

PRESS RELEASE

Ormiston Venture Academy
Gorleston, Norfolk, NR31 7JJ

Tel: 01493 662 966

Fax: 01493 660 260

Email: info@ormistonventureacademy.co.uk

Web: www.ormistonventureacademy.co.uk

Author In Residence at Ormiston Venture Academy

Students at Ormiston Venture Academy in Gorleston, Norfolk, are taking part in the National Literacy Trust's Literacy for Life programme to develop their writing skills with the help of their very own author-in-residence.

As one of the six schools taking part, Ormiston Venture Academy, which is part of Ormiston Academies Trust (OAT), has been assigned Alexander Gordon Smith, who is holding workshops for students throughout the school year to support them with the development of their writing.

Gordon is an author of children's and young adult fiction, with books including the horror series Furnace. He has visited Ormiston Venture twice, delivering horror writing workshops with students from Year 7 through to Year 9.

Jodie Gilbert-Barnham, Dean of Programmes at Ormiston Venture, arranged for Gordon to give an assembly to the entire Year 7 year group on his first visit to the school, before holding two two-hour workshops for selected groups of 20 students.

For the first hour of the workshop, Gordon discussed character and plot development with the students, getting them to build a basic structure for their story. In the second hour, they started writing their own stories, with Gordon on hand to help.

On Gordon's second visit to the school, he delivered the horror writing workshops for Year 9 students, and met again with the Year 7s from his first visit to help them continue developing their stories.

The popularity of Gordon's workshops has led Ormiston Venture to specially launch a creative writing club, with Gordon agreeing to attend some of the club's sessions to help pupils develop their writing even further.

By the end of the school year, the pupils working with Gordon will put together an anthology of their writing, demonstrating the success of the workshops and the students' love for literature.

Alexander Gordon Smith said:

"I label the workshops a 'horror writing' workshop, as it helps get students excited about the workshops and it's a great genre for reluctant writers. I asked the students to come up with a story idea based on their own worst fears and they were so enthusiastic."

"Every pupil wrote a story, even the reluctant writers. One boy who found writing difficult started off quite reluctant, but by the end of the workshop he actually volunteered to stand up and read his story out which was an amazing transformation. The quality of their writing all-round was so impressive!"

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Jodie Gilbert-Barnham, Dean of Programmes at Ormiston Venture Academy, said:

“Gordon talked about his journey into writing, his background and his experiences in getting his books published, which really resonated with the students. The whole message behind it was to be resilient and never give up on your dreams, which the students loved. Staff and students came out of his assembly buzzing and in awe of how inspirational he was.”

“Gordon’s work really has got the students so enthused. So many students have been coming into the school library asking for his books, that our librarian has had to order more copies, which is brilliant!”

Note to editors:

- Literacy for Life is a whole school improvement programme funded by the JJ Trust, which equips pupils with the literacy and language skills to access the curriculum. Whole school strategies which develop reading and writing for pleasure, as well as academic language acquisition, are key to developing intrinsic motivation, improving attitudes to literacy and supporting pupils to become more confident and successful communicators.



For further press information, please contact [Andrea Cockrill](#) on:

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Web: www.ormistonventureacademy.co.uk

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Mobile: 01493 662966
Email: pa@ormistonventureacademy.co.uk

For more information about [Ormiston Venture Academy](http://www.ormistonventureacademy.co.uk) please see:

Our Website: www.ormistonventureacademy.co.uk
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For more information about [Ormiston](http://www.ormistontrust.org/) please see:

Ormiston Website: <http://www.ormistontrust.org/>
Press Enquiries: 0121 273 4815 or 07854 013 376