

Our Community Matters

February 2025
Issue 24



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



#catschools/#schoolscat

Editor: Michelle Borders

communications@catschools.uk

www.thecat institute.org

INSIDE

Message from Philip Hamilton OBE, CEO

Ensuring Excellence

Snapshots of School life across our trust

Introducing

Debbie Cambridge, Chair of new Pupil Premium Specialist Network Group

Training Opportunities

Safeguarding in the Digital Age: Protecting Young Lives

Safer Recruitment Training

Education Matters

Spotlight on Walkthrus and new resources

CAT Institute of Education Matters

Message from Director of IoE, Alexis Rickus

CATalyst25

Whole trust training day, the who, the what and the why!

Specialist/Curriculum Network Group News

Events, competitions, workshops

Well, that was a very quick half term. Hope you managed to do something good with your break or simply had a well-deserved rest.

So much going on over the next few weeks.

You will soon be able to get your hands on the TA Toolkit. Work has been ongoing for some time to get this publication out to you. Hopefully it should be arriving in your schools very shortly.

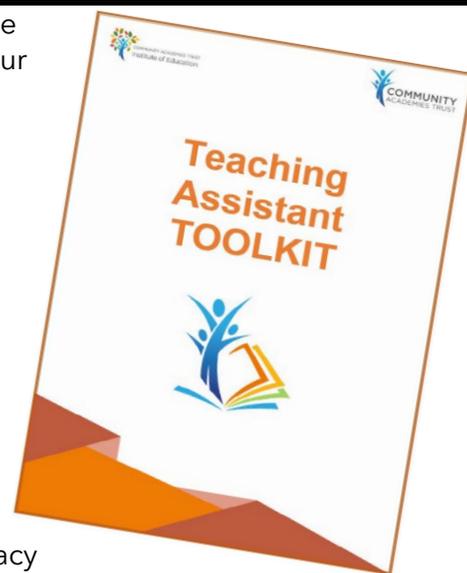
Also, very excited to see what's in store for our first whole Trust Day, CATalyst25, taking place in Birmingham, delivered by national behaviour consultant and expert, Tracy Campbell. This will be an opportunity for everyone in our trust to get together and look at how we can unify our approach to behaviour and to examine what elements should be included in our school behaviour policies. Everyone who works in a school or has contact with pupils in our schools has a stake in how our pupils behave and upholding a consistent message is key. This is your opportunity to take ownership of what should be in our behaviour policies. You can see the full outline of the day later in this issue.

Our schools have also been out and about, notably, not one but two ski trips to whet your appetite for cold, winter pursuits - both to Italy - and not a cornetto or a gondola in sight! Maybe a joint ski trip could be in the future for Polesworth and Wilnecote, who knows?

As well as cross trust competitions for world book day, involving a quiz and a book in a box, there's still time to sign up for the Big CAT Science Quiz if you haven't already done so.

Happy reading!

Michelle Borders
Editor





Message from Philip Hamilton OBE, CEO



We all come to work for a variety of reasons – you have chosen to work in a profession and a working environment that is focussed on the noblest of objectives – educating the next generation.

Education really does provide a master key to unlock positive and successful futures for the young people in our care. More than that, it enables social mobility and, in some cases, actually saves lives. Our work is challenging and occasionally the reasons we do what we do can get forgotten.

Many of you will have read *A Catcher in the Rye* by JD Salinger, the following extract is significant for me. The metaphor is literally one of saving lives which surely is what the best education actually does:

“Anyway, I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in this big field of rye and all. Thousands of little kids and nobody is around - nobody big I mean, except me. And I’m standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What do I have to do? I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff. I mean if they’re running, and they don’t look where they are going I have to come out of somewhere and catch them. That’s all I do all day. I’d just be the catcher in the rye and all. I know it’s crazy but it’s the only thing I’d really like to be”

Never underestimate the importance of your work – whatever role you have in our trust, you are making a huge difference.

My thanks and very best wishes for the term ahead.

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

Philip Hamilton OBE, CEO

Ensuring Excellence

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

The Polesworth School Year 10 GCSE Fine Art and Photography Exhibition 2024 by Nick Atkins, Department Head



Group photo alongside Mrs Favell, Mr Atkins and Miss Thompson

At the end of the autumn term, our Year 10 GCSE Fine Artists and Photographers proudly presented their first exhibition, which was graciously opened by Mrs. Favell.

The exhibition featured an impressive array of mixed media pieces on the theme of "Seashore," created by the GCSE Fine Art group, alongside captivating photographs by our GCSE Photography students. These photographs were the result of various workshops they participated in throughout the term.

