

Wicked Writers

**BE THE
CHANGE**

Anthology 2025

With a foreword by
Michael Morpurgo

Wicked Writers:
Be the Change
Anthology 2025

National Literacy Trust

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A huge thank you to the young writers who have shared their writing with us for this anthology. Your passion for the community and world around you, and your belief in change, inspires us.

To the educators who delivered fantastic lessons that inspired the pupils' writing, thank you for your dedication.

2025 is a special year, marking 15 years since the original Wicked Young Writers' Award was set up. An enormous thank you to Michael Morpurgo for his involvement since 2010, and for his foreword celebrating this year's writers.

Heartfelt thanks to our dedicated judging panel, who chose this year's winners and runners up with such care: authors Cressida Cowell and Manjeet Mann, and Chief Executive of the National Literacy Trust Jonathan Douglas.

We are incredibly grateful to Wicked Active Learning, whose generous support made this competition possible.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL LITERACY TRUST

The National Literacy Trust is an independent charity that empowers children, young people, and adults with the literacy skills they need to succeed.

Literacy changes everything. It gives you the tools to get the most out of life, and the power to shape your future. It opens the door to the life you want. But low literacy is inextricably linked to poverty. Over the last 30 years, we have continued to work with people who need us the most, supporting schools, families and communities on a local and national level.

The Wicked Writers: Be the Change competition is part of our evidence-based Young Writers programme, which supports schools to develop lasting writing-for-enjoyment practices with the radical view that every young person is a writer.

ABOUT WICKED ACTIVE LEARNING

Wicked Active Learning is the award-winning London stage musical's acclaimed cultural and social education programme, championing learning outside the classroom, live theatre evaluation, personal development, and curriculum enrichment.

Three time winner of 'Best Theatre Production for Schools' at the annual School Travel Awards, and inspired by 'one of the most influential children's stories of all time' (The Times), L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), Wicked explores themes of self-esteem, discrimination, identity, fake news, and friendship, and supports programmes of study for English, Drama, Music, PSHE, and more.

WickedActiveLearning.co.uk

FOREWORD

by Michael Morpurgo

2025 marks 15 years since we set up the original Wicked Young Writers Award, which has now become Wicked Writers: Be the Change. The competition shows that the imagination of young people is alive and well, especially when they are writing about what matters to them, what they care about. We need to celebrate the imagination and feed it, and this award does it so well. The young people writing for pleasure, rather than because they have to for exams, reveals that they haven't been afraid to tell their stories, write their poems down and express themselves truthfully. The link between writing for enjoyment and improved writing skills has been shown - a love of writing can support a young person's success in school and in life. We need all kinds of writing, stories and poetry, as well as music, theatre and the arts to feed our imagination. Without it we cannot grow. So, let's celebrate writing and celebrate the imagination too. The world needs young writers, and it needs their imagination more than ever now. We need projects like Wicked Writers: Be the Change to give young people a voice and a place to sing their songs and tell their stories. Bravo to the published young writers. Here's to another 15 years!

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INTRODUCTION

'Out of all the fabulous applicants, I am amazed and grateful that I have won ... I totally recommend anyone to enter this competition'

Luo Chen, Winner 2024

In 2024, the National Literacy Trust found that more than 1 in 6 children and young people are 'social writers': they write to support causes and issues they care about, or to feel connected to the world. More children and young people who took part in writing competitions also told us they enjoyed writing and wrote daily in their free time compared to those who didn't.

This is why we've teamed up with the stage musical *Wicked*, and its acclaimed cultural and social education programme, *Wicked Active Learning*, to run this exciting social action writing competition encouraging school and home-educated pupils to write about a positive change they want to see in their local community.

The following pages are a testament to the creativity and hard work of the shortlisted young writers from participating schools across the UK.

**WINNER AND RUNNER UP: YOUNGER
CATEGORY (age 9-11)**

WINNER: ST JOSEPH'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL

OX's Pollution Problem

By Lucía

Hello! My name is OX. I'm an oxygen particle living in the River Thames. I know, I look dirty. I was born clear, but now I'm brown because of pollution.

