

Northern Lights

End of autumn term magazine
2023-24

SHINE

IT'S CHRISTMAS!



Try to feel peace this Christmas



Dear parents/carers

I hope this newsletter gives you a flavour of Northern Lights, not just the range of schools that are part of our Trust, but also the wide range of wonderful opportunities

our children are provided with and the value we place on educating the whole pupil.

As your child's school is part of Northern Lights, they are part of a wider family of schools and support network. Our schools work collaboratively together, including cross-phase across our primary and secondary schools.

Our pupils also have opportunities to work together, including in our Trust Parliament that you will see in this newsletter.

At Northern Lights we have Trust values, one of which is the 'Voice of the Child' and our schools are working on developing this further this year, through a range of ways.

Our schools are also working on developing the Trust value of

'Pride' this year and celebrating aspects of achievement in our schools that they are developing and feel proud of our pupils.

As a Trust we value our partnership with our parents and carers and encourage you to work closely with your child's school. We value all of our children as individuals and that individual element includes our work with families.

The 'Trust' is our schools and our schools are the 'Trust'. We have a central team that supports our schools, but the Trust **is** our schools and all who work in them and the wider central team, our DfE Teaching School Hub and our Early Years Hub.

So, on behalf of the Trust, I wish you a wonderful Christmas, with time with loved ones and time to feel peace.

Thank you for all your partnership working with our schools, each and every thing you do to help us collaboratively get the best outcomes for all our children is very much appreciated.

Best Wishes
Mrs J. Heaton OBE



Northern Lights' values tell our story. This is us:

We place the **voice of the child** at the heart of decision-making, recognising that our work is ultimately to guide the next generation.

Our schools are embedded in their communities and sense of **community** is a responsibility as well as a value, embracing belonging, kindness, compassion, respect and the opportunities that brings.

Support is the rock upon which we choose to lean, to thrive, and the scaffolding we can give with humility to others, accepting that all of us need support at one time or another.

Integrity is central to our actions and means doing what we say we will do to stay authentic and encourage trust.

We always do the best we can to be genuine, non-judgmental and instil **pride** and we are proud of what we achieve and the difference we make.

COVER PICTURE: Children from St Peter's Elwick get ready for the festive season!

OUR SCHOOLS DECEMBER 2023

SUNDERLAND

HARTLEPOOL

STOCKTON-ON-TEES
DARLINGTON



- Benedict Biscop Church of England Academy, Sunderland
- Holley Park Academy, Washington
- Venerable Bede Church of England Academy, Sunderland
- Hart Community Primary School, Hartlepool
- St Helen's Primary School, Hartlepool
- St Peter's Elwick Church of England Primary School, Hartlepool
- Ian Ramsey Church of England Academy, Stockton-on-Tees

**Expected to join in the academic year 2023-24 are Grange Primary School in Hartlepool and St Aidan's CE Academy in Darlington.*

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All fired up

Holley Park Academy's Early Years children cosy up around the fire as part of Forest School. The Forest School initiative has been a brilliant way for our youngest pupils to develop the skills of resilience and resourcefulness in line with Holley Park's core school values.



Staying the course

St Peter's Elwick pupils showed resilience and determination in a demanding cross-country finals at High Tunstall. "We are extremely proud of everyone who took part," said Vikki Wilson, headteacher. "Congratulations to one of our pupils who finished in the top ten and will go on to represent Hartlepool in the Tees Valley final."



Food bank bingo

Ian Ramsey CE Academy are running their Food Bank Bingo again this year to help those in need over the festive season in the Stockton area. 10N have already collected everything on their bingo card so will be hard to beat. Last year - see picture - the school managed to fill their minibus with donations.



OUR OBJECTIVES FOR 2023-24

To continue to support school, families and the local community with the rise in the cost of living including conserving energy.

To ensure that pupil voice is heard when purchasing resources to support and enhance learning.

