

CONNECT NEWSLETTER

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Nene
Education
Trust



Children aim to 'Make The World A Better Place' in Anti-Bullying Song Competition

Months of preparation, song writing and rehearsals by schools around the county culminated in a concert in front of an expert judging panel at The Spinney Theatre in Northampton on 1st March 2024. Two schools from Nene Education Trust made it through to the final: St Peter's CE Primary Academy (with 4 acts) and Redwell Primary School, at an event compered by Martyna Wren – a renowned British singer songwriter.

120 children/groups entered songs into the competition of which 10 were selected to be performed on the night, in front of an audience of over 600 proud friends, family and school staff.

The competition has been running for over 10 years and was the brainchild of John Bowman. John is the co-founder of The Notivate Trust, a charity that funds on-site, studio-based and residential music activities for young people as well as training for aspiring music leaders both in the UK and Africa.

John said: "We are really pleased to be able to resurrect the project following a brief hiatus due to Covid. Huge thanks go to Northamptonshire Community Foundation and The Notivate Trust for providing the funds to us to be able to run the competition.

"Thanks also goes to everyone involved; the staff that supported the children with their songwriting skills, the children's parents for their support but most of all, the children for their eloquence in communicating the anti-bullying message."

The children, supported by the House Band, performed their songs and eloquently answered questions about what their anti-bullying message meant to them.

A song entitled 'Make The World A Better Place' written and performed by the Redwell Primary School Choir was deemed by the panel to be the winner. The children were supported by Mrs Zoe Casburn, music lead and Mrs Chrissie Fordham, anti-bullying lead for the school. (*The children in the blue vests in the photo are from the school's Anti-Bullying Council).

Principal of Redwell Primary, Claire Head, said: "I am extremely proud of the dedication and commitment our anti-bullying team provide to the school and pupils to ensure everyone feels comfortable and has positive relationships. I would like to thank the anti-bullying team, the Year 5 & 6 choir, Mrs Casburn and Mrs Fordham for their commitment to this event and as a school community. We are delighted that they won this competition considering the high calibre of entries."

The school choir will now get the opportunity to professionally record their song at The Stables in Milton Keynes which will be available to download from Apple Music, Spotify and other download sites.



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CEO Update

Redwell Primary School joined Nene Education Trust in 2021 and has gone from strength to strength ever since, participating in a number of initiatives and becoming a valued member of the Trust family. I spoke to Claire Head, Principal at Redwell, about what joining the Trust has meant to them.

Chris: What have these initial years as part of the Trust been like from your perspective?

Claire: It really feels like we're part of the family now. We have a reliable network of people to turn to for support and it's really brought us into a wider community. The staff feel included and are able to share their opinions and be involved in projects across the Trust. Everyone has a voice.

Chris: That's great to hear. As a principal, how have you benefitted from the network of the Trust?

Claire: It's definitely down to the support, from both you and Matt (Coleman, Deputy CEO) in particular. Guiding me through headship, and ensuring we are focussing on the right things for the school, even if that means having difficult conversations to ensure we're doing the right things for the children. Even as a leader, there are times when you have questions and being able to pick up the phone and speak to someone at the Trust is so useful.

Chris: Being a principal is a difficult job, with schools becoming more challenging and a lack of support services, so having a network of people you trust to talk to is invaluable.

Claire: Sometimes you don't know the answer, and it's about coming together to ask questions and share best practice. If we do hit a brick wall, having experts like Karen Stevenson, our SEND Lead, on hand to give advice, or the finance team to ensure we're not overspending helps us so much.

Chris: How different is that from being a local authority school?

Claire: This is no fault of the local authority, but schools are very much an island. Of course, you can build up partnerships with other local schools, but you are ultimately on your own. The difference when joining the Trust is that you do have that expertise around you.

The training is amazing too, allowing people to develop and improve themselves, which in turn will make outcomes for children better.

Chris: Seeing how you've grown as a leader over that time, you've had the right approach and the right mindset. You, and Redwell as a whole, have really got involved with the Trust, both sharing and receiving expertise and knowledge.

Claire: As a Trust, you empower us. If people want to expand their skillset or be involved in a project, there are opportunities to do that. There's an array of training opportunities led by Victoria Brennan, both to attend courses and to deliver them. I've been involved in the NPQLL and that's been a unique challenge, my candidates are just coming to their assessment point. Being part of the Trust is exciting and you can feel that there's more exciting things to come.

Chris: We need those exciting things, things where we can be brave and push the boundaries. Being in a school is difficult and rewarding, but we always need to be looking for the next thing that we can all work on together.

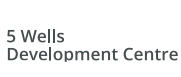
Claire: I think that local authority schools can find things like this intimidating, but within a Trust the support is there to explore something different and think outside the box. Ultimately, if that's the right thing to do by the children, then we should explore all avenues.

Chris: So, we've heard about yourself as a leader and your teachers, but what about the children? What benefits have they experienced over the last couple of years?

Claire: I'd like to bring up a quote from a parent I heard at a celebration assembly last week. She said: "I love this school; it feels like it's in a movie. Every day the children come home so calm but they've had so many opportunities and experiences." I had to thank her, as that's something that both as a Trust and as a school we work really hard to ensure that children have those opportunities.