Anyway, as I was saying— OUCH!! What was that? A bottle? (Oh, wait—that's a plastic bag!) It just smacked me right in the face! What on God's green Earth is going on?! I need to take a look...

OH NO! NOT THEM AGAIN!

Wait... Apologies! I forgot that you can't see what's happening. Let me explain...

There are three kids throwing plastic onto the ground and into the water—MY home! If they throw one more thing, I swear—OUCH!!

That's it! I'm going up there to teach them a lesson!

Excuse me?! NO, NOT YOU—those three kids!

Ahem. Could you stop throwing plastic into my home?!

Don't look at me like that! Do you even know what happens to that plastic? NO? Well, let me tell you.

It takes 450 years to break down! Actually —scratch that—it never truly disappears. It just turns into tiny pieces called microplastics. These little pieces are invisible to you and me. No one can see them— not even fish. And guess what? They swallow them without even knowing!

And what happens next is even worse.

When a fisherman catches a fish, every tiny plastic piece inside it could end up on your plate—and inside your body.

Remember this:

If you drop plastic, land or sea,

It stays there for eternity.

So think before you toss away,

Or we'll all pay the price someday!

Do you understand how wrong it is to throw just one plastic bottle or wrapper?

GOOD. Don't make me come up here again— it's a waste of my bath time!

BYE-BYE!!!

RUNNER UP: MERRYLEE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Protect our Pitch from Pain!

By Joey

Dear Councillor,

I am writing to you because I want to help rescue our beloved pitch. I know that you're very high in power and you can make a difference with the snap of your fingers. We've already worked hard but now if you grant us permission and help with a donation then we can do it!

I love our school pitch but it's just a matter of time before it's broken bones. It's skin is ripped, it's body is worn and it's heart has decayed. It's not just me that loves our pitch so many people love it, use it and make hundreds, if not thousands, of memories with it. Do you really want to throw that all away? The pitch used to be beautiful, clean and perfect but now it's a complete safety hazard. It's dangerous, destroyed and deserted.

Tons of people, including myself, show great affection towards our pitch but it's so much more than just grass, it's used for football matches, afterschool care, and so many other activities! And it's not just that people love it, plenty of people are trying to save it like OLA FC, the Parent Council, Stamperland FC and so many others including me! One of the reasons we want to salvage the pitch is because the little black bits that roam over it. They're usually under the astroturf but after 16 years of being trampled on it's so worn it has come to the surface and if they're digested they can make you immensely ill. In fact they're banned from being sold in Europe.

We need a new pitch because it's not just one of the most fun areas on earth but it provides us with the activity we need to stay healthy

and happy. All we need is your permission, a donation and a promise, a promise that means you will forever have our back to not only help us get the pitch but to help maintain it because our pitch has been abandoned, neglected and deserted.

I know and trust that you will do the right thing: permission- we can't get a pitch without your permission, promise- promise that you'll have our backs to maintain our pitch, and present- without a donation it might take us ages to get enough money to reach our goal. I really do believe that you'll make the right decision but it's your choice, not mine.

**WINNER AND RUNNER UP: OLDER CATEGORY
(age 11-14)**

**WINNER: CORPUS CHRISTI CATHOLIC
COLLEGE**

Increased Public Transport

By Megan

The buildings loomed over me; slender fingers ran down my spine; their grasp like a thousand icicles. Shadows upon the moonlit street danced in the alleyway that I swiftly turned into. Although no threat was apparent, my heart, held in an inescapable, panic-stricken grasp, hammered under my coat. I listened for the sounds of someone lingering in the dim street. With every step, I grew more uneasy. I felt my limbs shake with apprehension and my mind race as I tread deeper into the slim, dark, ghostly passageway.

