

# The Learning Exchange

Opportunities for Education in Letchworth Garden City

Issue One

## Inspired Learning

A unique programme of arts-based activities has enabled over 2,000 pupils at 13 Garden City Primary Schools to improve their concentration, behaviour and self-confidence.



That's the verdict of teachers and education experts attending a special conference, this week, evaluating the impact of the programme, **'ArtStart5'**.

A series of short sessions, targeted at the beginning of each day, involving **art, music or movement activities** has proved particularly successful in enabling pupils to maximise their learning during the rest of the school day.

**Over 90 teachers**, from participating schools, working with specialist consultancy, Insight Arts Foundation, benefited from specialist training to enable them to deliver the sessions.

"It's the best way to use the first 15 minutes of the day, it sets the climate for the whole day," was just one teacher comment received by **David Wood of Creative Partnerships**, a leading educational research specialist, heading up the project's appraisal team.

Another admitted: "**I have really enjoyed ArtStart and so have the children.** It is surprisingly quick and easy to prepare for, yet the results are quite impressive."

This week's conference, being staged at Plinston, Letchworth, will include **detailed feedback** from David Wood, together with a series of practical 'ArtStart' sessions and a key note speech by creative learning expert and Cape UK Chief Executive, Pat Cochrane.

A **newsletter** for teachers, educationalists and school governors



# Celebrating 100 years!

One of the Garden City's oldest schools is using its Centenary celebrations across the curriculum and galvanising its links with the local community.

Congratulations to the staff, governors and pupils of **Hillshott School** on its packed programme of learning and community engagement.

The School has 'collapsed' its regular timetable over a three-week period in order to incorporate special themes from its one

hundred year rich heritage. In close collaboration with the Heritage Foundation's First Garden City Heritage Museum, it has produced **three special exhibitions** on 'buildings', 'the Hillshott neighbourhood' and 'clothing through the Century'. Each will be staged for a week, with a series of special activities for the pupils, running alongside.

## North Herts Museums and Galleries

**Education Officer, Cas Sanders** will be on hand to lead some special workshops.

In early May, the School also hosted an Open Day and invited local residents and former pupils to attend. Showcasing artwork by pupils in its classrooms, including some **fabulous models of key Garden City buildings**, there were organised tours of the School buildings and plenty of photographs, documents, press cuttings and other memorabilia on display.

Assisted by Heritage Museum staff, many visitors took the opportunity to record their personal **memories and recollections** of the School.

**A case study** of the year is being prepared and history subject leaders will be invited to a special launch in the winter term.

## Follow the leader

Pupils looking to become the next **Fabio Capello** or **Hope Powell** are signing up for a unique, nationally accredited sports coaching qualification.

Sports Leaders (Levels 1 & 2) received Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) accreditation back in 2003. These courses are now available in Letchworth Garden City thanks to the partnership of the town's Secondary Schools, North Herts School Sports Partnership and the Heritage Foundation.

Led by the Heads of PE at Fearnhill (Ian Finch) and The Highfield School (Katy Corbett), the courses are proving very popular. Open to any pupils between the **ages of 14 and 18**, Sports Leaders provides an opportunity to learn the necessary skills for planning and delivering sports based training sessions.

The courses aim to enable participants to help **develop their confidence, communication and planning skills**. When completed, students will get the chance to deliver sports-based sessions within their own schools, in Letchworth Primary Schools and in the Garden City community.



# Where is IT?



**Fearnhill School is working with its four feeder schools – Grange, Norton St Nicholas, Stonehill and Wilbury – to pool skills and knowledge in applying ICT across the curriculum.**

In recent years, Letchworth Garden City schools have spent heavily on their ICT. From **interactive whiteboards to tablet PCs to wireless networks**, most schools have seen their own investment, go considerably further, thanks to generous matched funding from Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation.

Such grant funding has also been instrumental in providing each school with **qualified ICT support** to manage its ICT infrastructure, upgrading systems and absorbing hardware and software, as it has come along.

However, developing a vision and pathway towards it in an ever changing environment can be challenging. Stonehill and Woolgrove are the only schools in Letchworth GC to have achieved the nationally recognised **BECTA ICT Mark**. Then again, only 40 schools in the County have pursued this quality standard and been successful.

