

# Northern Lights

End of term magazine  
for parents and carers  
Summer 2025

# SHINE



# HERE COMES SUMMER!

PUPILS OF ALL AGES ENJOY THE GREAT OUTDOORS





# Working for our communities



## Dear parents/carers

I am delighted to be sharing this edition of SHINE, at the end of our academic year. It gives a really small flavour of the wide range of opportunities across

our schools, including the opportunities provided by being part of Northern Lights.

As a Trust, we sit behind our schools to support them and to develop the provision and opportunities that our pupils receive. As you're aware, one of the ways we have worked collaboratively across our Trust this year has been in our "year of community". It has been wonderful to see the work that our schools have been doing in their communities. This has included adding a community library, improving their environments through litter picks and planting flowers, raising money for charities and installing defibrillators, along with many more amazing activities. All of our schools should be extremely proud.

I'm very proud of all the work that our schools have been doing to make an impact in their local communities.

We are very proud of our SATS results that have come in for our Year 6 pupils across our seven primary schools and look

forward to celebrating our GCSE results with our Year 11 pupils in August.

But it's important to us in Northern Lights that we develop our pupils to have a fully-rounded education and a wide range of opportunities to shine in all areas.

Being part of Northern Lights Learning Trust means being part of a community that believes in excellence, equity and opportunity for every child. Our schools benefit from shared expertise, strong partnerships, and a collective commitment to nurturing both academic success and personal growth.

I am deeply grateful to our dedicated staff, supportive families, and of course, our incredible children and young people, who continue to inspire us every day. Thank you for your trust, your encouragement, and your support in what we do.

Wishing you all a restful and joyful summer break. We look forward to welcoming most of you back in September for another exciting year ahead. To those Year 6 who are coming to one of our secondary schools, we look forward to seeing you again in September, but for our Year 6 who leave us, and for our Year 11 students and all their families, we wish you all the best for your future and we hope that you carry a piece of your school with you in your future.

*Mrs J. Heaton OBE*

## OUR SCHOOLS SUMMER 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



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:** Primary and Secondary pupils enjoy some welcome fresh air

## HOW TO CONTACT US

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Trust Parliament representatives from some of our schools at a special celebration event with, on the back row, David Airey, left; Jonathan Brash, MP for Hartlepool; and (right) Katie Hammond, Chair of the Northern Lights Learning Trust. Mr Brash spoke about his role as a Member of Parliament in Westminster

# Trust Parliament shows the power of pupil voice in action

Our Trust Parliament has once again proven the incredible power of pupil voice in action.

Made up of two representatives from each of the ten schools within the Trust, this inspirational group of young leaders has embraced the theme of "Looking After People in Our Communities" with remarkable energy, compassion, and creativity.

Each school brought their own unique interpretation, reflecting the diversity and strength of our schools. From food bank donations to litter-picking campaigns to care home connections and community projects, our pupils have demonstrated how small ideas led by young hearts can create real and lasting impact.

David Airey, Trust Parliament lead, said: "What has been truly inspiring is the spirit of unity which has grown across our schools. The Trust Parliament has served as a bridge, encouraging collaboration, sharing of ideas and celebrating one another's successes. "Our TP representatives have not only championed kindness within their local communities but also strengthened connections across the wider Trust family.

The passion and leadership displayed has been a credit to their schools and a shining example of

what happens when we trust young people to lead.

"Through their work, they have reminded us that age is no barrier to empathy, initiative, or making a difference."

We are incredibly proud of everything our Trust Parliament has achieved this year. Their efforts have not only helped others, they will hopefully inspire us all.

Here's to another year of shared purpose, community spirit, and pupil-powered change.

## **Some of the ways schools in the Trust Parliament looked after people in their community:**

Throughout the year, many schools organised collections for local food banks.

Benedict Biscop CE Academy organised a 'wear red' to school day and everyone was asked to donate £1, raising £217.56.

At Christmas the school collected a range of toys to help others in a time of need.

