

Northern Lights

End of term magazine
for parents and carers
Easter 2025

SHINE

RAISING THE ROOF!

One Voice

**TALENTED
YOUNGSTERS
FOLLOW IN THE
FOOTSTEPS OF
THE BEATLES**



So much to look forward to



Dear parents/carers

As we draw towards the Easter break, it is always a good time to reflect on all the great work that has been going on in the schools across our Trust. Our schools go the extra mile to ensure that our children and young people

have some fantastic opportunities. It has also been great to see the wonderful work being done in our Trust in relation to our 'Year of the Community' this year. I have heard some amazing feedback from members of our school communities, where our schools are making a real difference in their local settings. This makes us really proud that our children and young people have the opportunity to develop their skills for the future, and also an understanding of the importance of playing an important role in the places we live and work.

It is also my pleasure to welcome Dame Dorothy school in Sunderland into Northern Lights this term. We are delighted to have this fabulous school as part of our Trust.

This edition of 'Shine' gives you an insight into some of the things that have gone on across Northern Lights this term. It is wonderful to see all of our children, from our very youngest children in Early Years, to our oldest children in Year 11, enjoying a vast array of opportunities, including residentials and opportunities in sport, art, careers, music and other curriculum areas.

I can't miss this opportunity to mention the wonderful One Voice Choir and Music Concert that took place at the Stockton Globe theatre this term.

Schools across our Trust had the opportunity to sing, dance, play music and perform. It was lovely to see St. Aidan's CE Secondary join us for their first time participating, and we look forward to Dame Dorothy joining us in the concert next year.

At Northern Lights we endeavour to provide opportunities to ensure everyone can flourish and the One Voice concert is a great example of this. All of the children involved were a real credit to their schools, their families and themselves.

It is important that I thank parents and carers for their support, we really value all that our parents/carers do to help our children to flourish in their time with us, as well as the support you give to our schools and staff. We really value the importance of that partnership. It is also important that I thank our staff, who work hard to provide our children with the opportunities that they provide.

I hope that the Easter break brings the opportunity for our families to spend time together, to hopefully enjoy some warmer weather, and get some time to appreciate the new beginnings that Easter brings - whether that is lambs in the fields, blossom on the trees, or the lighter evenings.

We know that life can feel unsettling for many people at the moment and we want to remind you that we are here to support and to work together, to ensure our children and families are supported to flourish, in good times as well as more challenging times. We really believe in the strength of togetherness, as our Trust vision says 'Shining Stronger Together.'

Wishing everyone peace and joy at Easter time.

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: Our One Voice concert in the amazing Stockton Globe Theatre

OUR SCHOOLS SPRING 2025

SUNDERLAND

HARTLEPOOL

STOCKTON-ON-TEES

DARLINGTON



- Benedict Biscop Church of England Academy, Sunderland
- Dame Dorothy Primary School, 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 CE 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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Celebrating joining Northern Lights Learning Trust are pupils of Dame Dorothy Primary School with headteacher Iain Williamson; school governor Linda Wilson; and chief executive of Northern Lights, Jo Heaton

Now we are 10: Dame Dorothy Primary School joins Northern Lights



Dame Dorothy Primary School in Sunderland has become the tenth school to join us after careful consideration and a partnership of over two years working with the Trust.

There are now over 4,200 pupils in total across our schools in an area stretching from Wearside to Teesside.

School leaders at Dame Dorothy say they have taken great time and consideration in joining a trust for the next part of their development. Formal transition took place on Saturday, 1 February, but the school and Northern Lights have been working together for some time, including with our "Trust Parliament" of pupils.

"We spoke with many trusts over a two-year period and all had great strengths and possibilities," said Iain Williamson, headteacher. However, the trust that stood out head and shoulders to us was Northern Lights. Dame Dorothy wanted to find an organisation that aligned with our values that puts the children front and centre in all we try to do and would respect our individuality and uniqueness.

"We strongly believe Northern

Lights is that trust. Northern Lights comes across as a caring family organisation that values all who are part of it."

Jo Heaton OBE, Chief Executive of Northern Lights, welcomed the addition of Dame Dorothy to the trust, which also comprises the DfE Northern Lights Teaching School Hub as well as the DfE Early Years Hub North East "Our trust mission is to ensure everyone flourishes, with children and young people at the heart of everything that we do.

