settle back into having our schools full once more, the welfare of our children remains our highest priority. Having talked with many of our teachers, support staff, school leaders and governors from across our Trust, along with a number of parents and young people, it is very clear that this lockdown has taken a toll on everyone, far more than the

first one. While the majority of young people seem very happy to be back, a significant number of children and parents are wobbling and need our support every bit as much now as they did during the lockdown. This is a time then to remain vigilant, to live and breathe our culture of safeguarding and to ensure that every single person in our Trust - children and adults - feel they have at least one 'go to' person who will listen, support and even fight for them if they need to.

I feel incredibly privileged to share in the leadership of safeguarding in our Trust, not least because I am always blown away with how easy you all make my job by being such dedicated advocates and battlers for our children. Moving forward, all of our safeguarding leads are now focused on continuing to respond rapidly to safeguarding concerns and supporting those who are having difficulties. It is worth remembering though that they cannot do this alone - safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. I am grateful to everyone for their ongoing vigilance and care for our children and young people, as we work to move forwards and plan for their futures.

### **Safer Recruitment in Education**

**Expressions of Interest are invited from anyone who would like to take part in the trust's Safer Recruitment in Education Training.**

**Led by Strategic Leader of Education, Jo Howell and Trust HR Officer, Sam Sweet, this session will take place in the summer term.**

**To register interest please email:**  
[catts@thepolesworthschool.com](mailto:catts@thepolesworthschool.com)

## Battle ahead for family of Trust colleague

by Mike Stevenson, The Wilnecote School



In February, Belle (aged 5) daughter of Mike Stevenson (Operations and Facilities Manager at The Wilnecote School) was diagnosed with AML a rare form of Leukemia.

Intensive chemotherapy began within 48 hours of diagnosis, four courses of chemo each lasting 10 days, followed by 3-4 weeks of in hospital observations and, all being well, a short period at home for recuperation is scheduled with an approximate duration of six months. The possible requirement of a stem cell

transplant will also be regularly monitored.

Belle is currently enjoying her first few days at home since diagnosis, much needed family is being spent with Mum (Christie), Dad, big brother Cole (10) and her twin sister Lola but she is due back at Birmingham Children's Hospital on Monday 29th of March for course number two.

Thankfully, although a long way to go, the treatment is working as expected and Belle's determination and strength of character are clear to see. You can read more about Belle's journey in Mike's [blog](#).

Out of such adversity there has been some positivity with the formation of a Go Fund Me page, the proceeds of which will be used to enable Belle on her journey and will also, where possible, support those groups and organisations who help Belle and the family.

One of Belle's best friends at school, Bella-Rose started the fundraising with a 24 hour silence and raised a staggering £7000!

In addition, Belle's uncle is completing a virtual mountain climb; her cousins in Ireland a sponsored walk; a local support group and local business worked together to provide Mother's Day afternoon teas and there are currently "Belles Bows" available to order.

The fund, which has been named "Belle's Fundraising Fairies" and has been formalised with the development of a committee, can be found [here](#) and there are a number of activities and events scheduled to take place over coming weeks and months.

We wish Belle, Mike and their amazing family the very best of luck for a super speedy recovery.

## Grange Park is a 5\* Gardening School



Congratulations to Grange Park Primary School who, following two years of hard work on their allotment, have received the Royal Horticultural Society's 5 Star Schools Gardening Award!

The after-school gardening club was the brainchild of teaching assistants, Mrs Hounsell and Mrs Asterly who saw the potential of the then unused plot of land, and together, with their gardening team, have turned it into an award-winning allotment.

The rewards scheme is made up of five levels that provide specific goals, turning the garden into a learning resource.

The scheme is accessible to all ages and abilities, urban and rural areas, and levels are easy to achieve. Each level is worth a reward worth up to £200.

Level 1 is about planning the garden project and its benefits to the school; Level 2 is about growing plants and using tools; Level 3 is building on practical skills and environmental issues; Level 4 is about growing, harvesting and fundraising and Level 5 is about sharing the garden with the local community.