Hart Primary School established a community library, recognising there was no library in the village.

The school was also out and about spreading Christmas cheer and Valentine's love in the village



Ian Ramsey CE Academy used social media to signpost support for community – vital for families struggling to meet the cost of living.

**Children from Hart Primary brighten up their village with floral displays**





## Reducing environmental impact

Benedict Biscop CE Academy visited Sunderland City Hall to take part in the Low Carbon Schools Conference – an important step on the school's journey to becoming a Climate Friendly and

a Low Carbon school.

"Our pupils confidently shared their ideas within the chamber, showing their commitment to making a positive change for the planet," said Headteacher

Sarah Armstrong. "We also had the chance to speak to a range of inspiring organisations who can support us as we continue to reduce our environmental impact."



## How a West End play works

Forty outstanding Year 10 pupils from Venerable Bede CE Academy were rewarded for their excellent attendance and behaviour with an unforgettable trip to the Sunderland Empire to see the smash-hit musical Hamilton.

From the moment the curtain rose, pupils were captivated by the powerful performances, incredible music and

gripping storytelling. But the excitement didn't end there – as a surprise treat, the backstage crew gave students an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at just how the magic happens.

From lighting and sound to set changes and costumes, pupils got a rare glimpse into the technical wizardry that brings a West End production to life.

"The pupils were a credit to Venerable Bede, representing the school with pride, enthusiasm and impeccable behaviour," said Head, Tracey Burgess.

■ Year 10s from Ian Ramsey CE Academy enjoyed the same Hamilton experience. Head, Donna Park, said their young people were equally impressive advocates for their school.

## Singing and dancing from Grange pupils



Pupils in Year 6 at Grange Primary School performed Cinderella Rockerfella to a large audience at their local secondary school. The singing, dancing and acting displayed was just fantastic, said Head, Samantha Musgrave.



## Year 6 show for the community



Elderly people across the St Helen's Primary School community enjoyed the exuberance of youth as Year 6 leavers put on a show for them. It was a special early premiere for the people the school has supported as part of Cleveland Fire Brigade's Befriending Service. "What an incredible day," said Marcus Newing, Headteacher. "We are so proud of our pupils for making a difference in our community."





# What happens next for Y10s



Year 10 at Ian Ramsey CE Academy spent time at Stockton Sixth Form College, trying out different activities to give them an idea of what the next stage of their learning could look like after leaving secondary school..



# Hart turn really good idea into reality

School librarians from Hart Primary have now set up a community library outside the front of the school. The initiative is part of the Trust's "Year of the Community" and is in response to the fact that there is no library in the village. Everyone around the local area is invited to take a book to read, then return it for someone else to enjoy. If they have any books that they no longer need, these can be contributed to the library too.



# Anyone for tennis? Speak to Wimbledon fans at Dame Dorothy!

Deuce! Eight children from Dame Dorothy Primary School had an unforgettable adventure with a very special day out at Wimbledon during the famous tournament, where they were lucky enough to watch Cam Norrie and Sonay Kartal both secure wins on Court One! From start to finish, the children's energy was infectious: lively, full of cheer and not a single moment without a smile said Headteacher Iain Williamson. "They've been a true credit to their school and families and we couldn't be prouder of how brilliantly they represented themselves," he said.

# Big hearts at Holley Park



Two brothers from Holley Park Academy - and their mum - have been overwhelmed at the strength of support from the school community. Cameron and Louie held a cake fundraiser to support the Freeman hospital, who took care of their father during his battle with leukaemia. The event was a great success and raised lots of money for this valuable resource. Cameron said: "Louie and I would like to say a massive thank you. We are overwhelmed with your generosity and kindness."





# Teamwork shines through on hot sports day

Sports Day 2025 at St Peter's Elwick was a fantastic – but boiling! – sunny day of fun and competition.

Early Years enjoyed their Sports Day in the morning, followed by an action-packed afternoon with Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

"Congratulations to all our children who participated in the

events, with a special well done to the Blue Team, who were crowned the 2025 winners," said Vikki Wilson, Headteacher.