"We support all pupils and staff to grow, develop and 'be the best they can be'. We are delighted that school leaders at Dame Dorothy saw a reflection of themselves in our mission and vision and we are looking forward to continuing to work alongside them."

Mr Williamson explained that Dame Dorothy, of Dock Street, Roker, has been a strong standalone maintained school in Sunderland for many years.

"But we have a desire to improve and grow and in an ever more challenging landscape," he said. "We believe that we can best achieve these ambitions by becoming part of the Northern Lights Learning Trust."



Shining stronger together!

Our third annual One Voice concert was the biggest and best yet, featuring dance performances as well as showcasing choral and musical talent across children and staff at our primary and secondary schools. It was truly an event to remember...

Talented children and young people from across our schools followed in the footsteps of musical legends The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and Elton John as they sang, danced and performed on stage at Stockton's beautiful Globe Theatre in our annual One Voice concert.

"We came together and did a wonderful thing tonight that our children and families will remember," said Northern Lights Learning Trust's Chief Executive Jo Heaton. "Thank you and I couldn't be prouder of you all."

Some 188 youngsters from primary

and secondary school choirs met up at the prestigious theatre for the first time after rehearsing since January in their own schools. Planning for this, the third annual Trust event started just after last year's concert, in April. Marie Crowe, Headteacher at Hart Primary School and chief organiser, said: "I've had lots of lovely feedback. We should be immensely proud of our talented young people and what they achieved!"

This was the first time One Voice has performed at the Stockton Globe, the only venue in the North East where The Beatles have played.

The original One Voice concert in 2023 was held at the Lubetkin Theatre, East Durham College, which held 200 audience members. We then moved to Venerable Bede last year in front of 600 but with the addition of St Aidan's this year and a bigger programme - including the inaugural Northern Lights staff choir - it was necessary to find a larger venue for performers and parents, grandparents and carers who wanted to watch.

The Globe lifted One Voice to an even higher level of professionalism. Sponsors and a raffle helped fund the



Traditional Indian dance by Neeva, from Holley Park Academy

memorable performance.

Jo Heaton added: "This was a wonderful Trust event... the talent and enthusiasm of our children was brilliant as well as seeing everyone come together in such a joyous way. It was lovely to have St Aidan's join us and we look forward to Dame Dorothy being part of it next year.

"I was unbelievably proud of every single one of our wonderful schools, children, young people and staff. I would like to say a big thankyou to Marie Crowe, Headteacher of Hart Primary School, for her hard work in organising the One Voice concert. It would not have been possible without Marie's hard work and dedication. Thank you so much to everyone who supported the event, preparing the children, supervising them, organising the logistics, working on the door, sorting the raffle, the sponsorship, playing instruments... the list could go





on. And thank you to everyone who came along and supported – not to mention the first performance of our fab Northern Lights' staff choir!"

The programme included all primaries singing what has now been adopted as the concert's anthem, "I am One Voice". To celebrate the Fab Four's 1964 show at the Globe, primary choirs sang "Yellow Submarine", "Little Help from Our Friends" and "Twist and Shout."

Ben from Ian Ramsay CE Academy played a clarinet solo and separately his twin brother Alex played a piano solo. Years 3 and 4 from Hart Primary played their recorders; Hart's Young Thespians performed "Hard Knock Life" from the musical Annie; Year 6s from St Helen's Primary School took part in an energetic contemporary dance and Neeva from Holley Park Academy performed a traditional Indian dance. There were performances from Northern Lights' secondary school choirs,



Venerable Bede, Ian Ramsey and St Aidan's.

Jess Dale, a teaching assistant at Benedict Biscop CE Academy and accomplished singer, performed "Colour of the Wind" while Grange Primary School sang "You've got a Friend". The staff choir, made up of colleagues from schools and the central team, belted out the Oasis classic, "Don't Look Back in Anger".

One Voice 2025 wrapped up with an Abba megamix and finally "We are Family" – which was entirely appropriate, according to Director of Inclusion Carole Bradley. She said: "This was such an amazing, uplifting night. Every part was special and it truly felt like we were one family – shining stronger together."

Marie Crowe added: "A massive thanks from me to everyone who was involved and throughout the planning of the event. Special thanks to Ruth Bonner and her band for their musical expertise and to Mat Smith for his technical assistance."