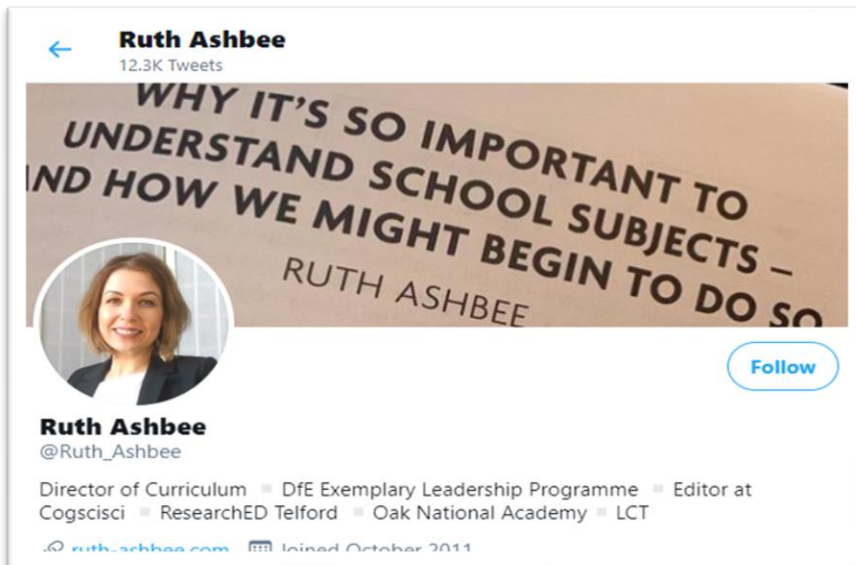
If you want to join Grange Park, more information on the awards can be found here:

<https://schoolgardening.rhs.org.uk/school-gardening-awards>

# Education Matters

## Getting involved in education discourse: Twitter

by Ruth Ashbee, The Telford Priory School



**Ruth Ashbee** is a teacher, Director of Curriculum at The Telford Priory School and blogger and has worked in state comprehensives since qualifying as a teacher of physics in 2005. Specialising in curriculum, teacher development and school improvement, her interests include philosophy, the professionalisation of teaching, and the destruction of ivory towers.

### What's the one single thing that could do the most to transform professional development? The answer for many people across the education sector is to join the "education discourse". But what is the education discourse anyway?!

The concept of discourse comes from philosopher Michel Foucault, who described it as a "system of thought, knowledge, ideas and communication which constructs our experience of the world."

Education is a big thing, with a lot of thought, knowledge, ideas, and discussion. There are a lot of people thinking about education, carrying out research, debating issues, and putting forward ideas. The body of knowledge and ongoing discussions and debates, residing in media from books and journals to education conferences and Twitter, is what we might call the education discourse.

### What does being engaged in the education discourse look like?

People who are effectively engaged in the education discourse will almost certainly be on Twitter. If you are not already on Twitter or are on it but not following

high-impact education accounts, you may view it as another social media platform, on a par with Facebook.

It's not! This is for several reasons. The nature of Twitter means that it is closely linked to the "blogosphere" - the system of articles published online by teachers and education thinkers globally. Scrolling through twitter is like browsing a corridor lined with doorways leading to infinite worlds of fascinating thought - from how we can represent time in a meaningful way in history, to effective work to close the gap for pupil premium, to how to develop novice teachers using evidence-informed practice.

In addition, the structure of Twitter means there are often very interesting discussions and debates played out live on the timeline. This discursive approach has been fundamental to intellectual development in the West since Ancient Greece and is a very valuable aspect of Twitter for teachers engaging in the discourse.

Furthermore, users can directly tweet or tag accounts and hashtags in for specific advice and input. For example, somebody seeking research on SEND could tag in experts from the field, or somebody who would know some experts, and be directed to a wealth of quality material in the space of a few minutes. In the

*Scrolling through twitter is like browsing a corridor lined with doorways leading to infinite worlds of fascinating thought*

age of the internet when any activist or charlatan can post untruths online, expert recommendation is invaluable.

