



# Academy Newsletter

## Co-op Academy Stoke-on-Trent

2024/25 Issue 4 - December 2024

### The highest performing non-selective school in Stoke-on-Trent

Co-op Academy Stoke-on-Trent is the highest performing non-selective school in the city achieving its best ever results in 2024. That is according to new data published by the Department for Education on Thursday 5th December.



Students at the academy achieve higher grades at Co-op Academy Stoke-on-Trent than their peers nationally.

Performance in English is strongest with progress in the top 3% of all schools nationally.

Yet again our students have achieved some quite exceptional results. We place real value on hard work and relentless determination to succeed. Our Year 11 cohort were the ultimate example of those qualities as they delivered the Academy's best ever results. I have always been clear: our young people are as intelligent, talented and impressive as the very best in the country. And this year, they proved that with some phenomenal achievements. We are incredibly proud of them.

*-Shane Richardson, Headteacher*



Co-op Academy  
Stoke-on-Trent



The DFE data measures progress, or, the difference between where a child begins their time at the Academy - using their SATs results as a starting point - and their grades at the end. Our results show students making “above average” progress compared to other schools. To have achieved such exceptional rates of progress is testament to the incredible tenacity and professional expertise of the teachers at the Academy.

Mr Richardson continued: ‘Great teachers define futures. Our students attend a school with exceptional teachers who are experts in their subjects and work tirelessly to deliver the very best lessons each day. This is coupled with a commitment to making sure our Year 11s are given every support to be ready for their exams so that they can go and perform. Our students, like all young people, deserve the very best teachers. That is what they get at our Academy.’

The Academy is not only the highest performing non-selective school in Stoke-on-Trent, it has outperformed schools in many areas of Staffordshire, Cheshire East and Cheshire West, including some judged to be “outstanding”, meaning that the Academy is one of the best in the region.

## Lion King Cast: A ROAR-some Performance

On Friday 29 November 2024, the talented cast of The Lion King from Co-op Academy Stoke-on-Trent had the honour of performing at the opening of the Co-op Academies Trust Recognition Awards, in front of almost 300 attendees.





The special ceremony, held at the historic King's Hall in Stoke-on-Trent, brought together staff from 38 schools across Manchester, Leeds, Bradford, Merseyside, and Staffordshire for an evening of celebration, inspiration, and togetherness.

The cast delivered a stunning and moving performance of *He Lives In You*, showcasing their exceptional acting and singing talents. Having performed the full show at the academy in July, it was fantastic to see this encore performance at such a prestigious event. Their dedication and hard work were evident in every moment, and their performance set the tone beautifully for the evening.

A huge thank you to Mr Ward and Ms Leighton for their incredible efforts in preparing the students for this memorable occasion. The cast's performance was a powerful reminder of the importance of the arts in education and a shining example of the creativity and talent within our academy.



# Recognition Awards Celebrate Staff Excellence

We were proud to celebrate the hard work and dedication of our staff at the recent Recognition Awards, a fantastic event that recognised the outstanding contributions of colleagues across the Trust. It was an evening of celebration, shining a light on the commitment and passion that drive the success of our academy.

Mark Rogers, Head of Performance Faculty, was honoured with the Show You Care award, a well-deserved recognition for his tireless work supporting both students and colleagues. Mark's dedication goes above and beyond his role, and this award is a true testament to the positive impact he has on our academy community.



Co-op Academies Trust  
**RECOGNITION AWARDS 2024**

The English Department was awarded Team of the Year, recognising their collective efforts and exceptional achievements. Trust CEO Dr Chris Tomlinson spoke with great admiration about their work, highlighting their phenomenal GCSE results, including a Progress 8 score of over 0.9. This means that, on average, students at Co-op Academy achieve one grade higher in English than they would at other schools, a reflection of the department's unwavering commitment to student success.



A huge congratulations to Mark Rogers and the English Department for their incredible achievements. We're proud of all our staff who continue to go above and beyond in supporting our students and fostering a positive learning environment.



