

# CONNECT NEWSLETTER

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# Football star **Harry Kane** inspires students

Children at Manor School were inspired by sports star Harry Kane who made a special appearance to mark Children's Mental Health Week.

The famous footballer and England Captain also answered questions from students as part of an initiative by the Harry Kane Foundation and Bounce Forward charities.

The charities are working together on a shared mission to inspire a generation's thinking about mental health and how to nurture and build psychological fitness.

Bounce Forward marked Children's Mental Health Week with the special visit to Manor School, alongside Harry and Kate Kane. The aim of the visit was to hear from pupils and see a Bounce Forward Physical Resilience lesson in action, which has been curated with Harry Kane, and teaches children about the link between physical and mental health.

Harry joined the classroom virtually from Munich and spoke directly to the children to hear how they have been using the learning from the lessons and answer their questions.

Manor School has been specially selected as one of 17 lead secondary schools across all nine regions of the country, to benefit from the free psychological fitness training and educational resources provided in partnership by Bounce Forward and the Harry Kane Foundation.

Designed to nurture and build mental resilience and emotional wellbeing, Manor School has embedded Bounce Forward's Healthy Minds lessons into its core curriculum to achieve long-term impact.

**Matt Coleman**, Deputy CEO, said: "This initiative is so incredibly important and is an area that both I personally and we as a family of schools have been championing for a long time now. Young people's mental health is not getting any better; it is a gradually worsening situation."

"We are determined to do something to make a positive change, which is a priority across our Trust; however, this should be a key focus for all schools, everywhere. Some would say that there is a general reluctance within the education sector to instigate meaningful change as many schools are exam factories focused on grades and percentages of pupils passing exams, meaning that schools are unable to also work on the children's resilience, their mental wellbeing, and the ability to look after themselves, which is sad.

"Our work with Bounce Forward aims to support our young people with better strategies for supporting their own mental health. It goes without saying that having someone as iconic as Harry Kane inspiring this change adds to the profile and will undoubtedly help to ensure long-lasting impact."

Healthy Minds includes training for education staff and 69-lessons across year 7 - year 11. The evidence-based teaching resources feature bespoke content co-authored by Harry and his wife, Kate. The Physical Resilience lessons inspired by Harry deliver learning on the role that exercise, nutrition and sleep has on mental health.

Alongside Bounce Forward, **Kate Kane** also visited Manor School, to see first-hand the lessons she has helped design with Bounce Forward called Intentional Stillness.





Kate heard from teachers and spoke to students about what the lessons, which teach calming and focusing techniques to nurture and build positive mental health, mean to them.

Trust Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead, **Amy Bradshaw**, said: "Meeting Harry was a real focal point of the day for students and having Kate there in person to watch an Intentional Stillness lesson and engage with the students was a really special part of the whole experience.

"The buzz this created at Manor School was extremely positive as Harry is someone that so many of the children look up to. He opened up and talked about the fact that he had faced struggles and difficulties and he talked about the things he does to overcome that.

It is great Harry and his foundation is doing this work because lending his voice to something so important means more people will sit up and listen.

"Children's mental health is lower than ever before and a school's role in how it tackles that issue is bigger than ever before.

As a Trust we are doing everything we can to skill children up with the knowledge, understanding and the tools around mental health and wellbeing to empower them. We want to ensure our children are happy mentally and physically and encourage them to achieve the best they can achieve – happy children learn best."

**Lucy Bailey**, CEO and Founder of Bounce Forward added: "I wish I could bottle up the thoughtful and strategic approach that Manor School has taken in implementing Healthy Minds and share it with every school in the country!

They are at the start of their journey, but have put into place all the building blocks, using all the expertise and energy from within the school to imbue the learning. I am excited to see how it grows over the months and years ahead, and to be able to share their approach with other schools."

**To find out more about the important work done by the Harry Kane Foundation and Bounce Forward, visit [bounceforward.com](https://bounceforward.com)**



# Trustee Talk with Lee Hughes

Lee Hughes joined the Board of Trustees in September 2023, and has been hard at work providing valued insights on the Trust's finances. We spoke to him about his role as a Trustee and his aspirations for the Trust moving forward.