Teachers engaged in this discourse read! They read the tweets and exchanges on their timeline, they read blogs they see headlined, just a click away to read the article. They read books and journals, reached again often through recommendation through Twitter. We know that reading changes lives - this is as true for us as professional adults as it is for the students in our care.

### Benefits of being involved in the discourse

Let's start with a concrete example (that's a tip we learned from Twitter @atharby):

*"My first feeling after entering the Twitter world of education was anger at not having discovered it earlier! I'd always thought Twitter was just another social media platform not worth joining - how wrong could I be. Twitter has completely re-energised my excitement of teaching, being able to interact with research-driven ideas rather than fads, the joy of discovering researchED, Michaela, #Cogscisci etc. etc. I can honestly say that the biggest impact on my practice and professional development over the last few years has been engagement with the heroes of educational twitter"*

Teachers engaged in Twitter have access to high-quality material, to networks across subject and professional specialisms, and experience an almost visceral invigoration, a rediscovery of the intellect often sadly absent for many since graduation. All these things feed our wellbeing and provide a powerful input for motivated professional development.

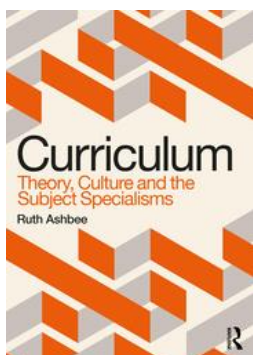
Being involved in this discourse isn't just a great thing - many would argue it's an ethical responsibility. After all, our students only get one chance at school, and we owe it to them to be well-informed about what works and what doesn't. Many of us rue the days we wasted on learning styles, brain gym and discovery learning - ideas which not only have been comprehensively discredited by many and repeated trials, but *never had any evidence to support them in the first place*. These have only come to light as fraudulent claims due to the tireless work of bloggers such as Andrew Old, Katharine Birbalsingh, and Joe Kirby engaging with the discourse, seeking out, reading, and blogging about what research actually says, tweeting about it to raise awareness, challenging the status quo, and often risking their own jobs in doing so.

Of course, access to great material isn't the whole story - it's how we apply it in our planning, teaching and leadership at all levels that makes the difference in the end - but for bringing teachers into the great conversations of our profession, Twitter is unrivalled.

So, sign up, follow some key accounts, tell your colleagues... and your professional life will never be the same again.

### Some key accounts to get you started:

@DavidDidau  
 @Counsell\_C  
 @EmathsUK  
 @Trivium21c  
 @MrMountstevens  
 @ClareSealy  
 @Mr\_Raichura  
 @hannahcusworth  
 @NLad84  
 @StuartLock  
 @Ruth\_Ashbee  
 @SchoolsCat  
 @ChrisMoyse



'Ruth Ashbee has produced the guide that senior leaders urgently need. She manages to show both why subject-sensitivity matters and how leaders can transcend subjects to find intellectual and practical coherence. The reader is also guided through subjects' complex relationships with changing culture, and the attendant responsibilities leaders must exercise. Thus, her respect for the truth quests and traditions of subject communities unlocks bigger educational thinking.'

**Christine Counsell**, Education Consultant, Trustee of David Ross Education Trust, Editor of *Teaching History* journal; formerly History PGCE leader, University of Cambridge and Director of Education, Inspiration Trust

ISBN 9780367483777  
 Available from Routledge, June 15, 2021



# Central Matters

News from CAT Central Support Team

## Covid Vaccine

By Zoe Parton, Head Human Resources



**Individual opinions on vaccines can vary greatly.** Despite the extensive measures that schools have taken to ensure the workplace and working practices are, and continue to be, COVID secure, the vaccine provides a greater level of personal safety against serious illness.

Because of this we encourage you to take up the opportunity to have the vaccine when it is offered to you.