The exhibition was a culmination of the hard work and effort our talented young artists have dedicated during their first term of GCSE Art. The displayed works were truly outstanding, showcasing their expressive abilities and creative talents.

The Amazing Five: Foundations of Our Art Department

At Polesworth School, we strive to instill five key dispositions in our students, known as "The Amazing Five", they comprise the following words: *Persistence*, *Disciplined*, *Collaborative*, *Inquisitive*, and *Imaginative*. These values form the foundation of our Art Department and guide our philosophy in nurturing young artists.

- **Persistence:** Our students demonstrated remarkable persistence in developing their skills and completing their projects. Their dedication and determination were evident in every piece of art and photograph on display.
- **Disciplined:** The disciplined approach of our students was crucial in achieving the high standards of work presented in the exhibition. Their ability to focus and commit to their artistic process was truly commendable.
- **Collaborative:** The success of the exhibition was also a testament to the collaborative spirit within our Art

Atkins, Department Head

Department. Students supported and inspired each other, fostering a sense of community and teamwork.

- **Inquisitive:** Our students' inquisitive nature drove them to explore new techniques and concepts, pushing the boundaries of their creativity and artistic expression.
- **Imaginative:** The imaginative works on display highlighted the unique perspectives and creative visions of our students. Their ability to think outside the box and bring their ideas to life was truly inspiring.

A Memorable Event

The exhibition was not only a showcase of individual achievements but also a celebration of the collective efforts of our students and staff. The event was attended by Mrs. Favell (Headteacher), Mr. Atkins (Head of Art), and Miss Thompson (Teacher of Art and Photography), who were all immensely proud of the students' accomplishments.



Photograph from Photography workshop



Mixed media piece on the theme of "Seashore"

As we look forward to future exhibitions, we remain committed to our core values of creativity, expression, and community. We are excited to see how our students will continue to grow and evolve as artists, and we are proud to support them every step of the way.

A Creative Adventure at Ingestre Hall: Year 4's Unforgettable Experience

by Esther Parsons, Headteacher, Stoneydelph Primary School



Sixty-seven Year 4 students from Stoneydelph, Chadsmead, and Woodlands schools recently enjoyed an incredible three-day trip to Ingestre Hall Residential Art Centre. As the UK's only dedicated residential arts centre, Ingestre Hall offers a stunning Jacobean mansion setting for creative and expressive arts like music, drama, visual art, dance, and animation.



During their stay, our pupils had the chance to imagine, create, and express themselves under the guidance of professional artists, musicians, actors, and dancers. This was our first joint adventure as a trio of schools, and it exceeded all our expectations.

The children embraced the arts wholeheartedly, producing amazing works on the theme of 'Respect.' They wrote and recorded their own songs, rehearsed drama performances and dances, and created art exhibitions—all in professional studios.



What made this experience even more special were the friendships formed among the children in our big CAT family. New bonds were created, and lasting memories were made, strengthening our community of schools. This residential trip showcased how we can achieve greatness together.

We can't wait to do it again next year!

Skiing through Italy: A Journey of Growth, Friendship, and Adventure in Claviere

by Carl Savage, The Wilnecote School



The ski trip to Claviere, Italy, was an unforgettable experience for our students. Departing in the early hours of Sunday morning, they embarked on a journey filled with excitement and anticipation. Arriving in Claviere, the adventure began. The beginner group showcased remarkable progress, confidently navigating the slopes on their very first day. Laughter filled the air as students received the much-coveted orange jerseys, awarded for the most entertaining crashes and mishaps of the day.

While a heavy snowfall temporarily closed the top of the mountain, students remained undeterred. They made the most of the situation, refining their skills on the lower slopes and enjoying the camaraderie of their peers. As the weather improved, the mountain reopened, and the advanced groups eagerly tackled challenging red runs with impressive confidence.

Throughout the trip, Joel, our amazing Select ski rep with an unforgettable moustache, went above and beyond to ensure the students had the best possible experience. He not only diligently performed his usual duties but also kindly offered to capture some fantastic videos of the students skiing, providing lasting memories of their accomplishments.

The following days brought sunshine, breathtaking scenery, and thrilling descents. Students enjoyed delicious Italian cuisine, including a memorable feast at a local pizzeria. A highlight of the trip was a day excursion to Montgenèvre in France. Students tackled challenging red runs, explored the French slopes, and experienced the thrill of skiing across the border. Unfortunately, heavy snow and low cloud obscured some of the breathtaking views, but the adventure continued, with students navigating various trails and enjoying packed lunches amidst the snowy landscape.