Did you know that one in two women feel unsafe walking home after nightfall? In modern day, many young people, specifically women, are unable to engage in profitable, extra-curricular activities due to the unsafety of their neighbourhood. This often generates a feeling of anxiety of having to walk home in late hours. To solve this issue, we could provide safe transport, like buses, for students.

Providing buses would improve lives as it would cause less stress, not only for the person walking home, but the parent. It would also ensure that parents do not need to take time off work to collect their child; increasing how much they earn. This will allow children to enjoy after school activities while caretakers can have peace of mind and work towards a better life economically through increased working hours.

Another way safe transport will improve lives is that it allows children, who are already learning and developing life skills, to become more informed and educated. For example, if children are able to participate in extracurricular activities, they can develop highly coveted skills in the workforce such as confidence and lateral

thinking, improving their chances and broadening their horizons to jobs they didn't even know existed. In addition, it could also improve lives economically as they may find a job with a high pay that they enjoy.

With safer transport, more children will have a way to get home from after school activities which may impact their CV positively. This will allow children to have more options later down the line. For example, they will be able to get into whatever college or university, they desire. This will improve lives economically through going to college or studying a profession, helping work towards a job the child may want and will help them do these jobs more efficiently with the skills they have learnt.

To fund this improvement, in the community, we could do a fundraiser such as cake stalls, tombola, a go-fund me, council, taxes or sponsored runs/walks to raise for the cause.

I believe that providing these ways of transport will provide opportunities for many young people and have a big impact on the community in the way that will change day-to-day life for the better. I believe that by making this small change, many people can enjoy a safe space to express themselves and practice their hobbies and interests, safely and beneficially.

RUNNER UP: HOME EDUCATION

People, Places and Safe Spaces

By Violet

Women across Lancashire feel unsafe, especially at night. In fact, last year, more than 5,800 sexual offences against women were reported to Lancashire police. Imagine being attacked while out for a peaceful walk along the seafront with your child and dog on an idyllic summer day. Then, without warning, you are assaulted. This happened to a woman on August 12th, 2024. How would you feel? Or think of a fun night out with friends, suddenly interrupted by an attack. How would you react? Sadly, incidents like these are all too common in Lancashire, where the rate of sexual offences against women is higher than the national average.

To understand how widespread this problem is, I conducted a survey with over 200 women across Lancashire. This questionnaire asked women about their perceptions of safety in the local community. Statistics reveal that 23.6% of women feel unsafe, with 2.4% feeling very unsafe in their local areas. This issue needs urgent attention! Further results were eye-opening: 25% of women felt vulnerable walking alone during the day, and that number nearly tripled when it came to walking alone at night. When asked about changes that would make them feel safer, the response was clear, better public spaces and better safety measures.

Many women pointed to inadequate street lighting, a lack of CCTV, and the vulnerability they feel when using public transport. These concerns could be addressed by improving places with better street lighting, surveillance, and specialised transport options. In fact, some countries, such as Japan, Egypt, and India, have implemented

women only transport to address safety concerns. This idea was even discussed in the UK back in 2015 but was dismissed due to funding issues. But the real question is: How much is too much to make women feel safe?

Imagine if Lancashire invested in these changes; safe spaces, better lighting, enhanced surveillance, and women-only transport. These actions would make a significant difference. Women would feel empowered to walk alone, travel freely, and go about their daily lives without fear.

In conclusion, it's time for our town to focus on people, specifically women. We need to invest in education immediately, starting with the rollout of secondary school PSHE lessons that focus on women's safety and rights. The community would also benefit from the creation of strong women's groups, which would provide safe spaces where women can access support, advice, and friendship. Improved public transport, CCTV, and street lighting will make a world of difference; helping to create safer people, places, and spaces. These changes will empower women, allowing them to take control of their safety and feel truly valued in their community. It's time to make this a reality.

