

Northern Lights

End of term magazine
for parents and carers
Christmas 2024

SHINE

HAVING AN ICE TIME!

PLUS

OUR TRUST'S COMMUNITY FOCUS

At the centre of our communities



Dear parents/carers

I want to begin by wishing all of you a very Merry Christmas. I am sure that you have enjoyed seeing and hearing about the many things your children

have taken part in as part of the Christmas celebrations in their school. I hope that this has helped make some really special Christmas memories for everyone.

I also want to thank you for all of your support in working with your child's school over the last term. We are truly grateful for the partnership working and support that our parents and carers give. This support has shone through in attending Christmas events, parent consultations, school events through the term, supporting the school's social media celebrations of all they do, or in supporting your child with their learning. So a big Christmas 'thank-you'!

This year across Northern Lights we are celebrating 'The Year of Community'.

Community is one of our Trust values because we believe that our schools are here to serve their community, to support and contribute to the

communities where they are based. You may have seen some of these activities celebrated on your child's school social media, or heard what's been happening in their school. I have been truly moved by some of the amazing things that our schools have been doing to make a difference in their communities. Extremely proud!

We produce this *Shine* magazine each term, to also help parents and carers see what's happening in their school, as well as the other schools across our trust.

So I hope that you find time to grab a cuppa and a mince pie and read about some of the wonderful things that have been happening across the schools in Northern Lights this Autumn term.

I would like to wish you all love, joy and peace this holiday season. I would also like to remind any of our families who need our support, our schools are there to help you in any way that they can. We know this season can be a tough time for some of us, for many reasons. Our school staff want to help. Please get in touch with them if you need our support.

Wishing everyone a wonderful Christmas and a Happy New Year.

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.

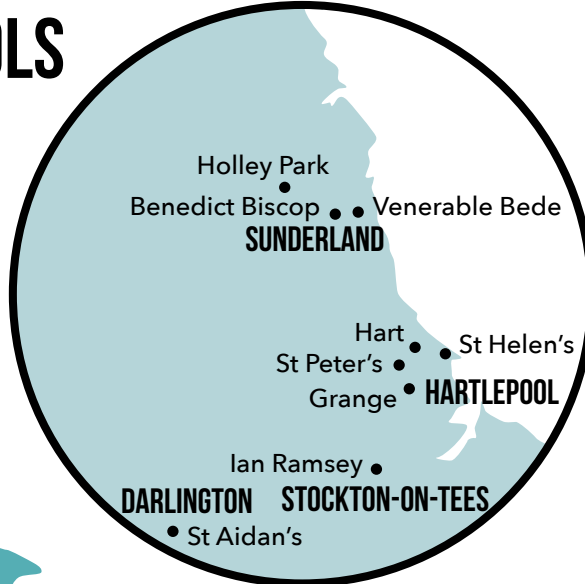
Support is the rock upon which we choose to lean, to thrive, and the scaffolding we can give with humility to others, accepting that all of us need support at one time or another.

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: St Helen's Primary School children have fun on the ice

OUR SCHOOLS DECEMBER 2024



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

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HOW WE'RE CELEBRATING OUR YEAR OF COMMUNITY



Support for those needing cardiac care



Pupils at Holley Park Academy have voted to support Red Sky Foundation as part of the school's ongoing focus to strengthen community links.

Red Sky Foundation raise vital funds and provide lifelong care for babies, children and adults who need cardiac care.

"We're thrilled to be partnering with the Red Sky Foundation and look forward to finding ways for our school community to get involved and support their important work," said headteacher Lisa Curtis.

"Also, we were, once again, overwhelmed with the generosity of our families during this year's harvest collection. All donations received were shared with Washington Community Food Project to support local families."



Year 10s spread good cheer



The Year 10 ASPIRE group at Ian Ramsey CE Academy spent a morning volunteering at Little Sprouts in Thornaby, getting ready for their annual toy sale so the residents of Thornaby have access to affordable toys for their children for Christmas.

The group moved and sorted a huge number of toys for the sale and Little Sprouts were extremely appreciative for the help.