The warmth and hospitality of our hotel, owned by the charming Fulvia, added a special touch to the trip. Fulvia welcomed us all as family, creating a truly welcoming and unforgettable atmosphere. The final day was a celebration of progress. Students confidently navigated the slopes, showcasing the skills they had acquired throughout the week. A celebratory run down the blue run, where their journey began, marked the culmination of their achievements. Certificates were awarded, and farewells were said to the instructors who had guided them throughout the week.

The trip was a resounding success. Students not only improved their skiing abilities but also demonstrated impressive personal growth, forging lasting friendships and developing valuable life skills. The hotel owner, deeply impressed by the students' positive attitude and excellent behaviour, made a special speech, a testament to their positive impact on the community.

We are incredibly proud of all the students who participated in this unforgettable adventure. They returned home with a wealth of exciting memories, stories to share, and a renewed appreciation for the beauty of the winter landscape.



Polesworth Students Shine on Unforgettable Italian Ski Adventure!

by Deputy Safeguarding Lead, John White

From Saturday, January 11th to Friday, January 17th, the much-anticipated Polesworth Ski Trip made a triumphant return! Lucky students from Years 8, 9, and 10 embarked on an exhilarating week-long skiing adventure in the picturesque Italian Alps.



The students enjoyed five hours of ski tuition each day, honing their skills on the slopes. But the fun didn't stop there! Evenings were packed with exciting activities, including night skiing, a torchlit descent, tubing, quizzes, and games. It was a week filled with unforgettable experiences and endless laughter.

Beyond mastering a new sport, the students also developed invaluable life skills such as resilience, teamwork, and independence—qualities that are often discussed but rarely put into practice so effectively.

The hotel staff went above and beyond to ensure everyone was well taken care of, providing excellent service, delicious food, and delightful treats like hot chocolate. Their efforts made the trip even more special.

Polesworth students were exemplary ambassadors for their school, impressing the public with their impeccable manners and behavior. While we always knew our students were fantastic, it was heartwarming to hear such positive feedback from others.



A huge thank you goes out to our dedicated finance and admin team, who worked tirelessly before and during the trip to ensure everything ran smoothly. We also extend our gratitude to the staff who accompanied the students and took great care of them throughout the week.

This ski trip was truly a memorable experience for everyone involved, and we can't wait for the next adventure!





Introducing....

Our Network Groups..... This issue shines a light on the **Pupil Premium Specialist Group**. By Debbie Cambridge, Chair of Group, Windmill Primary School

What makes a school successful?

A familiar question?

It was recently asked to Marc Rowland, a government advisor and expert on pupil premium, and this is what he said.

- Consistency of experience for pupils
- Consistently welcoming
- Consistent behaviour expectations
- Consistent strong relationships

You may have noticed a common theme above.

It is a fact that children who have vulnerabilities and are therefore disadvantaged need consistency, they thrive off it, in fact we all do.



So as educators and members of our trust we have a commitment to explore best practices and develop these in our schools to secure the above.

If you are interested in creating an equitable education within your school and collaboratively developing these ideas to diminish difference and close attainment gaps within your school and across the trust, then please feel welcomed to join our Pupil Premium Networking group to discuss research, existing practice, best-practice and strategy guidance.

During our networking time we discuss pragmatic tips for strategic thinking and planning around the pupil premium strategy and are working to develop a trust-wide document to enable all schools access to best practice that has been tried and tested by a school you can easily reach out to and see in practice.

We know that school cannot solve all of society's problems, but we can and do have a commitment to giving all children opportunities to have the best experience in school, especially those that lack opportunities outside of school.

Join our group to discuss the latest research, ideas and what works well when strategically planning, delivering and reviewing an equitable education for all.

Our next meeting is May 21st, and you can access our agendas, minutes and resources on the IOE,

If you wish to join our email thread to receive resources email me at debbie.cambridge@taw.org.uk.



Training News....

The Community Academies Trust supports colleagues to develop professionally, creating a community of learners, striving to achieve excellence

Safeguarding in the Digital Age: Protecting Young Lives

Where: IoE Training Centre, Dordon Primary School

When: Tuesday 1 April 2025

Session 1: 10-11.30

Session 2: 1-2.30

Session 3: 3.30-5.00

Delivered by Birchwood's tech expert Martin Bailey

In today's interconnected world, the digital landscape presents both significant opportunities and complex challenges for children and adults alike. The rapid advancement of technology, including the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), has made online safeguarding more urgent and complex than ever. To ensure the safety and wellbeing of pupils, it is essential for teachers to stay informed about emerging trends and potential risks in the digital realm.