## Tell us about your background and how this informed how you became involved with governance at the trust?

I'm a chartered accountant and spent most of my career working in large global businesses. In 2017, I began working at a multi-academy trust in central Bedfordshire and I loved it. In 2019 I moved to Peterborough Diocese Education Trust (PDET) and continued to develop my work in the sector. I love my job and, in my own way, how I'm able to have an impact on pupils and create positive outcomes for children. As a father of two young girls, I see the value in it massively. When the opportunity arose to support NET, as a Northamptonshire resident living close to a number of NET schools, I felt I could make a difference.

As a Fellow of the Institute of School Business Leaders (ISBL) I can offer system leadership across a number of business support services and help develop systems and processes to improve on lots of the good work the NET Executive Team have already completed.

## Do you have a particular specialty or an area that's your responsibility?

I sit on the Finances and Resources Committee. As a chartered accountant who also works in a multi-academy trust, I specialise in academy finances and have a deep understanding of how to run the business of a multi-academy trust so I can see ways in which to foster NET's growth and build resilient, high performing teams.

## The multi-academy trust system is unique in that it pursues both growth in a business sense and better educational outcomes. How are those two things linked?

We are at a strange crossroads in the Education sector, as everyone wants to grow, but there's a finite number of schools and children, so not everyone can grow.



However, financial growth provides security and stabilises a trust's ability to be impactful. As part of a larger organisation with more schools, there's more knowledge and skills that you can lean on, allowing staff to share best practice and bring all the schools up together. The larger financial might means that money can be moved to schools where it's needed within the trust, while maintaining stability in the others.

That said, it's important not to grow for growth's sake. You have to grow with schools that match your ethos and believe in what you're trying to achieve. If there is a cultural fit in that respect, then that's great. There can be a 'grow at all costs' mentality in multi academy trusts, but growth should be considered careful and assured to truly reap the benefits.

## What are your goals within your role and on the board of trustees? What would you like to see NET achieve going forward?

I would like to see a high performing trust that is recognised both internally and externally. I want people to feel proud of being part of NET, and I want the children to be happy. If the staff are flourishing, the children will flourish too. I want to be part of a trust that gets its culture right, and wants to grow the right way, rather than at all costs.

# Students at Stanwick Experience the Explorer Dome

Children at Stanwick Primary were able to experience different environments in the Explorer Dome recently.

They learnt about the desert, arctic and even a rubbish dump and enjoyed dressing up and adapting to the different environments like animals do in their habitats.



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# CEO Update

Following on from last month's edition of CEO Update, we're continuing to spotlight some early career teachers and teacher in training who are the future of the Trust.

This month we'll be speaking to some Early Career Teachers (ECTs): **Anita Taylor from Stanwick Primary School**, and **Veritee Burton and Chloe Wheatley from Redwell Primary School**.

**Chris:** What has it been like being an ECT in our schools? What are the best bits?

**Anita:** The best thing for me is teaching the children. I've been lucky to have a really supportive principal, she's been amazing. My first year was incredible, if I ever needed any support or questions answering, she's been there. Seeing others teach is also very valuable, I'm a one form entry ECT which is great in some ways as it allows me to work on my own.

**Chris:** And you are doing it all on your own. It's a clear investment in you.

**Anita:** My principal definitely fully invests in her new teachers, which makes you feel more valued.

**Veritee:** I feel the same about my principals, Claire and Dulcie at Redwell. Dulcie does my observations, and she always gives great, constructive feedback that she relates back to teacher standards and gives me things to work on for next time. The mentor leads are great as well, mine is in my year group so I can maintain constant contact with her to get feedback and reflect on successes.

**Chloe:** It's handy that they are so down to earth, they never make you feel silly. Everyone being supportive definitely makes you feel more comfortable.

**Anita:** Even teachers who say that they've been doing it for twenty years and sometimes things go wrong can be reassuring. Every child and every group are different, and you can't get it right first time for all of them.

**Chris:** In a way that's the joy of teaching: every day is different, let alone year to year with a different group of children. Teaching is about being responsive to the needs of the group in front of you, which is a rewarding challenge. Have there been any challenges in your first year or two?

**Chloe:** Behaviour management was huge for me. In my first year I found it really tough, especially because I was teaching year 5. Now I feel like I've really overcome that and now have mutual respect with my class.