Joining forces to make a difference



The Student Council at St Helen's Primary School worked alongside Cleveland Fire Brigade to host a Christmas party for vulnerable people in their community.

The heart-warming event was filled with singing, crafts and a Christmas quiz.

Marcus Newing, headteacher, said: "We've made new friendships and can't wait to organise our next meet up! Well done - you are truly making a difference in our community!"



Bringing Christmas cheer to Aviva



Benedict Biscop CE Academy pupils were

invited to sing at the head office of Arriva in Doxford Park to celebrate the trust's Year of the Community.

The children sang Christmas songs and Aviva staff said it really cheered them up - and got them in the Christmas spirit.



St Peter's key role in play area bid



St Peter's Elwick CE Primary School's Junior Leadership Team have worked with the Elwick Playing Fields Committee to submit a bid to improve local playing facilities.

The project has involved assessing the area's use by different groups and getting student voice about how it could be improved. The Junior Leadership Team have worked hard to prepare the funding bid.

If the bid is successful, the children will continue to have a key role going forward.

HOW WE'RE CELEBRATING OUR YEAR OF COMMUNITY



Harvest festival helps support vital charity

Year 2 art on display

As part of a community artwork project, Grange Primary School pupils produced individual seaside canvases based on the work by Hartlepool artist Derryck Stephen Crowther.

The artwork is being exhibited at Christ Church Art Gallery, which opened in a special event for Year 2 pupils and their parents.

Afterwards, headteacher Samantha Musgrave received a letter from a member of the public. It read: "May I congratulate you for such a wonderful event. It was heartwarming to witness the joy and pride the children showed seeing their work displayed in a professional space."



Children at Hart Primary School have voted for a local charity to support - The Salaam Centre-Poolie Time Exchange.

The charity was involved in the clean-up and subsequent fundraising following the riots in Hartlepool over the summer.

The first act of charity was collecting food to donate to their food bank during the school's Harvest festival.

Work on show at museum



Pupils from St Aidan's CE Academy involved in an art textiles workshop during the summer, have been invited to Hopetown to see the exhibition in place.

The school's installation is in the carriage works part of the museum, presented with a plaque and accompanying photos of pupils taking part in the workshop, alongside local artist Jess Grady.

Entry into the museum is free, so please visit to help celebrate the work of our school.



Help for toy appeal and food bank



Big-hearted pupils and families pulled together to support Venerable Bede CE Academy's Harvest Food Bank. All donations were sent to a food bank at Bethany City Church in Sunderland.

"A huge thanks also to everyone who was able to donate to the Salvation Army's Toy Appeal," said

head of school, Tracey Burgess. "We presented the toys at a carol service - and all donations will make a big difference to the lives of children in our community.

"The Salvation Army band were fabulous, as were our Year 11 pupils who volunteered to read at the service at St Patrick's Church," she said.

School inspectors have been to two Northern Lights schools in Sunderland this term: Benedict Biscop, a primary and 'feeder' to secondary school Venerable Bede. Both schools received glowing reports...

Inspectors give top marks for Trust schools

■ Pupils thrive in an ambitious learning atmosphere and show great enthusiasm for their learning, Ofsted inspectors discovered at Benedict Biscop CE Academy. They awarded the school an 'Outstanding' judgement in all areas.

This rare, ultimate accolade in school inspection was made after a two-day visit. Inspectors said the Sunderland primary school removes barriers to learning for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, which mean they benefit from the ambitious curriculum and staff expertise. "As a result, pupils achieve exceptionally well," declares the report.

"The school has carefully designed a language-rich and stimulating environment in the early years. The experiences and activities promote children's creativity, social skills and emotional development," says the report.

"Children have a phenomenal start to their education in this school."

Headteacher Sarah Armstrong said: "The report is testimony to the tremendous teamwork of our school community and reveals how everyone plays their part well. Our children, parents, staff and governors are so passionate about Benedict Biscop and it is a real privilege to be its headteacher."