OUR REPRESENTATIVES

Benedict Biscop CE Academy Emile	 Matthew	Grange Primary School Mia-Annabell	 James	Hart Primary School Will	 Rosie	Holley Park Academy Fearne	 Leo
St Helen's Primary School Jack	 Poppy	St Peter's Elwick CE Primary School Neve	 Pully	Ian Ramsey CE Academy Damisi	 Maria	Venerable Bede CE Academy Neve	 Jessica
<p>The Voice of the Child is really important to us - we want our children's voices to be heard in all aspects of the work we do in our schools.</p>				 Harry	 James	 Jessica	 Jessica

Parliament off to a great start

The Northern Lights Learning Trust Pupil Parliament - or Trust Parliament for short - has been elected for this school year.

Members have started their planning to ensure that they meet their aims: to ensure that pupil voice is heard when purchasing resources to support and enhance learning; and to continue to support school, families and the local community with the rise in the cost of living, including conserving energy. They are looking forward to liaising with Katie Hammond, Chair of the Board.

Holley Park Academy members Fearne and Leo have already made

the following suggestions, working with their school council in response to a question asking what resources would help them in their learning:

- a giant timeline for history
- a suggestion board in each class
- a world map for each class
- maths games for play time.

At Ian Ramsey CE Academy, Damisi, Maria, Harry and James are exploring a survey to collect opinions; and how to offer extra-curricular sports equipment to students. Among other topics they are also discussing are uniform adaptations and a year-round foodbank scheme.

Hart pupils encouraged to dream big with school's careers project

Children from Hart Primary School know it's never too early to start thinking about what they want to do when they grow up.

During the autumn term they began work on an innovative, Department for Education-based "Start Small, Dream Big" project, which gives schools the opportunity to be part of a programme of activity and research. In turn this helps influence and shape future policy decisions on primary career-related learning.

Benefits of the programme include:

- Increased awareness and aspirations amongst primary aged children of the range of jobs and career pathways available to them in the future
- Removal of barriers and stereotypes which limit children's thinking
- Providing children with forward-looking, realistic views of jobs and the way we work
- Developing an understanding amongst children of the link between what they learn in school and skills and the world of work
- Increased parental engagement in supporting children to think broadly about future careers.

Activities related to the careers project so far include:

- A visit from Simfly Aviation in Darlington who talked all about the different job opportunities in aviation such as engineers, pilots, crew, airport staff and so on. They discussed safety and security in the airport and when boarding the aircraft and



High flyers: a new project at Hart Primary School helps children think about careers

what cabin crew do when people are going through security and boarding their flight. They also discussed the cabin procedures, including how to locate smuggling.

- Participation in Green Careers Week, where each class took on a job role for the Antarctic Polar Research Camp. EYFS were environmentalists, clearing pollution from the ice; Year 1/2

built wind turbines to provide power to the research centre; Year 3/4 were structural engineers who designed and built bridges to span the polar ice caps; and Year 5/6 were naval architects, designing propeller-powered ships to cut through the ice. The project had such an impact that one child continued their learning at home and built another ship out of Lego.

Strong partnerships are key, says new Holley Park head



Mrs Lisa Curtis has said how delighted she is to have been appointed headteacher at Holley Park Academy.

"I very much look forward to leading the school in the next phase of its success and building on the excellent work already carried out by Mr Garrett and the rest of the team," she said.

"I have been a senior leader for over 20 years; my most recent post was deputy headteacher

in a primary school in Durham. Throughout my career, I have always been fully committed to the education and wellbeing of all pupils. As a parent myself, I fully understand the journey that your child will go through during their primary years and beyond.

"The school vision, 'Work Together, Achieve More' resonates with my own belief that strong partnerships between school and home are crucial if we are to ensure all pupils feel safe and happy and are able to flourish and achieve their full potential."



Robotics club at St Peter's Elwick have been busy creating their robot game pieces and key stage 2 children will be competing in the regional competition next month.