Why You Should Attend: ***This training session is not just for teachers; it is crucial for anyone with children.*** The digital age brings unique risks that can affect your child's safety and wellbeing. By attending, you will gain invaluable insights into the online world your children navigate daily. This session will empower you with the knowledge and tools to protect your children from online dangers, ensuring they can explore the digital world safely.

Benefits of attending:

- Stay Informed: Understand the latest digital trends and potential risks that could impact your children.
- Practical Strategies: Learn effective methods to safeguard your children from online threats such as cyberbullying, grooming, and exploitation.
- Empowerment: Gain the confidence to discuss digital safety with your children and implement protective measures at home.
- Supportive Environment: Connect with other parents and educators to share experiences and strategies for keeping children safe online.

Session Aims:

- Provide an overview of the digital challenges and risks children face today.
- Examine the impact of AI technologies on children's safety and wellbeing.
- Strengthen understanding of online risks, including cyberbullying, grooming, and exploitation, in alignment with safeguarding priorities.
- Explore how the online world influences children's development, wellbeing, and safety.
- Understand children's digital behaviours and identify platforms that may pose safeguarding concerns.

By attending this session, you will be taking a proactive step in safeguarding your children in the digital age. Don't miss this opportunity to protect young lives and foster a safe and supportive environment for their growth and development.

To book on any of the above sessions, please email ioe@catschools.uk, specifying which session you would like to join.

OCM Issue 24, February 2025

Early Career Framework: News

As you may be aware, our trust uses Best Practice Network to deliver our Early Career Framework. You may also have heard in the national press, that they were not successful in the most recent round of bids.

The consequence of this is as follows:

ECT/ECM Y1 will continue pursue the remainder of thier course through Best Practice Network, so no change for them.

ECT/ECM Y2 will complete this summer, so no change for them.

New ECTs/ECMs starting September 2025 We are delighted to announce our intention to partner with Teach First to continue facilitating delivery of the ECF programme. Teach First has a strong track record in supporting teacher development and we are confident that this partnership will ensure a seamless transition and continued high-quality support for our ECTs.

National Professional Qualifications: News

Whilst Best Practice Network did not secure the Early Career Framework, they continue to provide outstanding NPQs.

The IoE continues to deliver the NPQSL together with the specialist NPQs in partnership with Best Practice Network. We have been advised that if you have anyone in your school you believe may benefit from undertaking an NPQ, particularly if you have potential or new SENCos, they should sign up to do this as soon as possible, as indications show that DfE may be withdrawing funding from these in the near future.

Funding for Spring 2025 will target those teachers and leaders who work in the most challenging schools or educational settings, serving more disadvantaged communities.

Scholarship funding to cover the full NPQ course cost will be available to teachers and leaders from:

- the 50% of schools with the highest proportion of students who attract pupil premium funding
- 16 to 19 educational settings identified as having high disadvantage

If you are unsure whether or not you qualify for funding, use the NPQ scholarship checker on the Best Practice website here: [NPQ Checker](#)

IoE facilitates the NPQSL, NPQLT, NPQLTD and NPQLBC. These courses are facilitated face to face at the IoE training centre based at Dordon Primary School. With the exception of the NPQSL which is 4 sessions in length, the specialist NPQs comprise three face to face sessions.

If you register, do please select CATTs as your delivery partner as that not only ensures that you are allocated to one of our groups but also generates a small introduction fee for our trust.

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.

Education Matters

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



Spotlight on WalkThrus

As part of the Assessment Specialist Group, the IoE has funded an annual subscription to ensure that all schools have access to these comprehensive online resources created by Tom Sherrington and Oliver Caviglioli. The WalkThru series offer valuable insights and strategies that can significantly enhance our practices in key areas including:

- Behaviour and Relationships
- Curriculum Planning
- Explaining and Modelling
- Research
- Questioning and Feedback
- Practice & Retrieval
- Mode B Teaching



As a reminder, you can access the Walkthru resources using the following credentials:

Login: walkthrus@catschools.uk

Password: CATIoE2020

Website: [Walkthrus Resources](#)

Whilst you're on there, check out the new LEARNING WALKTHRUS, with it's 70+ five step techniques.



LEARNING WALKTHRUS

BETTER LEARNING. STEP BY STEP.

