

## **INSPIRATIONAL DAGENHAM HEADTEACHER HONOURED IN PRESTIGIOUS UK CELEBRATION OF TEACHING**

**++ The Jo Richardson Community School headteacher wins Silver Award in The Award for Lifetime Achievement ++**

**++ Ges Smith honoured as schools across the country celebrate Thank a Teacher Day to highlight families' gratitude to school staff ++**

Selected from thousands of nominations, Ges Smith has been honoured as one of 102 Pearson National Teaching Silver Award winners across the country. Ges Smith was honoured with a Silver Award in The Award for Lifetime Achievement for his outstanding commitment to changing the lives of the children he has worked with over the past 30 years.

Mr Smith has transformed this inner-city secondary school, taking it to a position where it consistently receives national recognition and acclaim. During lockdown on a number of occasions Ges was a national spokesperson for the teaching profession sharing the steps the school was taking to manage risk and support home learning during the pandemic. He supported parents by loaning out school computing equipment ahead of Government initiatives to ensure pupils had no delay to their learning.

He also visited lots of students at their home address as part of the school's "Hug in a mug" campaign. He trains and mentors other aspiring headteachers to ensure local pupils receive the best possible education, both inside and out of his school walls. Ges is an inspirational leader who is respected by staff and students alike. This has never been more apparent than now. Upon hearing of his retirement lots of ex-students have reached out to ask if they can be part of any celebrations because they want to tell him about the impact he has had on their lives. He understands the power of connection and never severs links. Lots of the staff in the school are ex-students. This is possibly his greatest legacy.

Ges Smith has now been shortlisted to win one of just 15 Gold Awards later in the year, in a programme which will be broadcast on the BBC. This is a great opportunity to celebrate the exceptional school staff who have worked wonders during an incredibly challenging time for educators across the country.

The Silver Award winners are being honoured as part of the wider celebrations for 'Thank a Teacher Day', a national campaign to honour and recognise school staff for their incredible work. The celebrations follow new data which shows how the previous year's lockdowns have significantly changed how families across the country view the role of teachers.

New research from Parentkind and The Teaching Awards Trust highlights that three in four parents and carers have a newfound respect hold for the teaching profession following their experiences of remote learning during lockdown. 74.9% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had more respect for the work that teachers do following their family's experiences of remote learning.

The last year has seen a wealth of stories of teachers making care visits to vulnerable families, coming up with innovative ways of remote teaching, keeping their pupils settled by regularly checking in and even using their school sites for Covid-19 testing when classes did return to school. There has never been a better time to appreciate them and the vital work they do.

The Pearson National Teaching Awards is an annual celebration of excellence in education, founded in 1998 by Lord Puttnam to recognise the life-changing impact an inspirational teacher can have on the lives of the young people they work with. This year marks its 22<sup>nd</sup> year of celebrating, award-winning teachers, teaching assistants, headteachers and lecturers across the UK

**Sir Michael Morpurgo, celebrated author and former Children’s Laureate, and President of the Teaching Awards Trust, said:**

“Thank a Teacher Day gives us all a chance - children, families, all of us - to pay tribute to those wonderful educators who change more lives than they will ever know. Today we say thank you to the teachers who have helped our young people navigate these most difficult of times, and who will continue to inspire countless young minds over the coming years.”

**Sharon Hague, Senior Vice President of Schools at Pearson UK, said:**

“After a year like no other we want to take today to say thank you to all the incredible school staff who have kept children and young people learning despite unprecedented challenges. We hope the celebrations today show how much you are appreciated, and that your hard work has not gone unnoticed nor unrecognised.”

**ENDS**

**Notes to Editors:**

The 2021 Pearson National Teaching Awards are open to every school across the UK. The awards were established by Lord Puttnam CBE in 1998 and are managed by the Teaching Awards Trust, an independent charity. The vision of the charity is to recognise and celebrate excellence in education. It does this through its public-facing ‘Thank A Teacher’ campaign [www.thankateacher.co.uk](http://www.thankateacher.co.uk), and through the Pearson National Teaching Awards [www.teachingawards.com](http://www.teachingawards.com).

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Michael Morpurgo is one of Britain’s best-loved writers for children. With a writing career that spans four decades, he has written over 100 books, selling more than 5 million copies in the UK and over 35 million worldwide. A former Children’s Laureate, Michael has won countless prizes, including the Smarties prize, the Blue Peter Book Award and the Whitbread Award, and was awarded an OBE for Services to Literature. Michael was also awarded an MBE in 1999, along with his wife Clare, in recognition of their work in founding Farms For City Children, a charity that has enabled 100,000 children to visit the charity’s three farms over the last 40 years.

**The 2021 Pearson National Teaching Award Categories are:**

The Award for Excellence in Special Needs Education	The Award for FE Lecturer of the Year, supported by DfE
The Award for FE Team of the Year, supported by DfE	The Award for Headteacher of the Year in a Primary School, supported by Hays Education

The Award for Headteacher of the Year in a Secondary School, supported by Hays Education	The Award for Digital Innovator of the Year, supported by Nord Anglia Education
The Award for Making a Difference - Secondary School of the Year	The Award for Teacher of the Year in a Secondary School, supported by Nord Anglia Education
The Award for Making a Difference - Primary School of the Year	The Award for Teacher of the Year in a Primary School, supported by Randstad
The Award for Lifetime Achievement supported by DfE, supported by DfE	The Award for Teaching Assistant of the Year
The Award for Outstanding New Teacher of the Year, supported by DfE	The Award for Impact through Partnership
The Lockdown Hero Award for Learner and Community Support	