Jo Heaton OBE, Chief Executive of Northern Lights Learning Trust said: "We are delighted with Benedict Biscop's Ofsted report and judgment, which demonstrates the high standards of inclusive provision our school ensures every child receives. I am pleased the continued hard work by everyone involved across the school and the Trust has been recognised."

■ Lives are transformed at Venerable Bede CE Academy in Sunderland, say school inspectors in a new report.

Pupils understand that they are valued and thrive in an atmosphere

where they are well known as individuals and the quality of relationships is a notable strength, declares the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) report, following a two-day visit to the secondary school.

"Staff are caring, valuing pupils and each other. Astute decisions overcome barriers to flourishing, especially for the most vulnerable. As a result, people's lives are transformed," the report says.

"We are delighted with the SIAMS report," said Tracey Burgess, Head of Venerable Bede. "Inspectors have recognised and accurately captured in their report the commitment we have to all of our students. Our vision is 'We soar to the heights together' and this is a shared aspiration everyone, staff and pupils, try to live every day."

The report explains that there is a clear ethos in the school, that encourages pupils and adults to flourish. "The school is highly inclusive and cherishes the worth of every single member of the school community," it says.



Celebrating Ofsted success at Benedict Biscop CE Academy are Sarah Armstrong, top right, Headteacher; Gordon Petrie, Chair of Governors; Gemma Clark, Deputy Headteacher and pupils Myla and Avery (front) and Reuben and Megan

Venerable Bede CE Academy's curriculum and extracurricular provision is carefully planned to reflect its vision, according to the SIAMS report. The school ensures that pupils are well informed and carefully educated about the wider world, say inspectors.

People of faith at the Church of England school say they find the collective worship at the heart of the school uplifting while others find it meaningful and thought-provoking. Adults describe working at the school as "being part of a loving family."

Jo Heaton said: "I'm so pleased SIAMS inspectors have recognised that the culture of Venerable Bede as caring school creates an atmosphere where all individuals are valued. The school is on a journey of change, and to hold the core aspects that the report recognises whilst on this journey, is very important to us all. We are proud of all that is celebrated in the SIAMS report."

Tracey Burgess, Head of Venerable Bede, front, with, from left, Tilly, Alex, David Johnson, Head of RE, Sam and Poppy





Our objectives for 2024-25: We want to enable our pupils to become "Agents of Change" to address inequalities in society. This year our Trust Parliament will focus on:

Looking after people in our communities

Our representatives:

Immanuel Wesley CE Academy 	St Ann's Catholic School 	St George's Primary School 	St Mary's Primary School 	Holley Park Academy
St Barnaby CE Academy 	St Albans CE Academy 	St Edmund's Primary School 	St Peter's Church CE Primary School 	Venerable Bede CE Academy

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.



Families in class

Children at St Helen's Primary School welcomed parents and family members to take part in their annual Christmas crafts workshop.



Calling in to care

Hart Primary School visited Sheraton Court Care Home to spread Christmas cheer in the community.



Digital mapping

Year 5 at Holley Park Academy have been using ordinance survey keys to locate places on the North East coast. They have also been locating human and physical features using a marker on a digital map.

St Peter's Elwick put a focus on future careers

St Peter's Elwick CE Primary School takes its careers work seriously – with an interest in future jobs starting in EYFS to broadens pupils' horizons.

KS2 pupils were visited by a employees within the maritime industry. Some had travelled from London that morning just to be there. Pupils then had the chance to visit PD Ports to explore the industry for themselves.

Some of the roles discussed included being a captain, people manager, workboat engineer, operational chargehand, business development analyst, digital and communications officer and an office administrator.

"We would like to say a big St Peter's thank you to all of the volunteers for sharing their experiences, skills and favourite parts of their jobs," said Vikki Wilson, head of school. "We really appreciate everyone for travelling so far to see and speak to us, and for making the sessions so engaging and informative."