Chris: Thank you, Claire, and it's wonderful to have Redwell as part of our family of schools.

[Listen to the full interview on the NETCast.](#)





Bringing **Learning** to Life

Staff and children at Stanwick Primary Academy are celebrating achieving Outdoor School Status.

The prestigious accolade is in recognition of all the efforts of teachers and staff at the school, which hosted a special presentation to mark the achievement.

Parents and local businesses also pledged their support and sponsorship to help the school achieve its status success.

Teach Outdoors has awarded Stanwick Primary Academy the 'Teach Outdoors School' Status, which celebrates a commitment to a whole school approach to active outdoor learning.

Rich Bosworth, Interim Principal, said: "We've done the hard work and we're now celebrating achieving the status. There was lots of work involved to ensure we met the criteria to achieve this and we look forward to enhancing our provision further now that we are in the sustainability phase. It is all about engagement and ensuring that outdoor learning is seen as the core offer here, that it is consistent across the school."

"We ensure outdoor learning is part of everything we do, so every year group has the opportunity to get outside and learn."

He explained there is a connection between outdoor learning and mental health and wellbeing.

"We have found that there is a clear correlation for our children that being outdoors and having the opportunity to learn that way does improve their wellbeing."



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We use the term 'sticky learning' as we want to make sure our learning experiences are memorable. The opportunity to go and learn outdoors means that they are."

"Our Year Six pupils were outdoor learning about algebra recently and were measuring the heights of trees using algorithms. They will remember what they have learned because it was more fun than having to sit and do that in the classroom."

Kirsty Smith, Outdoors Learning Lead at the school, also took part in the school's special presentation.

Kirsty added: "Any space, as long as you are outside, becomes a valuable learning tool."

The school would like to extend special thanks to the Mower Shed and other sponsors for supporting the project and invited them, and representatives from the Learn Outdoors organisation and the University of Northampton to visit the school for an official handover of the school's framed certificate.



Does your school have some incredible news? Staff successes? School events?
Contact vbrennan@neneducationtrust.org.uk to be featured in the next NET Connect Newsletter

World Book Day Stars

Familiar characters and creatures from some of the most popular children's books made an appearance in classrooms across the Trust's network of schools.

Children celebrated World Book Day by dressing up as their favourite characters from a range of popular books, some asked the children to come in dressed as a word.

Other schools asked children to come into school dressed in their pyjamas instead of costumes and bring in their favourite book. Redwell ran a competition where the children decorated a potato to represent their favourite book character and these were judged by staff and reading ambassadors.

Here is a snapshot of some of the children who took part.



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St Peter's C.E. Academy



Redwell Primary School



Woodford Primary School



Wood Park Infant School



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10 minutes with...



Name and Job Title
Rhys Penny,
Principal at Windmill
Primary School.

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

I am Principal at Windmill Primary. My duties include supporting teaching and learning; supporting teachers with SEN and behaviour due to the school having three times the amount of SEN compared to National Average, meeting parents and, of course, making good relationships with the pupils, staff and parents and building relationships within our local community.

How long have you worked at the Trust?

I have worked in NET and at Windmill Primary since September 2022, but I started in May 2022 as part of my transition into my current role.

What do you enjoy about your work?

The school is an amazing place to work but does bring its own challenges which I enjoy taking on. The pupils and staff make the school what it is; it is great seeing the pupils thrive in everything they do each day. I have always wanted to teach since I was five years old due to my first teacher, Mrs Freeman. She made me want to teach, be the best I could be for children and help them learn. Ultimately, I want to enable children to be what they want to be in life.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I enjoy going to the gym to keep fit and healthy, going for a run. I have recently started participating in dance classes and have recently learnt a routine to Kylie's Padam Padam. I have two black Labradors, who keep me busy as do my two children. As for my down time, I enjoy building Lego structures; with my favourite piece being my light up Marvel Iron-Man Head. I like to watch Sci-fi with Star Trek is one of my favourites

Do you play/follow any sports?

The only sport that I am interested in is tennis, where I had the greatest opportunity of attending Wimbledon and watching Serena Williams play on Centre Court. It was magnificent watching her in person, where I could see the sheer power behind each serve which was truly immense! That is something that does not translate when watching on TV.



Favourite city/destination?

New York would have to be my favourite city, I was lucky enough to see the Chrysler building which is my favourite architectural building of all time. The atmosphere in New York was something I have never experienced before but would love to visit again.



Favourite food?

My mother's roast dinner has to be my all-time favourite meal.



Favourite book?

My favourite book to this day is still *'The Owl who was Afraid of the Dark'* by Jill Tomlinson. I love how an owl could be afraid of the dark and how all the characters do their best to help Plop understand why the dark is so good. I have also started reading the Agatha Raisin novels.



Favourite saying or quote?

The thing I say the most often is 'I'll be there now, in a minute'. This is something my mother says and possibly all Welsh people, but really confuses the English a lot.

Fears?

Spiders, snakes, and slugs. Enough said!



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GET IN TOUCH

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Raising Aspirations - Developing Character - Positive Environment