We encourage all of you to access official information sources such as the NHS in support of you having the vaccine. We recognise that the length of notice you are given for your appointment date and time may be short but would ask that you provide as much notice as you possibly can if time off work is needed for your appointment.

There are three vaccines currently being offered: The Pfizer-BioNTech, the University of Oxford and Astra-Zeneca and the Moderna, all of which require two doses. Remember that you are not fully vaccinated until you have had both shots and even then, you still need to remember Hands Face Space and fresh air.

**You can check out availability of appointments if you haven't heard yet through this website:**

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/>

**March has marked the first session of accredited Safer Recruitment in Education training being delivered internally within the trust by Jo Howell, Strategic Leader of Education and Samantha Sweet, Human Resources Officer.**

The session was delivered virtually to 21 delegates and there was a broad level of roles involved. Said Sam, *"it was fantastic to see the range of delegates which was reflective of the fact that we all have a role to play in either safer recruitment processes or the culture of ongoing vigilance within the trust"*.

**There is already interest in this full course being held again in the summer term. Anyone who may like to book places please enquire with Michelle Borders ([m.borders@thepolesworthschool.com](mailto:m.borders@thepolesworthschool.com)).**

Places are available to all staff involved in recruitment process, appointment and clearance of new staff, governors and volunteers. As this is available internally, it is recommended to take up this opportunity for all relevant staff to benefit from the support and to strengthen safer recruitment and the ongoing culture of vigilance in school.

## Safer Recruitment in Education

by Sam Sweet



Virtual training session

# Estates Update on New Builds and Projects across our Trust

by Allan Ravenscroft, Estate Manager



The first of the projects to be completed is the extension to Heathcote Primary shown here. This planned phase two development was completed in November 2020 a month ahead of schedule the extension has provided 8 additional classrooms allowing the school to increase its Pan to 60. The project was funded by Warwickshire County Council.

**Heathcote Primary new classroom building**

The Telford Langley School's new classroom block is shown opposite. As you can see this build is currently under construction and will be completed ready to for the new school year in September 2021. As part of this project some re-modelling of the existing building will be completed the new build will increase the capacity of the school by an additional 300 students.



**The Telford Langley School new classrooms building**



The new building shown opposite, currently under construction, is part of the DFE funded PSBP2 program. The build is on schedule to be completed in time for the new school year in September 2021. It will house new modern science labs as well as design and technology workshops and classrooms. When completed the existing science and DT blocks, along with the school's community wing, will be demolished.

**The Polesworth School's new Science and Design & Technology building**

## Future projects: Stoneydelph Primary & Kingsway Primary Schools

Looking to the future, design meetings are underway on a building development at Kingsway Primary School that, by 2023 will provide a new school hall, kitchen, and boiler house. This will be connected to the main school building. As part of this development the block known as the blue building will demolished and the private nursery and children centre currently located in the blue building will be relocated to a new building which will be constructed in a new location on the school site.

The replacement of the external windows and doors at Stoneydelph upper school and at Kingsway has been finished ahead of schedule see a couple of examples below of the work completed.



**Stoneydelph Primary School**



**Kingsway Primary School**

## Introducing.....

### Simon Wickes, Head of Operations and Compliance



Meet Simon Wickes, the trust's new Head of Operations and Compliance. Here we find out a little more about Simon and his new role.

Head of Operations and Compliance for the trust is a newly created role. Simon joined the trust at the start of January 2021. It's not the easiest thing to start a new role in an unfamiliar industry let alone in the middle of a national lockdown. And let's not forget, jumping into a role that has never existed before. We asked Simon to talk a little about himself and what he will be doing for the trust.

So, what does being the Head of Operations and Compliance entail?

The main functions of the role are to lead and develop operations and compliance across the trust. This will include the areas of procurement, ICT, data protection, estates, and clerking. I'll be presenting reports to trustees on matters around risk management and compliance, ensuring that the trust meets its statutory responsibilities.