SHORTLIST: YOUNGER CATEGORY (age 9-11)

BOOTHAM JUNIOR SCHOOL

My Local Green

By Jared

For a while, my local green in Clifton, York has suffered. The problem? Used needles are everywhere. They are in the parks, on the roads and near the nurseries. I might not be able to tackle all issues related to drug use, but I know that together, we could stop needles being thrown away on our streets. I hope we can make a difference.

If you are a member of the police, listen up. I need your help. Please ask your officers to find needles and dispose of them safely. Don't let children die from accidents involving needles. Help me and help the people of York and Clifton to find needles and the people using them. Even though I can't stop needles and drugs in local areas, that doesn't mean we can't try.

If you are a member of the public, listen up. I need your help. Please call 01904 551551 and ask for a sharps bin, grab a litter picker and find needles and throw them away safely. Children can walk on needles or pick them up causing injuries and diseases.

If you are a member of the council, listen up. I need your help. Please install sharps boxes near churches, hospitals & car parks. I know we know that we can't stop these drug users, but we can stop people from getting hurt.

So this is goodbye for now, I know we can make a difference in both York & Clifton. We can't make the world change but you can help us try to make York & Clifton a better place.

MOUNT PLEASANT PRIMARY SCHOOL

We are Hiring!

By Kaitlynn

Job Title: Youth Space Project Manager

Location: Quarry Bank, UK

Salary: Negotiable on fulfillment

Full job description:

Our community needs someone with compassion, a sympathetic shoulder and can help provide a safe space for our young people. Our young people need you so they can be part of a community, to socialise safely somewhere they can be themselves. They may need to get away from things happening at home like: abusive households, young carers, broken homes, living in poverty, mental and physical health issues.

- Statistics show that 1 in 5 children from ages 11-18 suffer from some form of mental health issue.
- Over 800,000 children are affected by domestic abuse in their own households.
- Half of all teenagers have witnesses or been victims of violence (2023 the guardian)
- There are also 4.3 million children in the UK living in low income households in 22/23 reports.

Helping our young people will help give them a voice, a safe and happy environment and a more promising future away from the streets, gangs, violence and feeling alone.

Taking on this role and being responsible for the young people of Quarry Bank will provide an accessible and safe space for all children.

So are you that person that could take on the challenge and help build our community, because the youth of Quarry Bank needs change **today** because they deserve a **future**.

Benefits:

- Increase mental and physical wellbeing of young people
- Prevent/decrease situations arising or getting worse
- Creates a better community
- Supports people going through rough times
- Allows young people to have a voice
- Provides a safe and happy environment
- Gives better opportunities for the future

Apply now!

ST MICHAEL'S V.A. JUNIOR SCHOOL

My River Needs a Doctor

By Eva

Hi, my name is Eva and I am nine years old. There is a river near my home where I used to play. I remember splashing in the cool water, watching fish swim, and listening to birds sing in the trees. But now, that river is not the same. Scum floats on the surface, plastic bottles and rubbish line the banks and a horrible smell fills the air. My river is sick and it breaks my heart.

Pollution has stolen the beauty of this river. A once magical place filled with sunlight and colour. The fish that once swam happily here are struggling to survive and the birds have started to fall silent. My memory of this place brings me joy, a feeling I fear others may not get a chance to experience unless we make a change and fast!

If a person is sick they see a doctor, if an animal is sick it sees a vet but the river stands alone. With no voice it relies on people like me to say stop!

To the water companies, don't treat our river like a rubbish tip. Polluted water can make animals sick, destroy nature, and even harm people who drink or play in it. You are poisoning our river and harming the wildlife that call it their home. To those who visit the river we must protect it. You come to enjoy it's beauty, so take your rubbish home with you!

I may only be nine, but I know we all need clean water to live. I don't want my river to be just a memory. I want to play in it again. With more bins added to the area and a promise of a clean-up plan, I believe together we can still save it! Will you help me?

LITTLE ASTON PRIMARY ACADEMY

Walking to School - Make Roads Safer!