Top left, contemporary dance from Year 6, St Helen's Primary School; Hart Young Thespians Group performing "Hard Knock Life" from the musical Annie; Guitarist Leighton, of Venerable Bede CE Academy, supporting the NLLT staff choir; Ben, Ian Ramsey CE Academy performing his clarinet solo; and Jess Dale, a teaching assistant at Benedict Biscop CE Academy



Clean up in the forest is a big success

Family groups run by teachers at Benedict Biscop CE Academy – Mrs Holmes and Miss Rogerson – had a fantastic time during their visit to the forest. On their journey they spotted signs of spring, such as blooming flowers and budding trees,

and recognised familiar spots like the pond and some of their homes.

Once at the forest, the children got to work on their litter-picking mission, collecting two full black bags of rubbish to help keep the environment clean.

Leaving the forest, a council van stopped and praised the school for their cleaning up efforts. The children felt proud to have made a positive impact on the environment and were thrilled to receive such recognition for their hard work.

Easter excitement



Easter excitement started in Nursery at Dame Dorothy Primary School with lots of paint, egg counting and fun together.



Remembering Auschwitz

Pupils in 9M at Ian Ramsey CE Academy have produced a wonderful memorial piece to commemorate victims of Auschwitz on the 80th anniversary of its liberation. Staff and pupils have been commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day. Mr Burt, Ms Dodd and volunteer Y9 pupils delivered a poignant worship on remembering, learning and taking action for a better future.





Early Years develop skills

EYFS at St Helen's Primary School have been developing listening skills through playing games and participating in obstacle course races. They have been sorting vehicles, exploring and learning about 3D shapes, gardening, making maps and decorating and drawing flowers linked to new life and to Easter.



Smarter planters thanks to donation



St Peter's Elwick are grateful to MKM Building Supplies for their donation of timber to help renew one of the raised beds in the school's Early Years garden. "With their wonderful donation and the talents of our very own Mr Chapman you can see the difference this has made to the garden area," said Vikki Wilson, headteacher. The Early Years children are delighted with their brand new planter and have already been busy planting seeds and bulbs.

St Aidan's hosts online safety forum for local MP



St Aidan's CE Academy has hosted an online safety forum, organised by Darlington MP Lola McEvoy, to highlight the benefits and risks of online content.

Secondary school pupils from across the area - together with a reporter and camera crew from Sky

News - attended the specially convened focus group so that the MP, who is campaigning on the issue could gain valuable first-hand insights.

They discussed findings from a survey of over 1,000 Darlington youngsters aged 14-17 about their experiences online, specifically drawing

on bullying, explicit content and the amount of time they spend on social media.

Now, the experiences of Darlington's teenagers are set to be taken to Westminster - Ms McEvoy wants to invite students to Parliament to share their thoughts with senior politicians.



Grange Primary wins 'Dragon's Den'

School councillors from Years 4, 5 and 6 at Grange Primary School have won a pitch in a "Dragon's Den" event at Teesside University where £3,000 was available to help support in-creased activity levels in school.

As part of their preparation, children were asked how playtimes could be improved. School councillors then compiled a wish-list and budget. The children delivered their pitch to the team of Dragons, where they were

successful in receiving the £3,000 funding! Well done to the team - their presentation was superb! Afterwards, the children were given a tour of the University before returning to school to spread the good news!



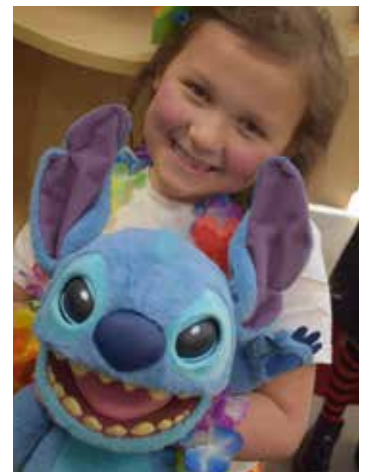
Bringing a library to the village

Librarians at Hart Primary School discussed a problem identified by our Pupil Parliament members – the fact that Hart Village

does not have a library. Following the meeting, plans have been made to create a free library where everyone at the school and

village, of all ages, will be able to swap books. First steps have taken place, collecting unwanted books – and more are welcome.

World Book Day fun



Children at Benedict Biscop CE Academy loved celebrating World Book Day in school. Our photographs show pupils and some of their amazing costumes.

Brunch reward



Brunch celebrations have been held for Year 11s at Ian Ramsey CE Academy, to celebrate the hard work, progress and mock exams success of specially invited pupils.