Simon has already been visiting schools in the trust, particularly looking at the new builds, so you may have spotted him out and about. We asked Simon to tell us a little more about himself.

I have come from the commercial and property world having worked in Construction, a DIY company, run an export company selling houses around the world and latterly in the Hospitality sector (for the last 19 years) working in property, IT, operations and as Head of Building Compliance.

That sounds hectic, so if you have any, what do you do in your spare time?

My spare time is divided between teaching scuba diving (I am a Nationally Qualified Instructor); playing drums and percussion in 50-piece concert band; sound engineering for live theatre and running an educational charity in amateur dramatics. Sad to say that I have done very little of this over the last 12 months. Sound engineering over Zoom has been a bit of a challenge ...

That all sounds very active. Playing drums? I bet your neighbours love you. It was World Book Day recently, do you enjoy any quieter pursuits such as reading? Tell me about the last book you read?

Ronnie Barker's "All I ever wrote" - the scripts from their television series. I am soon to re-read Murray Walker's Autobiography: "Unless I am very much mistaken".

Yes, the loss of Murray Walker certainly marks the end of an era. Murray was known for his genius bloopers such as "*The lead car is unique, except for the one behind it, which is identical*" - do you have any sayings you might be known for?

It's early days at the moment but I am often heard saying "You know I like a spreadsheet ...."

# Teaching School Matters

## News from the trust's Teaching School

by Alexis Rickus, Director of the CAT Teaching School



The Community Academies Trust Teaching School (CATTs) aims to provide colleagues with an entire framework of career pathways through which you can take advantage of the high-quality development opportunities on offer to you through our trust. Many of these opportunities are funded, and so are free for you as a member of our trust. You may have seen our training brochure, [Developing People](#), which is produced every year and is available for you to look at electronically.

To browse the courses that are available, simply click on the brochure. There are several sections designed to develop all aspects of teaching, learning and leadership, from teacher training to Headship and beyond. And for non-teaching staff, there are opportunities for TA development, through to facilities and administrative staff.



Of particular interest to all staff, given the launch of Growing Great People, are the courses on Coaching. On offer are courses through OLEVI on the Power of Coaching all the way through to an Apprenticeship in Advanced Educational Coaching.

The new apprenticeships are unrecognizable from what we would consider the traditional approach. Now, apprenticeships are part of a professional development model where you can gain the qualifications you need to help you to advance to the next step in your career. Available in levels equivalent to GCSE through to Masters, apprenticeships are funded through the trust's apprenticeship levy. If you're interested in growing your coaching skills, then maybe the level 4 apprenticeship on Advanced Coaching is for you.



## MFL Networking News

**Networking is an important part of our professional development. We believe it's important to have a platform where we as language professionals can meet, learn from each other, share good practice, ask for support and be inspired.**

The global pandemic has brought ecommunication into our everyday lives, and as we become used to using Teams and Zoom to talk to one another, we've learned that this affords us a fantastic tool. We warmly welcome you to join us. Drop in, drop out, let us know what you want to talk about - the door is open. We believe that networking relationships are more important to us now than they have ever been.

The next session of the networking hub is on 14 June 2021 for a twilight workshop on curriculum design with Language Gym author Gianfranco Conti

Any MFL teachers out there who want to join please contact [catts@thepolesworthschool.com](mailto:catts@thepolesworthschool.com).



## English Networking News

David Didau, The Learning Spy

Following consultation with North Warwickshire secondary headteachers, The CAT Teaching School secured financial backing from Warwick Local Authority to run a one-day programme looking at ways to implement the new Ofsted framework with a particular focus on English and Reading. Due to covid, the planned programme turned into three online sessions and is currently being delivered by David Didau, a nationally recognized educational consultant, with a strong track record of supporting school improvement.