By Ella

Hey everyone, listen up! Do you walk to school like me? I love walking! It's fun, great for the environment, and a brilliant way to get some fresh air. But, there's one big problem in Four Oaks... **our roads aren't safe enough!**

Have you ever tried crossing the road when there's no pedestrian crossings? It's even more frightening than the Wicked Witch of the West! Cars whizz past, some drivers don't always stop, and it makes walking to school dangerous and difficult. Some people even drive over the speed limit! It's not right and it's definitely not fair!

Did you know?

- Children are three times more likely to get hurt on the roads than adults
- Every year, 6,000 children in the UK are seriously injured by drivers when walking
- If cars slowed down from 40mph to 20mph, pedestrians that are hit are more likely to survive

We don't need magic to fix this, we need action, and fast!

We need to raise our voices louder than Elphaba!

We need to make this topic even more popular than Glinda!

We need to make our roads as safe as the Yellow Brick Road!

Research shows that children that walk to school get more exercise

and stay healthier. Walking to school reduces traffic and pollution, making the roads safer for everyone. When roads are designed for pedestrians, the number of accidents goes down!

So, who's with me? Let's tell our teachers, our parents, our friends, our local leaders, and everyone in between that Four Oaks needs safer roads NOW! If we all speak up, we can make a difference and make walking to school safer for everyone.

Let's make a change, FOR GOOD!

BURLEY OAKS PRIMARY SCHOOL

What are you really swimming in?

By Charlotte

Dear Anna Dixon,

I am writing to implore you to decrease the amount of sewage that is poured into the rivers of Bradford, particularly the River Wharfe. If you do not act now, there will be irreversible damage to our local rivers and wildlife. ***Only you can make a change.***

Did you know that the River Wharfe was polluted by sewage 2456 times in 2023 lasting 23120 hours? 80% of the world's rivers are affected by this, including the Wharfe. Sewage causes major algae blooms, starving the river from oxygen meaning animals suffocate. Let's act now and change that.

It's not just animals. People come from all around Yorkshire to swim in this river, but do they know what they're really swimming in? Our waste carries many horrible diseases, like salmonella. Humans have become ill from this. In 2021, 900 hours worth of raw sewage was dumped into the Wharfe from just Ilkley alone. You have to stop this, not only for the safety of marine life but also for the safety of us. Local communities, like ours, rely heavily on tourism. Let's face it, nobody can resist a cool dip on a hot summer day.

Please help us save our River Wharfe. Marine life will die if we don't. But it's not just the Wharfe, all the rivers in the UK are facing some type of pollution too. The residents of Burley in Wharfedale implore that you prioritise reducing the amount of sewage waste that is poured into the Wharfe. We want clean, safe water again, don't you? Only you and your government can make that happen. I hope I

have convinced you to act on this problem and save the rivers of
Bradford.

Hope for the best,

PRENDERGAST VALE SCHOOL

Omrah's Poem

By Omrah

The lost forest of Lewisham.

I walked through Lewisham's streets today,

Where trees once lined the old pathway,

Their branches stretched so tall, so wide,

A peaceful place, a home with pride

But now the ground is dry and bare,

The trees are gone, no life is there.

The birds that sang have flown away,

The air feels thick, the sky looks grey.

The axe was quick, the hands were strong,

But taking trees just feels so wrong.

They gave us shade, they cleaned the air,

But now they're gone, and a few still care

The park feels small, the streets feel loud

No rustling leaves, no cooling clouds.

The river sighs, the air stands still,

As towers rise upon the hill.

Still, maybe we can make things right,

Plant new trees and give them light,

If we can just try, if we can just see,

Lewisham's green can rise and be.

So let's be kind, let's take a stand,

Let the trees grow tall and heal the land.

The world is theirs as much as ours,

Let's bring back green, let's bring back flowers

SHORTLIST: OLDER CATEGORY (age 11-14)

NORTH WALSHAM HIGH SCHOOL

Persuasive Letter

By Gracie

Dear Norfolk County Council,

I am writing to you for the implementing of a library in my local area.