# Luo Chen Shines on Speak Up Council



We are incredibly proud of Year 9 student Luo Chen, who represented Stoke-on-Trent at the National Theatre's Speak Up Council Residential in London. This programme, now in its second year at the academy, is designed to amplify student voices and connect young people with artists and changemakers to inspire positive change in their communities.

The residential was packed with impactful sessions, including a welcome from Alice King-Farlow, the National Theatre's Director of Learning and National Partnerships. Students participated in a Q&A with Artistic Director Rufus Norris, where they shared their experiences and explored the leadership skills they have developed as Student Representatives.

Luo Chen joined other representatives in collaborating on plans for the final year of the programme, discussing ideas for the Speak Up celebration events in summer 2025, ensuring student voices remain central to the initiative.

This year marks the second time Co-op Academy has partnered with the National Theatre, and we are excited to continue supporting our students as they take on leadership roles and shape the future of this inspiring programme.

Speak Up is an invaluable opportunity for our students to engage with professionals, share their ideas, and feel empowered to make a difference. We are so proud of Luo Chen and the role he is playing in representing our academy and the voices of young people.

*Ms Williamson,  
Assistant  
Headteacher*

# Festive Fun at our Christmas Fair



What a night! Our Christmas Fair was a resounding success, bringing together parents, families, and members of our community for an evening filled with festive cheer. With Santa's Grotto, games, stalls, and activities, there was something for everyone to enjoy. We were also thrilled to welcome our community partners who joined us for the event.



The evening was expertly planned and run by our Co-op Young Leaders (CYLs), with over 100 students involved in making the event such a triumph. Their teamwork and dedication showcased the Co-op Ways of Being, particularly "Do What Matters Most" and "Be Yourself, Always."



Ms Williamson, Assistant Headteacher, praised the students for their hard work: "It was wonderful to see our CYLs take such pride in organising and running the Christmas Fair. They brought the community together and created a fantastic event. We're incredibly proud of their efforts."



Proceeds from the fair will go towards providing additional opportunities for our students, ensuring the spirit of giving continues beyond the festive season. A huge thank you to everyone who joined us and supported the event—we can't wait to see you again next year!

# Scholars Steal The Show in Acting Workshop

Our KS3 Scholars had an exciting opportunity to take part in a theatre workshop led by Raif Clarke, an experienced actor with credits including work with CBBC and the Royal Shakespeare Company.



The workshop took place in the academy's drama studio, offering students a unique chance to learn about the acting profession and explore theatrical techniques used in *Romeo and Juliet*.

During the session, students gained valuable insights into the world of professional acting while developing an understanding of how dramatic methods bring Shakespeare's iconic play to life. The workshop allowed scholars to refine their performance skills, creativity, and confidence, while also encouraging them to think about careers in the performing arts.



Ms Latham, Scholars' Programme Lead, praised the students for their engagement: "It was fantastic to see our scholars immersing themselves in this workshop, learning from a professional and developing both their skills and understanding of theatre. Experiences like this truly enrich their education and inspire them to aim high."



Thank you to Raif Clarke for delivering such an inspiring and engaging workshop. Our scholars came away brimming with enthusiasm and a new appreciation for acting and performance—what a brilliant experience!