Art school visit inspires creativity

Some 80 Year 10 pupils from Ian Ramsey CE Academy attended taster days offered by the Northern School of Art.

They took part in workshops in fashion, willow sculpture and TV, film and acting departments. Everyone had a really interesting and fun day and are inspired to take their creativity into their careers.

Venerable Bede collects gold RE quality mark for fourth time

"The core values of the school radiate from their RE" – just one of many favourable comments received as Venerable Bede CE Academy collected the prestigious RE Gold Quality Mark for the fourth time in a row.

"It was encouraging to see Religious Education being such a high-status subject clearly valued and fully supported at the highest level in school," said the assessor. "The fact that every student completes the full course GCSE is also impressive and enviable."

The RE Gold Quality Mark (REQM), has been developed to recognise high-quality religious education in schools across the country.

Head of RE, David Johnson, said: "The award recognised the outstanding learning in RE, both in terms of exam results and the high enthusiasm and enjoyment students have of the subject."

Gaining the award was no easy feat. The school had to provide thorough evidence as an assessor spent the morning with the department and senior staff, as well as pupils from all year groups.

David Airey, Venerable Bede's headteacher, said: "We are thrilled to have been redesignated REQM at the Gold standard. This shows the hard work and determination of our pupils and staff. This award recognises the high quality RE curriculum which our pupils experience, and the contribution it makes to outcomes across the school."



Celebrating the award at Venerable Bede

English praise too



The school's English department has earned a quality mark for the fifth consecutive year, awarded at the PTI Schools Programme Day.

James MacIntyre, director of English, said: "We are delighted to achieve this national award once again. It is a source of pride for the entire department to be awarded the PTI's quality mark, recognising the hard work and dedication in creating the best possible subject for our students."



Mathematicians from Year 5 and 6 at Hart Primary School took part in a maths activity day organised by Red House School. The children explored a range of practical mathematical activities during the morning and then completed a primary maths challenge, which included a diverse range of demanding word problems.



No wonder they're smiling: here's the St Helen's team in an upper key stage 2 dodgeball event, where the Hartlepool primary school were victorious and have progressed through to the forthcoming town final next month. "This is the first time in our school's history that we have made it through to the final. The children, as always, demonstrated great attitude and sportsmanship," said Marcus Newing, headteacher.



Year 5/6 children from St Peter's Elwick had a lesson with a difference when they visited Newcastle Cathedral to learn about "God and the Big Bang". The children discussed the overlaps of science and faith and heard from different scientists, who are Christians, and asked and answered important questions. "It was a fantastic day and it was great to see so many pupils contributing their ideas," said Vikki Wilson, headteacher.

Exploring the Fibonacci Sequence



Ian Ramsey CE Academy held a day dedicated to The Fibonacci Sequence; a set of steadily increasing numbers where each number is equal to the sum of the preceding two numbers.



Mrs Watson created games based on the Fibonacci sequence for pupils to try at break and lunch. The pupils had fun and raised money for good causes at the same time.



Community enjoys the most wonderful time of the year

Venerable Bede CE Academy hosts a community Christmas party each year for residents from their local community, along with pupils and staff from the school. It is always a resounding success, says headteacher David Airey, and a wonderful festive afternoon with entertaining performances, carol singing, refreshments and the ever-popular bingo and raffle.

Mr Airey said: "This year, our school band and choir led the room with rousing renditions of 'All I want for Christmas is you' plus many more festive tunes. We played several rounds of bingo with some lovely prizes being won by our guests. The raffle was a great success and the buffet delicious."

Pupils and staff worked tirelessly to ensure everything went smoothly. The school received lots of compliments from the guests who thoroughly enjoyed themselves.



Festival success

Year 3 did a dazzling job leading Holley Park's harvest festival. Alongside the service itself, the year group took the lead on collecting donations for the local foodbank. "The response to the collection was overwhelming and we'd like to thank all our parents and carers for their unwavering support of our initiatives," said acting headteacher Lee Garrett.