Did you know that there has been a 14.1% drop in children that have visited a library since the year 2008? How can children where I live visit a library regularly if the nearest one is 4 miles away? With busyness being a key attribute to today's culture and with the increase in fuel pricing resulting in the prioritising of drives, visits are scarce. Libraries should be prioritised. I know what you are thinking; you have a few books at home or maybe you could read a nice e-book online, but libraries are so much more than borrowing books. Don't get me wrong, library books are great but there are so many other benefits of libraries.

Research shows that the empathy levels of avid readers are increased in comparison to those who are not, implicating the importance of a library for young people's emotional development. Stories will help people understand and reflect on the lives of fictional and non-fictional characters, both of equally important value as the problems faced within a plot may relate to the difficulties of the reader or community. In addition, the journey through start to finish will enable the reader to build a relationship with the characters, replicating the traits of an actual person; boosting empathy levels and strengthening my local community through care and friendship.

Reading also enables the enhancement of vocabulary and language choices, developing precision within learning, also facilitating the expression of ideas more efficiently when writing. When these skills are applied correctly, this can increase exam scores therefore,

allowing people to have a greater chance of getting the job role applied for. Furthermore, improving the income of the local community through skilled workers with well-paid jobs.

Libraries are also a heart for many other clubs and societies, accounting for others' needs and interests too. For example, many people visit libraries for a sense of community, increasing the local population's sociability. I know you think that libraries are just strict and silent however, you need to look beyond the stereotypes. Yes, it is important to be respectful to others however, libraries are so special; they are a place where you can be amongst your own company, have a good time with your friends or even better: make new ones! This will aid our local community in becoming more connected, building stronger relationships and supporting each other.

You may still be thinking, 'why a library?' To conclude, a library will bring a sense of community to our local area. Yet, it doesn't stop there. The impacts of libraries reach far beyond our county and altogether could assist our country with tackling a humungous social barrier. 1 in 6 people in the UK are functionally illiterate. Libraries can change this. This change starts now. This change starts with us. This change starts with a library in my local area.

Yours sincerely,

MILBOURNE LODGE SCHOOL

Nothing to do

By Sam

There is nothin' to do in summertime
School's out and you're bored all the time
Cinema, climbing, shopping all day
But that's for the people who can pay

There is a park and a river nearby
But the parks' so dry
Just grass and slides
Doesn't stir excitement in your insides
And the river's so brown it makes you feel down

What we need is a skatepark
For those who need a spark
Of excitement
Keeps kids outside
Skilling up with pride

Not staring at their screens

But living out their dreams.

So join our local forces

And ask for the resources

Cos my local area's in need of some change

Gather all you can, let's see what we can arrange

ST NICHOLAS CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Fighting for Change in the Abyssborn Crisis

By Vanessa

Nova groaned as Channel 28 switched to an emergency broadcast. "Ugh, not again."

"Another 'emergency'?" Zane muttered. "Breaking news is always so dramatic."

But then, the words on the screen caught their attention:

TRASH MONSTERS ATTACKING NEXARA!

The news anchor's voice was shaking. "Ocean creatures have come to attack coastal cities. The creatures are called Abyssborn, mutated sea creatures covered in plastic, cigarettes, food wrappers, and derelict fishing gear. They throw people into the sea. There have been no survivors."

Nova's stomach twisted as shaky live footage appeared. The Abyssborn were eerie—less monstrous, more tragic. Their hollow eyes dripped with oil, their forms weighed down by tangled nets and waste. Every step they took left behind a trail of toxic sludge.

"This isn't some joke..." Zane whispered.

The screen switched to a dimly lit lab. A scientist stared into the camera, his face pale with fear. "We—we found a way! The only way to stop this is—"

A piercing screech rang out. The scientist's eyes widened before he ran offscreen, screaming. The camera fell, showing a shadow of

something massive before the screen cut to static.

Silence filled the room.

"What did he mean?!" Nova shouted. "The only way to stop this is what?"