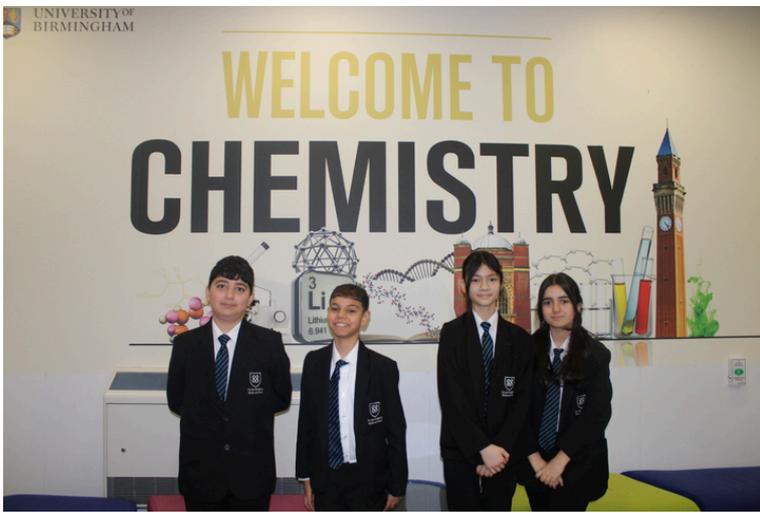


# Year 7 Students Inspired at RAISE Christmas Lecture



A group of our Year 7 students had the incredible opportunity to attend the RAISE Christmas Lectures at the University of Birmingham. The lecture, delivered by Dr Leah-Nani Alconcel, explored the fascinating question: "When will we live on the moon?"

Dr Alconcel, whose remarkable career includes key achievements working with NASA on groundbreaking space missions, shared insights into the challenges and possibilities of lunar living. Our students were captivated by her inspiring journey in space science and the cutting-edge research she described.



The session sparked real curiosity, with students asking a range of thoughtful and intelligent questions that impressed everyone. In addition to the lecture, students were amazed by the sheer size and scale of the university campus, a motivating glimpse of where their studies could take them in the future.



Thank you to the University of Birmingham for hosting such an inspiring event. The experience gave our students a glimpse into the possibilities of their future and encouraged them to aim for the stars!

It was a fantastic opportunity for our Year 7 students to learn from such an accomplished scientist. Dr Alconcel's lecture really brought space science to life, and I was so proud of the enthusiasm and intelligent questions from our students.