LEARNING WALKTHRUS is a visual guide to key aspects of learning and studying at home and at school. It features **70+** five-step techniques devised by Tom Sherrington and illustrated by Oliver Caviglioli, with guest authors including Sarah Cottingham, Peps Mccrea, Sara Milne Rowe, Christopher Such, Emma Turner and Jennifer Webb.

CAT Institute of Education Matters



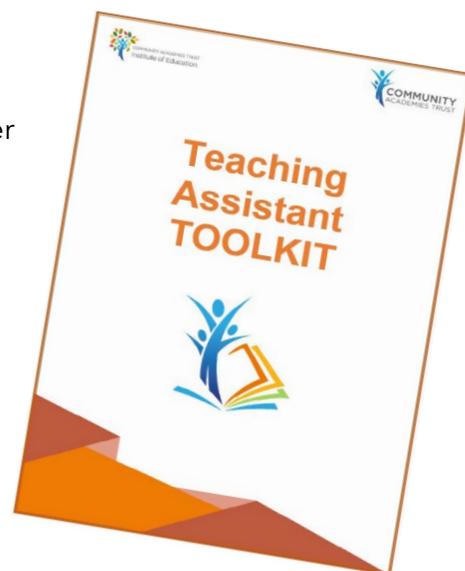
A spotlight on the trust's Centre for Teacher Training, Professional Development and school improvement by Alexis Rickus, Director of Institute of Education

I trust that you enjoyed your recent half-term break. The spring half-term appears to arrive with remarkable speed, particularly this year, as there have been numerous activities and initiatives we have been working on. Arrangements for CATalyst25, our first whole trust day, are well underway and we are excited to announce that Tracy Campbell, Together Transforming Behaviour, will be joining us for the day.

Just prior to the half-term, OFSTED published their draft framework for consultation together with a number of toolkits that explain their report cards. For a handy summary of what this means to schools check this out here. <https://youtu.be/bAlfl3nHTxl>.

In relation to toolkits, I am pleased to announce the long-awaited publication of our Teaching Assistant Toolkit. Previously, teaching assistants have relied on a combination of the support staff and teacher toolkits. Now, they possess a dedicated toolkit that includes their own self-reflection tool. This resource will enable teaching assistants within our trust to more effectively identify their own developmental goals, rather than solely focusing on those associated with their specific job roles.

We are also continuing our efforts on the Leadership Toolkit, and a working group has been established to advance this project. Should you be interested in participating, please contact Caroline O'Regan, Chair of the Leadership and Coaching Specialist Network, at c.oregan@thepolesworthschool.com.



I mentioned in the previous edition of OCM that the IoE has been exploring potential providers to deliver the Early Career Framework (ECF) programme to schools within our trust. We are now pleased to announce our intention to facilitate the ECF programme through **Teach First**. Teach First will afford us a more flexible approach to delivering the ECF programme and will allow us to facilitate to schools within our local contexts. Further information will go out to schools once it becomes available.

Regarding the National Professional Qualifications (NPQ), we will continue to support these qualifications while they remain available through the Best Practice Network. Applications for the Spring cohort are currently open; please visit <https://www.bestpracticenet.co.uk/specialist-npqs>. It is important to note that funding is limited, so if you qualify for free qualifications, I encourage you to register promptly before the scholarships are withdrawn. When registering for your NPQ, please indicate CATTs in your selection of delivery partner as this generates a small income as well as ensuring you are in a group facilitated by CAT colleagues.

Since our last publication, in which we directed you to various DfE funded subject networks, several of these have had their funding rescinded. Consequently, the Computing and behaviour Hubs are no more and Language Hubs are being scaled back. English, Maths and Music hubs remain.

Alexis Rickus
Director of the CAT Institute of Education



INSPIRING EXCELLENCE; SHAPING A STRONG, POSITIVE CULTURE

FRIDAY 27TH JUNE 2025. EASTSIDE ROOMS, BIRMINGHAM

Post-COVID classrooms need a radical, relational and restorative approach to behaviour to reestablish cooperation between students and staff.

Come and spend a whole day, looking at whole school behaviour...

Will you be the One? Keynote:

Touching the hearts of staff, changing the lives of students

Will you be the One? Workshop:

A balanced approach to whole school behaviour

Behaviour Leadership: Workshop:

Managing students, mobilising staff

Breakout Groups:

A clear plan for improved practice



Conference Facilitator: Tracey Campbell

Keynote Speaker | Behaviour Consultant | Trainer | Author

Tracey is a captivating speaker and trainer with a clear message to adults working in schools: Will you be the one to choose to cherish your students in their challenging moments?