Nobody knew. The scientist's last words were lost.

Days passed. All things in Nexara were consumed by the Abyssborn. Governments failed. Heroic attempts failed. Each attempt to defeat the creatures ended the same way—heroes were thrown into the sea. Nexara was running out of time.

Zane and Nova, refused to surrender. As they searched for answers, they snuck into the abandoned lab. That's when they found it—a single note left behind:

"They do not seek destruction. They seek change. Clean the waters. Purify the land. Only then will they leave."

It wasn't about fighting the Abyssborn. It was about undoing what had been done to them.

Zane and Nova sprang into action. The survivors rallied, activating old solar plants, clearing the shores of waste, and purifying poisoned water. Despite exhaustion, something incredible happened as the trash disappeared.

The Abyssborn... hesitated.

Slowly, they turned away from the city, retreating into the ocean. For the first time, the waves calmed, the storm clouds faded, and the air felt clean again.

The Astralis had won—but not through battle. Through change.

In days, Nexara looked as if it had never been attacked. The two stood in front of a crowd of reporters. Upon being asked how they saved Nexara, Nova said:

"It wasn't the Abyssborn that caused Nexara to collapse. It was us polluting their home. We saved Nexara, but we have a responsibility to make sure this never happens again."

Zane nodded. "The lesson is simple. We must protect our world before it's too late. Change starts with us."

The broadcast spread across Nexara, and for the first time, people truly listened.

The Abyssborn had left. But their message remained.

"Be the change... before it's too late."

SOUTHFIELD SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

The Odeon has officially closed down

By Grace

Yet again, we at Kettering town have had our favorite source of entertainment pulled away from us. You guessed it correctly; the Odeon has officially closed its doors for good. The landowners reasoning for this devastating outcome? Storage units. A large building full of beautiful memories of the past, collecting dust. It is now a dark, dreary building full of storage boxes. How did this happen? WHY did we let this happen?

Kettering town is not really bursting with entertainment. Once upon a time, we had a magnificent range of entertainment facilities, but now, barely anything.

We have our tiny, empty play parks, with barely any equipment, and large groups of teens, at a loss for things to do with their time. This can make parents, and younger children feel uncomfortable visiting the park, as they may feel intimidated by the teenagers, hence, the lack of primary school children joyfully whizzing down the slide.

We also have Wick steed Park, though unfortunately, similarly to a few years ago, Wick steed Park is AGAIN in danger. The owners of the beloved attraction say it could 'cease to exist in its current form' without extra funding. With the help of the national lottery, an appeal has been launched to save Wick steed Park, but how long do residents of Kettering town have to go through this?

Lastly, we have by far the most popular source of entertainment in Kettering, the Thunderbowl bowling alley. Did you know that 37% of people in my year group who live in Kettering said that they go to the Thunder bowl every weekend. That must get boring! While the Odeon was still around, the Thunderbowl was often many people's second

option. However, now that the Odeon is out of the picture, the Thunder bowl is pretty much our only source of entertainment. The bad news is that it's now extremely overbooked, making it almost impossible to get a slot in things like bowling, escape rooms, and more.

On a slightly more nostalgic note, just imagine all of the beautiful memories that were made here. All the first cinema trips, the distinct smell of popcorn, and chocolate, the amazement on a small child's face as they watch the big screen for the first time. I have fond memories of going with my family, and I'm sure many others do too. But now it's all gone.

Not only this, but multiple surrounding businesses are also closing, or have plans too, such as the KFC, the local pub, and more. It feels as if we have nothing here in Kettering anymore, and that NEEDS to change.

On the bright side, we were noticed. Our local MP, Rosie Wrighting, stood up and did a speech in parliament. She spoke out about Kettering's struggles, and hopefully, thanks to her, some things may be changing.

Thank you for reading.