*Ms Williamson, Assistant Headteacher*

## T Level Takeover Inspires Year 10 Students

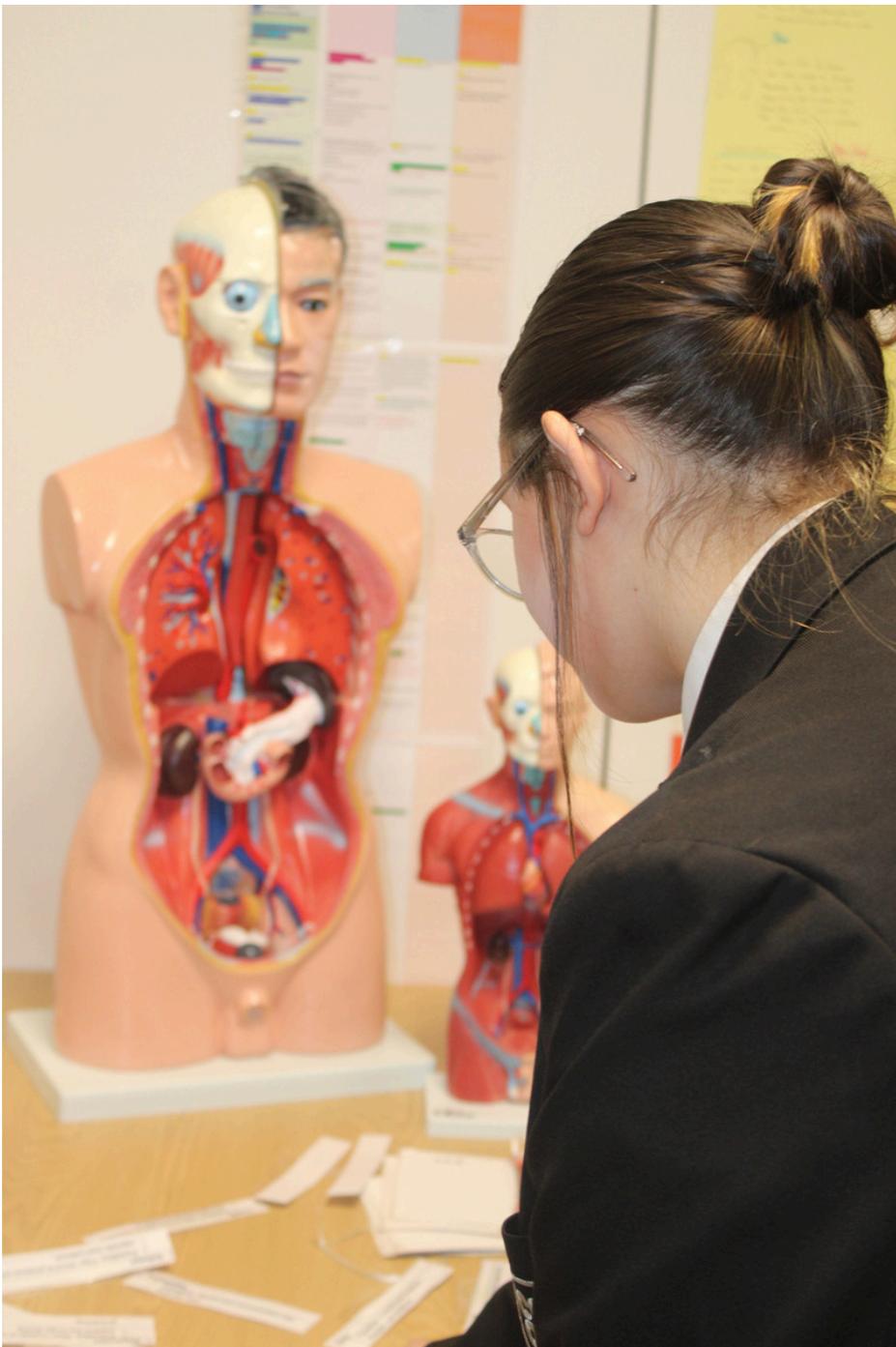


Our Year 10 students recently took part in the T Level Takeover at Stoke Sixth Form College—a fantastic event designed to give them a hands-on experience of the exciting subjects and opportunities available after GCSEs.

Students explored a diverse range of T Level subjects, including Ceramics, Healthcare, and Legal Services, all delivered in the college's state-of-the-art T Level block. The day provided a unique insight into these career-focused courses and the specialist facilities the college has recently invested in.

Mr Baillie, Careers Coordinator, reflected on the success of the event: "The T Level Takeover was a perfect opportunity for students to see the wide range of exciting subjects on offer, and to experience the amazing new facilities that the Sixth Form College has recently invested in. It has given our Year 10s a taste of where they could be heading after GCSEs and provided new inspiration to help them succeed."

Thank you to Stoke Sixth Form College for hosting this inspiring event—we're excited to see the futures our students will build with opportunities like these!



## Festive Treat for KS3 Stars

On the penultimate day of term, 20 students from each KS3 year group were treated to a Festive Afternoon Tea, hosted by Ms Williamson. Selected by their tutors or Heads of Year, these students were recognised for their hard work, positive attitudes, and for consistently going above and beyond in their daily school life.

The event was filled with festive cheer, with students enjoying a variety of sweet treats, crackers, music, bingo, and quizzes that added to the joyful atmosphere. It was a lovely opportunity to celebrate their dedication and contributions in a relaxed and fun setting.

Ms Williamson reflected on the importance of the event: "This was a wonderful chance to reward students who go above and beyond day in and day out. It's vital to recognise their efforts and show them how much we value their hard work and positive attitudes."

The Festive Afternoon Tea was made possible thanks to funding from Lidl's Community Fund, and we're so grateful for their support in helping us celebrate our amazing students. A huge well done to everyone who took part—you truly deserve it!



# Celebrating Year 11 Mock Results

On the final day of term, Year 11 students came together for a special Mock Results Afternoon to reflect on their hard work and achievements. With snacks and festive touches setting the scene, the event marked a celebratory moment after weeks of dedication and effort.

Mrs Tatton, Head of Year 11, shared her pride in the students' accomplishments: "I am very proud of the positive attitudes and amount of effort the Year 11s have put into their first set of mock exams. Preparing for these exams has required students to plan their time and commit to additional revision sessions, both in the academy and at home. This is the first time the students have sat formal exams in the sports hall, which is a daunting prospect. They all did exceptionally well, and their hard work has paid off. They now have four weeks to prepare for their next set of mocks, and I am sure they will produce top-quality results and show the same level of determination and dedication to their learning. Well done, Year 11!"

The afternoon was a chance to acknowledge the challenges students had faced, from revising effectively to managing the pressure of formal exams, while also looking ahead to the next set of mocks with renewed determination.