St Helen's celebrate Day of the Girl

Across school, St Helen's have been completing a competition called the power of women to celebrate the International Day of the Girl.

Children looked at people who inspire us and what careers we aspire towards. The competition is not just for the girls but highlights gender equality, which is a protected characteristic.

The school enjoyed an amazing range of posters, speeches, portraits and pictures for the event.

Here's one pupil's speech:

I have chosen Maria Salomea Sktodowska - also known as Marie Curie - as my inspirational person.

She was born on 1867 on the 7th November with 3 older sisters and 1 older brother. She was born in Warsaw, Poland and devoted her life to becoming a scientist.

She moved to Paris after being denied a college education in Poland. At first she was a teacher then a governor before finally becoming a scientist.

She met another scientist called Pierre Curie who became



Artwork by SEN pupils at St Helen's Primary School

the love of her life. They finally got married after 3 proposals. Together they discovered polonium and radium, which won them a Nobel prize for chemistry.

Sadly, Pierre died, which made Marie work harder than ever. She won a second Nobel prize, this time in physics. She died of aplastic pernicious anaemia caused by her work with radioactive materials. She died at the age of 66 on July 4th 1934.

To this day her discoveries are significant in everyday life.



Slip sliding away at Benedict Biscop

Whatever the weather, children at Benedict Biscop are outdoors together! Recently in Early Years, the children created a mud slide in the outdoor provision, helped along by heavy rain.

"We love celebrating the world around us and that includes mud!" said Sarah Armstrong, headteacher. "Please excuse the mess, we were just making memories!"

Isabelle's three kings wins Christmas card competition

One of the highlights of the festive season each year at Venerable Bede CE Academy is the Year 7 Christmas card design competition.

This year, Isabelle's creativity was chosen as the winning design and is being sent out as the school's official Christmas card.

Isabelle received professionally-printed copies of her design, as did runners-up Lily-May (below left) and Samuel with their designs.



Christmas on its way



Benedict Biscop children have been welcomed into school by magical elves!

Excited youngsters made their way round the school's winter wonderland taking part in carols, drinking hot chocolate, creating

reindeer dust, baubles, Christmas lists and jingle sticks - and not forgetting hearing a Christmas story from a "real-life" elf from the North Pole!

"The morning was filled with joy," said Sarah Armstrong, headteacher. "Thank you to our wonderful children for being the best they could possibly be and thank you to our PTFA for helping to fund the event!"



KS1 Craft Club and KS2 Creative Challenge Cub at Benedict Biscop have joined together to create Christmas crafts. The children made decorations, gift bags, gift tags and much more which went on sale at the Christmas Extravaganza to raise money for the school.



Lighting up the dark

Hart pupils had the privilege of being part of the Wintertide Festival at Hartlepool Headland.

Talented local artists Abigail Farrelly and Abigail McLean came to school as part of the festival

to work on an art project with the children, which later formed part of the popular parade. "I'm sure you will agree that the finished result looks fantastic!" said headteacher Marie Crowe.

Meeting the challenge



A year of progress for Early Years Hub

The Northern Lights Early Years Stronger Practice Hub for the North East has now been helping early years practitioners for a full year! Part of the celebrations involved a special visit from Gill Holden and Sarah Creek from the National Children's Bureau and Alice Ashworth from the Department for Education, as part of an annual review.

"We were so excited to share what we do here in the North East and the impact we're making in all areas of the Early Years world," said Emma Whelan-Tate, director of the Early Years Hub.



A 5am start signalled what was to be a long, challenging – but ultimately "great" – day for Ian Ramsey CE Academy's Year 11 Duke of Edinburgh Silver award participants. Starting from Stockton on Tees, the group were practising their navigation

skills and braving the weather around Conistone in the Lake District. A DoE awards evening at school saw over 70 Year 11s complete their bronze award with family and friends, with Mr Snowden handing out the awards.