Evan signs for Middlesbrough FC

Your heard about him here first... Congratulations to Evan in Year 11 at St Aidan's CE Academy who has signed a scholarship with Middlesbrough FC, which will start when he finishes school in June. This is a fantastic opportunity for Evan – and we are all very

proud of his achievements. Evan played for Middlesbrough in an Under 16 Premier League National Tournament showcasing future talent, against some very strong teams such as Aston Villa and Manchester City. Middlesbrough went on to win the tournament!



Pupils rise to challenge of freezing athletics!

There were some outstanding performances by pupils of Ian Ramsey CE Academy at the Stockton Schools Cross Country championships, on a freezing but fantastic afternoon at Norton sports complex.

Iris in Year 8 produced an amazing performance to win the Junior girls' event; Ted was also outstanding and came runner-up in the preliminary boys' event, with Lucas and Jack closely behind in 4th and 6th respectively.

Other qualifiers for the Cleveland County event, to be held in January, were Mofe in Year 7 and Oliver in

Year 11. The Year 7 boys were the winners of the preliminary boys' team event.

All students represented the school impeccably, with several staff from other schools commenting how they were a credit to the school.

At the Stockton Schools Sports Hall Athletics event, Ian Ramsey CE Academy Year 7 girls finished as champions and will represent Stockton in the Tees Valley finals next month.

The Year 7 boys finished 3rd overall in their event, with Year 8 boys and girls 4th and 5th respectively in their events.



St Hilda's tree of peace



Pupils from the Grange Primary choir attended the annual Christmas Tree Festival at St Hilda's church. Pupils made decorations for the Christmas tree linked to the theme of peace.



Panto beckons, thanks to PTFA

Everyone at Benedict Biscop CE Academy want to thank their "amazing PTFA" for organising a spectacular Christmas extravaganza.

"It was wonderful to see so many families come together to kick off the festive season in such a joyous way," said headteacher Sarah Armstrong. "A massive thank you to everyone

who donated, supported, and attended. Together, the event raised an incredible £1,879.42, including proceeds from the raffle!"

These funds will go directly towards ensuring all children in Years 1-6 attend the pantomime and will help support other activities throughout the year.



Tree tradition at Hart

Year 6 pupils at Hart Primary School continued the festive traditions by decorating the Christmas tree, while the other children and teachers sang songs watching together! "We're all so excited for Christmas here at school!" said head of school Marie Crowe. "And a big thank you to Asda for their generous donation of our lovely tall tree!"

Parents and carers enjoy going back to school



Children at St Peter's Elwick CE Primary School opened the doors for parents to come and join in a series of lessons with their children. "Our classrooms were packed!" said Vikki Wilson, headteacher. "The



children loved working with their adults and the adults enjoyed being part of the lesson. "We received some great feedback on the sessions from the parents/carers who attended which was lovely to hear and that we really appreciate!"

Stepping back in time at Beamish

Venerable Bede CE Academy's Year 7s went back in time to Beamish, on a curriculum visit. Our pupils did us proud, staff reported, as they explored our region's history at this incredible local attraction.



Sea shells - the provisions for two-year-olds at St Helen's Primary School - love sharing stories together

Attendance is rewarded

Pupils at Grange Primary School are aiming to be in school every day before the Christmas holidays as part of the trust's countdown to Christmas attendance initiative. In one week at Grange, pupils with 100% attendance received an extra playtime and a special certificate as a reward.





It's the real meaning of Christmas

Staff and pupils of Ian Ramsey CE Academy got to see the real meaning of Christmas after dropping off donated presents at the Salvation Army, Stockton.

The Citadel has received over 600 requests for help so the school can take pride in knowing it has played a part in bringing a smile to a young person's face this Christmas.

Warming up at Forest School



On a cold winter's day, children at Holley Park Academy can't beat getting cosy around the fire at Forest School.



Heart of the matter at St Aidan's



Not for the faint-hearted: Year 11 have followed up their learning of the cardiovascular system with a heart dissection. Pupils were able to see the four chambers and core vessels that bring blood to and away from the heart.