Congratulations to all our Year 11s on their achievements so far—keep up the fantastic work as you prepare for the next stage of your journey!



# A Successful Start for Scholars

After the launch last half term, our scholars have been engaging with their tailored programme and taking part in many exciting new experiences.

## Electives:

Our Key Stage 3 scholars have been attending the Medicine Through Time elective, learning about the revolutionary (and often gory) methods of medicine throughout the ages, as well as practising their writing skills at GCSE level questions. Others have been attending the Book Club elective, delving into literary debates and discussions about various texts.

## Competitions:

Year 7 have started preparations for their Poetry by Heart spoken word competition by discussing the importance of poetry, forms of poetry and they have been choosing their final pieces to recite by heart for the national competition. One poem has to be pre-1914 and the other is post-1914 and students will begin training for their readings in the new year.

Year 8 have been learning about the workings of the legal system for their Mock Trial Competition. They are learning all about the roles involved in a magistrates case and have started preparing for their local heat which will take place in Spring.

Year 9 have also been preparing for their Model UN competition which will take place at the end of the academic year. Students have been learning about the purpose of the United Nations and roles within this organisation in order to train for their competition.

## Higher Project Qualification:

The Year 10 Scholars have started their Higher Project Qualification which involves an independent research project and essay on a subject of their choosing. Students have been learning about how to conduct research and plan their project efficiently and have chosen some really interesting topics for their projects. We can't wait to see the work that they produce!

## Guest Lectures:

Finally, the guest lecture series has started. We have had a visit from a physiotherapist who has spoken to students about the career, his route into the profession and students practised using a stethoscope as well as diagnosing real X-ray injuries. We also were lucky to participate in a workshop delivered by an actor from the CBBC and Royal Shakespeare Company about theatre, acting in Shakespeare plays and students had a chance to analyse and perform part of Romeo and Juliet themselves. Some students even managed to revise their lines by heart within the half hour rehearsal! Our visitor was extremely impressed with every single student.

Overall, we are thoroughly impressed with our scholars so far and look forward to more experiences in the new year.

# Year 8 and 9 Students Begin First Story Programme



A group of Year 8 and 9 students from Co-op Academy Stoke-on-Trent have begun their journey with the First Story Programme, an exciting initiative that empowers young people to find their voice through creative writing.

First Story partners with schools to provide students with opportunities to work closely with professional writers. At our academy, students are guided by our author-in-residence, Mark Gwynne Jones, an award-winning poet known for his captivating performances and inspiring workshops.

Through weekly sessions, students have begun to develop their writing skills, experiment with different forms of expression, and build confidence in their abilities. The programme will culminate in a professionally published anthology of their work, giving students the opportunity to see their words in print.

Ms Williamson, Assistant Headteacher, praised the programme: "First Story is a wonderful opportunity for our students to explore their creativity and develop their writing skills. Working with a talented author like Mark Gwynne Jones will not only enhance their understanding of literature but also inspire them to see the power of their own voices. I'm excited to see the incredible work they will produce."

We're thrilled to see our students embrace this unique opportunity and look forward to celebrating their creative achievements as the programme progresses!

# Year 5 Students Enjoy Taster Day at Co-op Academy Stoke-on-Trent

We were delighted to welcome Year 5 students from Co-op Academy Grove for their first taster day at our academy. The day was packed with exciting activities that gave students a glimpse of what's to come in secondary school.

The taster sessions included Drama, where students explored improvisation, Library, where they designed festive cracker bookmarks, and Art, where they created beautiful watercolour Christmas scenes. The creativity, enthusiasm, and engagement shown by the Year 5 students were truly impressive—we were wowed by their efforts!

Thank you to Co-op Academy Grove for joining us for this fantastic experience. We can't wait to welcome these talented young people back in the future!



## Diary Dates

Y11 Parents' Evening -  
Wednesday 22nd January

Y10 Parents' Evening -  
Wednesday 29th January

Y7 Parents' Evening -  
Wednesday 5th February

  
**Ofsted**  
Good  
Provider



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