THE RAMSEY ACADEMY HALSTEAD

Green Spaces

By Ollie

We are very lucky to live in a place surrounded by nature and lots of history, but the community itself often feels disjointed. People seem really busy, distracted by their personal lives, work commitments, and the digital world. I think what is missing is the community togetherness—something that could be changed through the revitalisation of local green spaces.

Although Halstead has several lovely parks and public gardens it could significantly benefit from more thoughtful investment in these areas. I propose transforming underutilised spaces into vibrant, accessible hubs that encourage interaction and a shared sense of purpose. Maybe a community garden where local residents could come together to grow food, a pond with seating or even a small outdoor theatre for performances. These spaces could be designed with sustainability in mind, featuring plants that attract local wildlife and pathways made from eco-friendly materials.

One of the key benefits of this initiative would be the fostering of stronger community bonds. By creating spaces that encourage social interaction, neighbours who might never have crossed or met each other could meet, share ideas, and build relationships. Such interactions would promote a sense of belonging, reduce social isolation, and help build trust between people of different backgrounds and ages. In fact, studies have shown that communities with well-maintained, welcoming green spaces tend to have lower crime rates, improved mental health, and a higher overall quality of life.

Furthermore, these green spaces could provide opportunities for local schools, youth groups, and charity organisations to engage in educational and volunteer activities. Children could learn about nature and adults might volunteer their time to look after the gardens or assist with events. Not only would this encourage local pride, but it would also help teach people to be responsible for our shared environment.

The environmental benefits of revitalising green spaces also helps other places. Planting more trees and shrubs helps with the effects of climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide and providing cooler areas during hot summer months. These spaces would also serve as vital habitats for wildlife, contributing to the preservation of biodiversity in our area.

In addition to all of this, a thriving green space can be an attraction for local businesses. A well maintained park or garden attracts visitors, and those visitors will, in turn, support local cafés, shops, and markets. Local economies can flourish when people come together to enjoy the beauty of their surroundings.

In conclusion, the revitalisation of our local green spaces represents a simple yet powerful way to strengthen our community. By investing in these areas, we would not only improve the environment but also build a stronger, more connected, and more resilient community. The time to act is now, before these spaces fall into neglect and disrepair. Together, we can create a community we are all proud to call home.

STRABANE ACADEMY

New Facilities Offering Support for Disabilities

By Caiden

The current provisions of facilities and support for members of our community living with disabilities and their families are not well organised. Classes like swimming and football do not cater for people of different abilities in our town. Currently as an example my own family often drive 20 minutes to get access to swimming and arts, crafts and music for my sister with a disability. There is no support for new parents or people newly diagnosed with a disability which can be stressful and emotional time.

I believe building a central hub for people and families living with any disability at any age would create an exciting opportunity for a large portion of our local community. It could provide a safe and welcoming environment for families to meet others in similar circumstances, get advice, support, help with form filling and provide access to classes and activities that are currently not available locally. It could provide these things from birth right through a person's life e.g. soft play, sports classes, life skills, etc. For this to be a reality I would need the help of local politicians for funding and local disability advocates.

It would benefit a large portion of our local community who could mix, make new friends, access support quicker and develop our own local goals for the future. It would help my family as we continue on our own journey, get advice from other families and allow my sister to access opportunities not available locally.

Giving a louder voice and more opportunities to achieve to our most vulnerable community members can only lead to great things.

The young writers shortlisted for the Wicked Writers: Be the Change 2025 competition are proud to present their anthology of original writing.

Through a partnership between the National Literacy Trust and Wicked Active Learning, pupils aged 9-14 wrote persuasively about positive changes they'd like to see in their local community. 2025 marks the 15th anniversary since the original Wicked Young Writers' Award was set up with former Children's Laureate Michael Morpurgo, and to celebrate, Michael Morpurgo has written a foreword for this year's very special anthology.

The logo for the National Literacy Trust, featuring the text "National Literacy Trust" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The text is contained within a white, downward-pointing arrow shape that is set against a dark blue background.

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A horizontal brushstroke in a dark blue color, located below the Wicked Active Learning text.