On a screen near you



Never mind Netflix... Venerable Bede are now into season 2 of their "Head of School Video Blog", where school head Tracey Burgess chats with Northern Lights Learning Trust's director of secondary education, Jon Tait, about what's happening in school.

A TUNEFUL FESTIVE TIME

Move over Shakin' Stevens! Staff across Northern Lights have put together their annual Christmas music video to spread joy and cheer.

With contributions from all schools and the central team, *Merry Christmas Everyone* is interpreted in our own special way and features lots of familiar faces - and is bound to put a smile on your face this Christmas-time! A huge thank-you to Marie Crowe, head of school at Hart, who pulled it all together and to participants for being such good sports!

See and hear it here - and Happy Christmas from Northern Lights!

[Device/small screen version](#)



Excited early years decorate their tree

Decorating the EYFS Christmas trees was a lesson in itself for Benedict Biscop's younger children.

They eagerly chose their favourite ornaments from the box and found a branch to put them on.

They were so proud of their

finished Christmas tree and this sparked curiosity and they ended up discussing why we have a star or an angel at the top of our tree. The children linked this to their RE topic based around many Christians celebrating the Nativity.



First winners of Uno tournament

St Aidan's CE Academy's fully stocked library and resource centre is a great place for pupils to work - and it is also the venue for the school's first Uno tournament.

October saw the culmination of this popular card game event. After three weeks and over 20 team entries, Year 7 pupils Noah and Harry - winners of the KS3 tournament, pictured below, achieved an amazing victory over Year 11 pupils Victor and Enitan, the KS4 winners.

Congratulations to all involved.



Meet the language ambassadors



Please say a big 'Bien Hecho' to Venerable Bede CE Academy's newly-appointed language ambassadors. They will be helping to raise the importance of learning a modern foreign language within school and across our community.



Slip-sliding away... St Helen's Primary School Year 5/6 children had an incredible time at the ice-skating festival at Billingham forum. It was a fun and amazing experience filled with laughter, excitement and plenty of smiles. A day to remember!

Christmas card winner

Congratulations to Grace in Year 7, the winner of Ian Ramsey CE Academy's Christmas card competition 2024.



Children at Benedict Biscop CE Academy enjoyed lots of Pudsey the bear related activities to celebrate Children in Need.



St Peter's Elwick CE Primary pupils delivered harvest festival donations from their families to the Church Street food bank, where they found out about the important work that the food bank does and the range of ways that they help people.



Pupil leadership is an integral part of Holley Park Academy's personal development offer and Year 6 sports leaders had a brilliant time at Washington Leisure Centre. A key takeaway was learning all about how to support other children at playtimes and during PE.



Hart Primary School's Year 5 children have been learning about bike maintenance and how to ride safely on the road. Julie and Scott from Bikeability have been teaching the children how to turn at junctions left and right, performing U-turns and safely riding on the roads around Hart village.



Reception children at Grange Primary School performed a fantastic nativity "Away in a Manger" to parents and carers. "Well done everyone, you were amazing!" said Samantha Musgrave, headteacher.

Trust-wide tournament captures imagination

Children in primary schools across the trust have been participating in the Times Tables Rock Stars (TTRS) Top of the Rocks Tournament, since 5 November.

Our Year 3, 4 and 5 pupils have been playing TTRS games daily to improve the speed and accuracy of their times tables recall.

"Engagement with the competition has been fantastic thanks to the children's commitment to practising daily and their enthusiasm for learning times tables facts," said Lauren Sinden, tournament organiser. "A massive thank you needs to go to Year 3, 4 and 5 class teachers and maths leads in each school for promoting the competition and celebrating progress."

One Year 4 child had this to say about the tournament: "I like being competitive and I have been first, second and third place in the weekly competitions! I feel very proud when I see our school and sometimes my class at the top of the leader board."

During this week, the last week before the Christmas break, we will discover the top three children per school. These are the children who have given the most correct answers during the second half term and they will be rewarded with a special treat to be given out during assemblies.

We can't wait to celebrate with these children and highlight other individuals for their effort and improvement!



A study of concentration... pupils at Grange Primary School taking part in the tournament