**Chris:** That mutual respect factor is key. It's about building relationships and knowing the children as individuals.

**Veritee:** We say at the start of the year in our training that we need to find out one thing about each individual child that you can take forward for the year. Which is really valuable as then you always have something to fall back on to engage with them.

**Anita:** For me a challenge has been finding an appropriate work-life balance. But my principal is very good at encouraging me to find time for me. I am now doing things quicker as I gain experience and stop second guessing myself.

**Veritee:** I think staying in the same year group is helpful too, as you have experience with the material as well as experience overall.

**Chloe:** I haven't had the same experience as I moved schools between years, but it's been useful to bring alternative views to the material as well, which helps me feel like I'm contributing as well.

**Chris:** What happens between now and the end of the year in terms of finishing up your course?

**Veritee:** At Redwell, we have a form with all of the teacher standards on it which you fill out to show you are meeting those standards. It's split up by term so you can see progression over time.

**Chloe:** I didn't have to do that last year, and I've found it really helpful doing it this year, being able to look back and see that you've improved.

**Veritee:** When you reflect on it you can see how far you've come. I really enjoy doing it.

**Chris:** Usually the best teachers are the most reflective, and often the most self-critical, perhaps excessively. But it's important to drive improvement.

**Thank you for sharing your experiences so far.**



**Does your school have some incredible news? Staff successes? School events?**  
Contact [vbrennan@neducationtrust.org.uk](mailto:vbrennan@neducationtrust.org.uk) to be featured in the next NET Connect Newsletter



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# Preston's Lego Trip

Redwell Primary School pupil and content creator, Preston, was given an amazing opportunity to travel to Denmark for a new LEGO unveiling recently.

Preston started his TikTok page/Instagram Lego page with his Dad in 2020. In September 2023, they were contacted by Lego about becoming UK ambassadors and earlier this year were invited to the top secret unveiling of a new Star Wars collection.

Preston's family stayed in the Danish town of Billund and visited the Lego house where all of the creators are. The trip included a visit to a bespoke Lego store inside which you can scan your specially allocated wristband to access the second floor where you can enter the experience zones - there are some top secret vaults up there too.

Here is Preston's explanation of what he got up to in each of the pictures:



*'This is me with the LEGO designers of the new experience called Build the Change. You have to build something and a LEGO mini figure gives you 4 things to incorporate into a Lego model. I had a lot of fun with it.'*



*'This is me in the LEGO vault which we couldn't record any content but we could take pictures. It has every set from 1958 until now and it was crazy to see the evolution of the sets.'*



*'We saw some new Star Wars sets and we had to sign a Non Disclosure Agreement to see them. We saw lots of people and some of them had over one million subscribers! That's crazy!'*



*'In the LEGO House, there was a tree called the Tree of Creativity and it has a massive amount of LEGO bricks with 6,316,611 pieces and it took 24,000 hours to complete. Every branch represents a theme of LEGO and at the top, there is a crane to show that it's not finished and is forever growing.'*



*'This is me and my Dad with our content creator badges so we could get into some special places with them.'*

*What an amazing experience! Well done Preston.*



**Name and Title**

Katie Dicker,  
English teacher,  
Head of English and  
Professional Tutor

**Who are you and what are some of your day-to-day duties/key responsibilities?**

First and foremost, I am an English teacher – a passionate advocate for the power of language and literacy. My primary goal is to ignite a love for language within the students at Manor, empowering them to communicate effectively, think critically and engage meaningfully with the world around them. I spend a large portion of my time planning, delivering lessons, assessing students' progress, providing feedback and creating a positive learning environment.

As Head of English, I am extremely lucky to lead a group of incredibly dedicated and hard-working English teachers who are entirely committed to cultivating not only proficient readers and writers but also confident speakers and active listeners. My role is not just administrative; it's about empowering a team of dedicated educators to unleash the full potential of every student. I hope that I lead by example, fostering a culture of collaboration, innovation and continuous improvement. As a team we spend many hours together evaluating our current schemes of work and ensuring we are delivering the best we can to our students. Together, we have created a vibrant learning community where ideas flourish and creativity thrives.

