**14-16 Creative – Joint First Place**

**Katie Kirkpatrick, Soham Village College: ‘disposable camera’ in response to ‘Good Names for Three Children’**

see her at four

the almost-ringlets that stick to her face

and a gingham dress from the charity shop

accessorised with a smattering of ketchup

ecstasy or despair, no middle ground

except

crab-apple cheeks and the absence of shade

see her at five

see her at twelve

an eau de parfum of fairy cakes and burnt hair

an incessant giggle and a grown-up whisper

wiped-away lipstick that hides at the corners of her mouth

slightly too pink and slightly too old

the wipe’s in the bin but it’s too late:

I know

see her at thirteen

see her at seventeen

several incoming calls and several secret passwords

anxious waits for letters on a page, for boys, for buses

the turn of a key in a lock that means she’s home or not

the cards lying discarded in the kitchen, rail and college

she’s forgotten but it’s too late to text

see her at eighteen

see her at twenty

a boy, the same boy this time, around

emails and visits instead of supper and lunch

arms that are starting to care for me

but tear-stained cheeks that still need me to fix the tears

see her at twenty-one

**Commentary**

Good Names for Three Children is, to me, a poem about Ramlochan’s views on parenthood and aging, and is firmly rooted in fear: fear of loss of control, loss of closeness and loss of love. The poem made me think about how we remember our childhoods, and how they are remembered by those closest to us, and so I decided to explore parenthood through the idea of a photo album.

Inspired by Ramlochan’s use of repeated lines to open and close each stanza, I copied this but changed the age each time, so as to imply that each stanza – each photo – encapsulates a year of the child’s life. This helped me to convey the sense of loss felt by the parent: as soon as they’ve taken in the details of the child’s life, they become unrecognisable: it is impossible to pause or slow down aging.

The turning point of my poem is the lines ‘the wipe’s in the bin but it’s too late:/I know’. This is the only point in the poem where I use punctuation other than commas, and I did this so as to show the point where the daughter begins to show a conscious desire to detach herself from her mother and become an adult.

While Ramlochan’s piece is heavily rooted in symbolism and metaphor, I decided to focus on specific details of life at each stage, often through using hypehanted words and phrases to demonstrate the haphazard make-do-and-mend nature of parenting.

I wanted to create a representation of the childhood experienced by myself and my local peers, and so used the rhythmical freedom within each stanza to enjoy imagery connected to my life, while also playing with words as a child plays with toys to give the poem a sense of fun.