Against this background, Fearnhill and its four cluster schools has decided to call in Herts County Council's ICT Curriculum expert, **Shelagh MacKenzie** (below), to undertake a major review, the results of which will be rolled out to all other Letchworth GC schools.



Shelagh says: "We believe that by carrying out a review of ICT provision in the schools, we will be able to develop a plan for future development which will enable individual schools to progress, provide reliable resources and **systems for the future** and set up shared

approaches which will support collaboration and inter-school cooperation."

## Opportunity Knocks

The Letchworth Garden City Education Steering Group brings together educational interests from across the town to identify, develop and implement projects for learning.

The Group exists to **create opportunities** for all Letchworth GC schools by pooling ideas for collaborative projects in both the Primary and Secondary School sectors.

In its formative years, the Group concentrated on IT-based projects involving all schools in each sector. More recently, the emphasis of investment has been placed upon supporting schools, their staff and pupils **through training and development** and delivering 'pilot' projects, often involving just a small cluster of schools.

The Group, which meets once a term, is co-ordinated by **Alastair Stewart**, the **Heritage Foundation's Education and Sports Development Manager**. Also serving on the Group are:

- **Rebecca Clarke, 'Education' Governor, LGC Heritage Foundation**
- **Heather Edwards-Hedley, Board Member, LGC Heritage Foundation**
- **Mairin Hegarty, Headteacher, St Francis College**
- **Ben Parry, Headteacher, Lordship Farm School**
- **Jan Sandell, Headteacher, Grange School**
- **Joanne Wilson, Headteacher, Hillshott Infant School**
- **Jed Whelan, Headteacher, Fearnhill School**

If you would like to suggest an idea for a future project whatever your subject specialism or area of responsibility, please get in touch with **Alastair Stewart** by phone on **01462 476037**, or by email at **[alastair.stewart@lgchf.com](mailto:alastair.stewart@lgchf.com)**

# Touch of a Button!

Exciting interactive technologies may well be rolled out to all Garden City schools, subject to a successful trial currently taking place in four Letchworth GC schools.

Hand-held voting systems give pupils **a dynamic interface** with which to respond to questions and feedback their knowledge. Two such systems will be 'road tested'. St Francis (Preparatory School and College) and Stonehill will trial 'Activote'. 'Turning Point' will be tested at Fearnhill.

'Clicker' technology, as it is often referred to, is not new. Strathclyde University lecturer, Jim Boyle is credited as being the first academic to introduce **'ask the audience'** devices within his lectures, over ten years ago.

The Letchworth GC 'pilot' will ultimately **engage 400 pupils and 25 teachers** and teaching assistants across the three schools. 'Clickers' will be used at specific points in lessons across the curriculum to elicit pupil response.

Each school will have a **'lead' teacher** working on the project, who will run training sessions for the rest of the teaching staff at their school. The 'lead' teachers will get together to share experiences and 'best practice' on a once-a-term basis. They will also be running a 'toolkit' training session for Primary ICT subject leaders from all the other Garden City schools in 2009.



## The appliance of Science

**Pupils from The Highfield, St Francis, Fearnhill, Lordship Farm, Pixmore, St Thomas More and Westbury combined in over 30 'Science Festival' activities staged throughout the Garden City.**



One of the highlights of this year's programme was a special screening of the all-action, disaster blockbuster **'The Core'** at Letchworth's magnificent Broadway Cinema.

**180-plus pupils** took their seats in the art deco film house's Screen One to see this sci-fi movie about a team of six scientists and their intrepid journey to save the planet.

Forensic science, as seen on TV in 'CSI' and

'Waking the Dead', came to the fore in a workshop facilitated by Cambridge University. **Pupils examined a crime scene**, tracing the steps leading up to the crime and exploring the circumstances that had led up to it.

Another workshop explored the **ecological impact** of deforestation and other man-made disasters on wildlife of all shapes and sizes including chameleons, scorpions, snakes and tarantulas.

The Festival, culminated in a **special prize-giving** ceremony featuring the electronics engineer turned TV and radio presenter, Kate Bellingham at Plinston.

**Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation** was delighted to provide matched funding and practical hands-on assistance with all the above initiatives.