Network News.

Update by Director Network Groups, Neil Coleman

Firstly, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all staff who continue to support and contribute to the work of the Professional Networks. The collaboration, shared thinking, and contributions from staff across our Trust enable our networks to provide a support platform for school improvement and professional development.

During this half term, our Curriculum Networks shared an Institute of Education (IoE) video resource focusing on checking for understanding. The networks discussed what this looks like in their subject areas and shared examples of best practices.

Pupil enrichment activities were on the agenda for discussion at many of our meetings. Below are the details of the pupil enrichment activities planned so far:

- English: Trust World Book Day quiz - Wednesday 5th March. Schools can join in person at Birchwood or remotely.
- Science: The Big CAT Science quiz - Tuesday 11th March 13:30-14:30. Schools can join in person at Polesworth or remotely.
- Geography: Design your own Island competition - entries due by Wednesday 21st May.
- D.T: Great CAT Bake Off - Tuesday 8th July at Polesworth.
- Primary Maths: Year 5/6 virtual maths quiz in Summer 2.
- Languages: Transition day for Year 6 children in Summer 2, followed by a Languages virtual competition.
- P.E: KS2 Trust football tournaments - Summer 2. Dates, times, and venues are still to be arranged.
- R.E: NATRE picture and thought competition in Summer 2.

It is very encouraging that our Networks are not only providing an opportunity for Trust staff to learn together, but they are also enabling children from across our Trust to engage and learn from each other.

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

Enrichment Events: Dates for your diaries.....

THE CAT WORLD BOOK DAY QUIZ

Wednesday 5th March 2025

Join us at The Polesworth School and compete against other primary teams for a chance to win the grand prize!

LOCATION: The Polesworth School, Tamworth

TIME: 2-3pm

Open to Year 5 and Year 6 pupils- teams of 3-5

To find out more information or to enter your school please email Beth Currall at:
b.currall@thepolesworthschool.com
by 3pm on Wednesday 12th February



WORLD
BOOK
DAY

CAT World Book
Day
Competition 2025



Book in a Box

This World Book Day, put your creativity to the test...

Can you turn your favourite book into an artistic scene in a cardboard box?

Compete against other primary schools for your chance to win an exciting goody bag, plus...

1st Place: £20 National Book Token Gift Card

2nd Place: £10 National Book Token Gift Card

3rd Place: £5 National Book Token Gift Card

Each school will also get a prize to award to an entry of their choice.

We can't wait to see your entries!
Good luck!



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

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

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 r.wilkinson@thepolesworthschool.com.

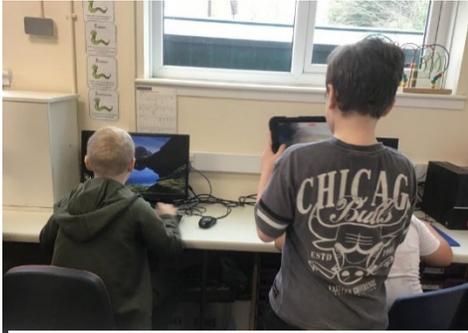
Don't miss out on this chance to inspire young minds and foster a love of science—register your team today!

Our Half Term in Pictures

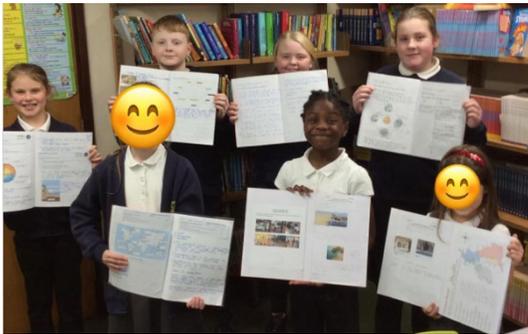


And finally.....

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.



Y5 Chadsmead Academy enjoying the world of film making



Y1-6 Geography books - beautiful work



Stoneydolph Primary and Chadsmead Primary Academy rocking it out together at Young Voices



WE ARE HIRING!
Visit our career site >>

MYNEWTTERM.COM
Teacher Internship - Institute of Education, Staffordshire,
Closing date: Midnight, Fri 11th Apr, 2025. View full details and apply online at MyNewTerm.

Still time to apply for a paid internship. If you know anyone who is an undergraduate in maths, science, computing, languages go to www.thecatinstittue.org and download an application or scan the QR code.