Held in February 2021 in his session on the Concept-led English Curriculum, David talked us through why English is taught or even, more fundamentally, what it actually is, or should be, as a subject discipline. He challenged us to consider whether it is about developing empathy and being better human beings? Is it about providing pupils with transferable skills like analysis? Or is it about transmitting a culturally enriching knowledge of literature? What is the purpose of a curriculum? You can catch up on this session here: [https://youtu.be/F6KD\\_7Pv-VE](https://youtu.be/F6KD_7Pv-VE)

March saw David make a return virtual visit to us where he examined how we can change the culture in our schools to build a reading culture. He told us that by the time they reach secondary school, many children are aware that reading isn't cool. According to the National Literacy Trust, fewer than a third of students read outside of school and about 20% say they feel embarrassed if their friends saw them reading a book. In far too many schools, it's not considered cool to be clever. In this session, David examined the funny old game that is reading and invited us to consider how reading can be embedded into school life so that all teachers are contributing to students' reading fluency regardless of subject. If you missed this session, you can listen to David's take on changing the culture in your school here: <https://youtu.be/U5SVwqyY7Ng>

There is still time to reserve your space on David's final session.

### **What do English teachers need to know about cognitive science** **29 April 2021 3.15– 4.15 (Online Free to attend)**

***Cognitive Load Theory or the Working Memory Model*** is one of the foundations on which most of cognitive science rests as it makes useful, testable predictions about how we think and learn.

David explores what teachers need to know about the relationship between working memory and long-term memory and how it's perfectly possible for students to solve problems and yet remember nothing about how to solve them again in the future.

David Didau's blog, *The Learning Spy*, is one of the most influential education blogs in the UK, and he has written a series of books that challenge our assumptions such as, *What If Everything You Knew About Education Was Wrong?*, *What Every Teacher Needs To Know About Psychology* and *Making Kids Cleverer*.



# And finally.....

Because the news is so fleeting, here is a taste of what our trust schools have been up to over the last few weeks. #catschools



@StoneydelphPS, programming a Sphero to move their Mars Rover



Sophie and Archie show off their @telfordprksch HT award for their awesome poetry written on World Book Day



@StoneydelphPS shows off its brand new IT hub thanks to donation of 31 laptops from Shell Energy



5 @Grange\_Park children finished in top 10 of the British Dodgeball Competition with Jack finishing 1<sup>st</sup> overall in the whole country



Y6 @StratfordPrim had a marvelous time at their Survival Day, pitching tents, tying knots, eating soups and exploring



@Chadsmeadschool staff getting into spirit of Red Nose Day

## Hot off the press....

Chadsmead Headteacher, Gemma Grainger praises the "great resilience" of her pupils as they return to the classroom. Read the story in Lichfield Live here: <https://lichfieldlive.co.uk/2021/03/23/lichfield-primary-school-headteacher-praises-great-resilience-of-pupils-following-return-to-the-classroom/>

## Blog Spot Blogs related to stories in this issue, can be found here

Ruth Ashbee, The Telford Priory School	<a href="https://www.ruth-ashbee.com/blog">https://www.ruth-ashbee.com/blog</a>
Mike Stevenson, The Wilnecote School	<a href="https://boopsloopsandcoops.wordpress.com/">https://boopsloopsandcoops.wordpress.com/</a>
David Didau, Educational Consultant	<a href="https://learningspy.co.uk/blog/">https://learningspy.co.uk/blog/</a>
Andrew Old, Teacher blogger	<a href="https://teachingbattleground.wordpress.com/">https://teachingbattleground.wordpress.com/</a>
Katharine Birbalsingh, Head Michaela School	<a href="https://tomisswithloveblog.wordpress.com/">https://tomisswithloveblog.wordpress.com/</a>
Joe Kirby, Dep Head and educational writer	<a href="https://pragmaticreform.wordpress.com/author/j0ekirby/">https://pragmaticreform.wordpress.com/author/j0ekirby/</a>

**Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this first issue and made this edition possible. This publication will drop into your inbox at the start of each half term.**

Please email any articles, news to [communications@catschools.uk](mailto:communications@catschools.uk).

# Our Community Matters

