Seeds of Hope 2025: Winning schools help a culture of peace to take root in the community

For immediate release

A ground-breaking international competition supported by UNESCO that brings art, culture and peace-making into young lives has produced inspirational winners from schools around the world.

The winners of the global 2025 Seeds of Hope for a Better Future competition announced today come from schools in France, the UK, Gambia, Haiti, and Kenya. Schools from pre-school and primary to secondary and high schools were invited, especially in the context of climate change, to submit works that promote the values of peace, sustainability and community in the minds of young people.

These values, set out in the Seeds of Hope artworks, involve a range of creative expressions to illustrate the need for humanity to play a responsible role in securing and maintaining a peaceful, bio-diverse future for the planet.

The competition encouraged schools to work with partners and for young people worldwide to share compelling stories and create global Seeds of Hope pathways to highlight the impact of climate change.

The competition is organised under the umbrella of the UNESCO UK Associated Schools Programme Network (ASPnet) Arts & Culture for Peace Initiative. ASPnet connects more than 12,000 educational institutions in around180 countries and brings together schools of all ages and at all levels.

The Seeds of Hope competition flows from the UNESCO UK Arts and Culture for Peace Initiative launched globally in 2022. In this competition young people were encouraged to research seeds of their choice from the themes identified, which inspired them to create and illustrate their own seed story or other artwork.

A distinguished jury of 12 artists, writers and creators including renowned sculptor Sir Antony Gormley; the artist, potter and author Edmund de Waal; leading journalist and broadcast executive Dame Liz Forgan; RSC actor Hugh Quarshie, and Rathna Ramanathan, the Pro Vice Chancellor of Central St Martins, University of the Arts London, selected the winning entries.

The winners share a prize fund of £5000 which is supported by The Hochhauser Foundation, in honour of the late Graham Marchant OBE, and Prestel Publishing has donated a newly-published book *Seeds* to each of the 2025 participating schools.

The project was initially inspired by Between the Stones, a UK-Japan art, drama and music project, and pilot projects by five primary schools in Coventry. These schools worked with others to create the Coventry Young Ambassadors Islands of Peace Japanese Garden, which was opened to the public by the Japanese Ambassador to the UK and the Mayor of Coventry in 2021. The garden is located in Coventry War Memorial Park, is open all year round, and is free.

Ann Beatty, the UNESCO ASPnet UK National Coordinator, said “UNESCO ASPNet UK is delighted at the response to this amazing initiative in collaboration with our international partners. The quality of entries was extraordinary. ”

Jannette Cheong, one of the judges and author of Between the Stones, said: "Congratulations to our winners who show that young people around the world understand well the value of peace and tolerant relationships between cultures. Their creativity is an inspiration to all of us.”

The Seeds of Hope For a Better Future: Winners 2025

Category One: Artworks

Oak View Primary and Nursery School in Hatfield, Hertfordshire, was the joint winner in the first category for artworks in a gallery exhibition or community setting. According to the judges their submission of sculptures, *Faces of Feeling* was “jovial, characterful and delightful.” The figures have already been exhibited in a local art gallery. The judges acknowledged that they “have been used to support the wellbeing of others. These young children can be seen as the Seeds of Hope.”

The second joint winner in this category was the Gambian entry from **St Joseph’s Senior Secondary School in Banjul**, which was entitled *Campaign for a Sustainable Banjul* and inspired by the Banjul City Council’s work to combat the effects of climate change in partnership with Ostend in Belgium. These Grade 12 High School Students produced a series of paintings that were “a most deserving and robust winner,” said the judges.

Category Two: Illustrated Stories

In the second category, for illustrated poems or short stories, presented at local festivals or circulated via print media there were again joint winners. The **United Nations Nursery school,** the Jardin d'Enfants des Nations Unies, based in Paris, France won for their entry *Wind of Peace*. This entry from 5-6 years olds, which judges said was “a charming combination of drawings and paintings and tree plantings, clearly using scientific materials about the need for more tree planting.” It was, they concluded, “inspirational to the local community to see such young children championing this issue.”

The other joint winner was **Lyng Hall Secondary School** from Coventry in the UK who, in collaboration with the UK Literacy Association, and Henley Green Primary School, won for their entry *The Heart Shaped Hole,* which judges said was “a genuine and innovative approach, and an intriguing metaphorical take on the Seeds of Hope brief.”

Category Three: Digital illustrations

In the third category there were two winners, first from the UK **Earlsdon Primary School,** Coventry, for their entry entitled *Primary Plot*, which the judges noted included excellent photographs and video of young people working with others, including the blind, to garden and grow food. They said: ”This project, and the development of the school's own large allotment clearly reflected the ethos of the Seeds of Hope project.”

The second joint winner was an ensemble of 21 schools from three areas in the UK who collaborated in a single project entitled *Lights, Camera, Score.* The Judges considered these projects to be an inspiring combination of animation, music and writing, with engaging performances by the children involved. It was, they said, “an exemplary cross-disciplinary project with wide reaching outcomes involving many schools, professional musicians and animators, with a clear focus on sustainability and the serious nature of the Seeds of Hope themes.”

The winning primary schools were from Calderdale in West Yorkshire: **Ash Green, Cliffe Hill, Calder, Cross Lane, Beech Hill, Holy Trinity** and **Wainstalls**; from Essex: **Canvey Junior, Castledon, Castle View, James Hornsby, Laindon Park Primary, Lincewood Primary, Northwick Primary** and **The King John School**; and from Tower Hamlets area: **Arnhem Wharf, Lansbury Lawrence, Lawdale, Olga, Osmani** and **St Luke’s.**

Category Four: Performance/Installation Art

The joint winners in this category were students from high schools in Haiti and Kenya. The first winner was **CIMA Community School of Hope** (Ecole communautaire de l'espoir de CIMA) from Haiti for their work entitled *Konbit* (work in solidarity) to build bridges to curtail violence and promote harmony within villages to regain pride and dignity. The Judges said the students had produced an interesting video, "with a series of dance pieces, showing young people expressing themselves with authenticity, and working together to cultivate the land and plant seeds. This community focused project clearly encourages people to build bridges, promote harmony, and regain pride and dignity."

The second winner was the **Daraja Academy** from Kenya for their entry entitled simply *Daraja Academy,* which the judges said was a very ambitious work with well-chosen examples of high quality art work. "This project conveyed a clear sense of hope, enthusiasm and optimism," they said, noting how the issue of sustainability was integrated into the daily life of the school.

The 2025 Panel of Judges were:

Jannette Cheong (Artist and author)
Edmund de Waal (Artist, Potter, author)
Liz Forgan (Journalist and radio and television executive)
Antony Gormley (Sculptor)
Lorna Hamilton-Brown (Freelance artist)
Andrew Hochhauser KC
Shobana Jeyasingh (Dance Director)
Paul Laikin (CEO of animation company UNANICO)
Hugh Quarshie (Actor, Star Wars and UK series Holby City)
Rathna Ramanathan (Head of Central St Martins,University of the Arts London, UK)
Marilena Reina (Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, UK)
Hilary Vernon-Smith (Former National Theatre Head of scenery, UK)

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