Brilliant hotel for bugs

Take a look at the fantastic bug hotel that EYFS at Holley Park Academy created during forest school, as part of their DT topic. Children worked together to collect a range of objects such as bricks, leaves, pebbles, bark, tiles, pots and sticks from the outdoor environment to create different habitats for the bugs to live in and around.

Venerable Bede going up in the world

Well done to Year 10 and 11 GCSE PE pupils at Venerable Bede CE Academy who completed their climbing assessment. They all worked so hard, showing great determination and resilience.



Meet Celine, fastest girl in England

You saw them here first... sprint distance runner Celine, aged 14 and footballer Jude, aged 13, both pupils at Venerable Bede CE Academy.

Celine has broken the record to become the fastest Under-17 girl in the country, winning the England 60m Under-17 title and beating girls up to three years older than her. She is now coached by former Olympic medallist Richard Kilty who says he has "never seen a natural sprint talent like her". Celine has her sights set on the next Olympics for Team GB and is grateful to everyone around her, including at school, for their support and encouragement.

After playing football since he was little, Jude, pictured below, is now a centre back for Seaburn Juniors and has progressed through successful trials to have been called up for Durham County Schools FA. He's already featured in a game in Sheffield, drawing with a Yorkshire team 1-1. Jude says he'd love to become a professional player, for Sunderland.



Quick off the mark: Celine, left and Tracey Burgess, head at Venerable Bede

Never too young to think about careers

Pupils at St Peter's Elwick have been learning about a wide variety of different careers.

Children heard from authors, engineers, artists, footballers, presenters and many more.

Early Years and Year 1/2 children have been thinking about their dream job. Year 3/4 have been



working as authors and illustrators and Year 5/6 considered their skills, talents and interests



and how these will help them in the future.

"It has been great to see children choosing careers

from our lessons and recognising their strengths from their work," said headteacher Vikki Wilson.



Special ways of thanking those very important people

Early Years at Hart Primary School had an incredible morning celebrating Mother's Day with all the important figures in their lives. "They have worked so hard to sing, dance and perform their lovely poem for you all and we are so proud of their crafts that they made," said headteacher Marie Crowe. "Thank you so much to all the adults who came and supported the children, they were beaming after the assembly and loved celebrating Mother's Day with you all!"





Our young artists and their colourful portraits

Year 6 at Dame Dorothy Primary School have taken part in their own version of Portrait Artist of the Year. The subject was a person with whom they are quite familiar. Children chose their own materials and ways of working, after some discussion of how they might deal with the background and the challenges they encountered drawing someone sitting down from life.

Life under canvas



Year 4 pupils at Grange Primary School took part in an overnight camping experience to Pybus. Children had to learn how to pitch a tent and had to plan a meal for dinner and breakfast on a budget, which they shopped for and then cooked on a camping stove.



Looking ahead to university

University life has been sampled by pupils at St Aidan's CE Academy.

Year 7 visited Newcastle University. They were taught about what it is like to study and the different courses and societies available to join. They also took part in two STEM work-shops learning about the chemistry of smells and engineering skills needed to escape

from a deserted island.

Year 10 enjoyed a fantastic trip to Oxford. Pupils spent time at Christ Church College, staying in halls and experiencing life as a student. Pupils sat through an academic style lecture, seminars on English, history, and medicine, as well as sampling student life, such as finance and societies.



Tees Barrage trip

Year 3 and 4 at St Peter's Elwick experienced a fantastic day with a trip to Tees Barrage. Children learned about rivers and how settlements develop around them and about the wildlife in the area around Tees Barrage.



An active future

Key Stage 2 pupils at Holley Park Academy pupils have a blast at the Sunderland Active Futures festival!



Working to help their community

A successful initiative led by St Helen's Primary School resulted in 591 items being donated to Hartlepool Foodbank and £669 raised for the town's Alice House Hospice.

The donations were funded through sponsored events and were largely inspired by Year 6 pupils Ella and Hettie, pictured, who are the

school's representatives on the Northern Lights Trust Parliament.

The activities won the Bright Sparks challenge for raising an incredible amount of money for Alice House Hospice and supporting the vulnerable in their community, by hosting a befriending service in partnership with Cleveland Fire Brigade.



At the foodbank with sacks of donations



NETBALL GLORY

Year 7 and Year 8 netball teams from Venerable Bede CE Academy travelled to Thornhill for their Sunderland league fixture. The teams had huge success bringing home 2 fantastic wins! Year 7 won 7-1 and Year 8 won 12-1.