Another key responsibility of mine is to champion the importance of literature – as the lead for our A-Level Literature course, I am driven by a profound love of literature and a fervent belief in its ability to enrich and transform lives. To teach literature is not just to teach a text; it is to share stories that resonate with the human experience, sparking discussions that challenge assumptions and provoke critical thinking.

As a professional tutor, I nurture the next generation of educators. My main responsibility is to serve as a mentor, guide and advocate for our new teachers and provide personalised support tailored to their unique needs and aspirations, making myself available to offer practical advice, constructive feedback and strategies to help them grow and thrive in the profession.

Beyond the syllabus, I have a desire to instil a lifelong love of reading and encourage students to explore literature

as a gateway to empathy, understanding and personal growth. As an English teacher the responsibility is great – to shape the next generation of thinkers, dreamers and changemakers, empowering them to harness the power of literature to shape a brighter, more compassionate world.

**How long have you worked at the Trust?**

I have worked at Manor as an English teacher for 11 years. This is my second year as Departmental Head. I have been working with trainee teachers and early career teachers for 3 years.

**What do you enjoy about your work?**

Witnessing the spark of understanding in a student's eyes, making a positive impact on lives, sharing knowledge and fostering growth. As a teacher, there is a huge sense of fulfilment that comes from helping shape the future generation. If I could bottle that feeling, I'd be very rich indeed!

**What do you like to do outside of work?**

I'm sure this won't be too much of a surprise...I read. I love embarking on a wild adventure without ever leaving the comfort of my favourite armchair – every page turn a potential plot twist, every character a new friend and every bookshelf a treasure trove waiting to be plundered.

I also have a keen interest in art and visiting galleries - the quiet of the gallery provides a welcome respite from the noise of the classroom. Not that I don't love the noise of the classroom!

**Do you play/follow any sports?**

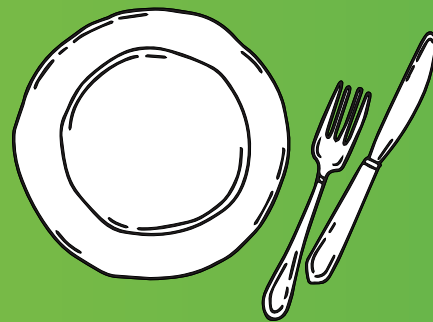
I don't play or follow sports. I chose books over sport at a very young age because I realised I had a much better chance of winning a literary marathon than a real one!

**Favourite city/destination?**

Giving 'favourites' is difficult for me, as I find that my preferences change often! My 'favourite' today may not be the same tomorrow. With that in mind, I can share a few destinations that I have spent enjoyable time in: I love Brighton for its vibrant energy and charm – it strikes me as a beacon of creativity and diversity. I love its modern spirit, embodied in the thriving arts scene and progressive community, set against a backdrop of Regency architecture. I also have a fond place in my heart for Berlin; the city tells a story – from the iconic Brandenburg Gate to the vibrant graffiti-adorned remnants of the Berlin Wall, every corner has a tale to tell... tales of struggle, triumph and transformation.



# 10 minutes with...



**Favourite food?**

Again, I struggle assigning a favourite. I love Thai food but I wouldn't want it for breakfast. I suppose it could be called culinary commitment issues – I'm afraid of settling down with just one dish and breaking the hearts of all the other delicious foods out there!

**Favourite book?**

For me, this is the most difficult question – I always struggle to pick a favourite book because its like asking a parent to choose their favourite child – impossible!

But here are some books I'd recommend:

- The Bell Jar by Sylvia Plath – a haunting journey into the depths of the human psyche. A true masterpiece.
- Doomed by Chuck Palanuk – a darkly humorous, absurd and thought-provoking exploration of the afterlife.
- To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee – a timeless masterpiece that bravely confronts prejudice and injustice. The themes of racial injustice, empathy and moral integrity are deeply relevant in our society today and should be read by all.

**Favourite saying or quote?**

Here are two, very different to one another, that I am particularly fond of: "I have learned over the years that when one's mind is made up, this diminishes fear; knowing what must be done does away with fear." Rosa Parks "Dispute not with her: she is a lunatic." Shakespeare (Richard III)



**Fears?**

As a secondary school teacher, I am, of course, entirely fearless (inserts winking face emoji!)



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## GET IN TOUCH

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