Tips from top poets

A group of Year 11s from Ian Ramsey CE Academy had the opportunity to listen to advice and live poetry readings from poets such as Carol Ann Duffy, Simon Armitage, Imtiaz Dhaker and John Agard – all who feature in the GCSE poetry anthology – at Poetry Live in Harrogate.

Appliance of science at Hart



Year 5 and 6 at Hart Primary School visited High Tunstall to support their science curriculum. Children had the opportunity to look through microscopes at different germs and ana-lyse what they looked like. The science teacher was helpful – and the work so interesting!



Understanding work of the police

EYFS children at Benedict Biscop CE Academy had a fantastic visit from the police.

The children were thrilled to meet real-life heroes and learn all about the important work they do

to keep our community safe. Officers talked about their role and showed the children some of the special equipment they use.

One of the highlights was getting to try on a

real police hat or helmet!

It was a wonderful opportunity for the children to ask questions, build positive relationships with the police and understand how they help us.

Digital posters



Year 1 at Dame Dorothy Primary School have been using their IT skills to create digital posters about the people who help us in the community. Children looked at different jobs then created a poster in different ways using iPads.

Science on show

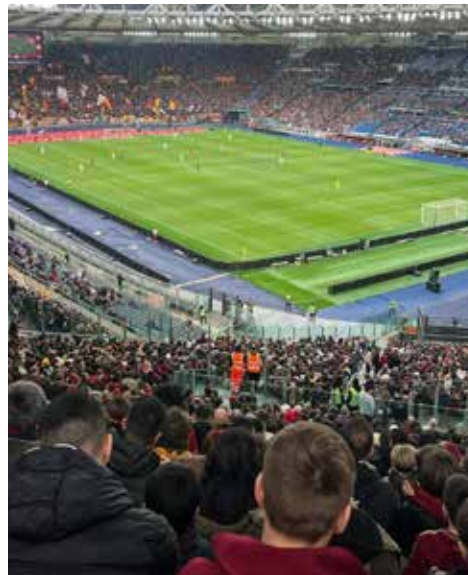


Year 1 pupils at Grange Primary School hosted a science exhibition to showcase their learning. Children really enjoyed demonstrating their knowledge.

Reading café



Year 5 parents and carers at Holley Park Academy were welcomed into school for their Reading Café.



Making fabulous memories of Rome

Pupils and staff from St Aidan's CE Academy had a memorable trip to the historic, eternal city of Rome, seeing all the sights including Vatican City and spending a fantastic afternoon at the Stadio Olimpico, watching Roma beat Cagliari.

Children enjoy bouncing around

Year 2 children at St Helen's Primary School had an amazing time at Hartlepool Gymnastics Club, where they had the opportunity to try a range of skills on the vault, floor, bars, and beam. "It was fantastic to see their enthusiasm and determination as they explored new movements and challenges," said headteacher Marcus Newing. "It was a brilliant experience that was thoroughly enjoyed by all!"



“There’s nothing to beat that lightbulb moment”



Jennifer Watt, a class teacher at St Peter's Elwick

Consider becoming a teacher

A career as a teacher means shaping futures for children and young people, as well as forging your own future, too.

Now, Northern Lights Initial Teacher Training team is asking YOU to consider teaching as a career.

It's not easy - nothing worthwhile ever is - but just ask teachers and they will agree that there's nothing to beat that "lightbulb moment" when teaching really hits the spot.

Northern Lights Initial Teacher Training works in partnership with Ambition Institute, England's largest professional development provider. We operate both a DfE registered Teaching School Hub and Early Years Stronger Practice Hub.

Applications are being invited now for the next programme, which starts in September.

Those completing the one-year, school-based programme will achieve qualified teacher status with a postgraduate certificate in education.

"Our curriculum is evidence-led, high quality and developed by experts in education," said Zoe Thompson, Director of the Teaching School Hub at Northern Lights.

"The course is really supportive - you will have your own mentor - and placements are tailored to you."

"Straight away you will be in schools, learning the craft, in a programme that has helped countless aspiring teachers begin their rewarding journey."

"Everything has been very streamlined and structured. I feel well equipped and really comfortable, and I would strongly recommend anyone to train with Northern Lights," said Sarah Rutherford, now an established Class Teacher.

Teachers now have a minimum starting salary of £31,650.

If you have any questions or want to know more, email itt@nllt.co.uk or visit northernlightstsh.co.uk

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