"Thank you to all the families who came along to cheer and support – your presence made the day extra special!"

Vikki said that even with the heat,

everyone still had a great attitude. "We couldn't be prouder of the excellent behaviour and positive attitudes displayed by every single child."

From the start of the day to the very last race, it was clear that the spirit of teamwork, respect and kindness shone through," she said.

## Out of this world...



**Reception children at Holley Park Academy used pastels to create their own pictures of the solar system.**



## Amazon boost for St Aidan's

Some 30 pupils from St Aidan's CE Academy have visited one of Darlington's high-profile businesses – and has received £10,000 to develop the school's careers resources in a special twinning project.

The young people were given the opportunity to have a site tour of the Amazon fulfilment centre and talk to members of their engineering department about their roles and careers. Apprentices gave presentations about their roles and the positive experiences that they have enjoyed while working at the online giant.

The engineering team later provided workshops for pupils to see how they check and repair the robotics used in the factory.

St Aidan's has now been invited to take part in the Amazon twinning project – a further chance to allow more pupils to experience a broader range of careers that the company can offer in the future through further visits to the factory, virtual resources and in-school presentations and workshops.

As part of the project, Amazon has donated £10,000 to be put towards resources and experiences linked to careers projects.

"We are really looking forward to beginning this project and would like to thank Amazon and My Big Career charity for all their support," said Chris Henderson, Senior Deputy Headteacher at St Aidan's. "Thank you also to our amazing pupils."





## Pulling together

Pupils from Hart Primary School have visited High Tunstall for an inter-sport challenge. The children were put into mixed school groups to take part in a variety of sporting events including tug of war, 100m sprint, endurance running and relay. "They all had great fun and people commented on their enthusiasm and positive attitude," said Headteacher Marie Crowe. "Huge well done to you all!"

## Summer showcase



Ian Ramsey CE Academy's Summer Showcase of Music and Dance was a fantastic celebration of talent and creativity. Pupils from Year 7 to 11 took to the stage to perform a wide range of musical pieces, with stunning performances on saxophone, guitar and vocals.

The energy and enthusiasm were electric – especially impressive considering some of the school's young musicians have only been playing for nine months.

The school choir delivered a beautiful performance that brought the audience together. It was a brilliant way to end the term.

# Forest School helps build resilience in children



How to use potato peelers safely to whittle sticks and create wooden pegs was one of the highlights of a Forest School session at Benedict Biscop CE Academy.

With careful guidance and lots of concentration, everyone had a go at

shaping the sticks, gaining confidence and developing fine motor skills. Later, the group worked together to build an impressive den using branches and sticks. It was wonderful to see their creativity come to life, with children sharing ideas,

problem-solving and proudly standing back to admire their woodland creation.

Forest School days like these are not just about fun – they're about building resilience, independence and a deep appreciation for the natural world.



## Keeping children active is essential: Headteacher's message to Parliament

**Iain Williamson, Headteacher at Dame Dorothy Primary School, has taken part in a round table event in Parliament to share his expertise about how we increase children's participation in physical activity.**

Iain shared lots of the pioneering work being done at Dame Dorothy.

"Through my ongoing involvement with Youth Sport Trust, I was invited to Westminster by Leigh Ingham, MP for Stafford, to discuss the decline in PE and activity for our young people and to look at possible solutions. The meeting was attended by three MPs, officials from the FA, Sport England, Ali Oliver, the CEO of Youth Sports Trust, CEOs of MATs and government policy makers.

"The consensus from the group readily acknowledged that



childhood activity is decreasing and that this is negatively impacting the mental health of young people. The group debated potential solutions to breaking these barriers to inactivity in school and a large part of the discussions focussed

upon our active uniform initiative at Dame Dorothy.

"It was pleasing to note that our uniform change (to sportswear) was very well received by the MPs who were keen to understand the reasons why and the benefits that it has brought. In fact, a significant part of the meeting was spent discussing how this could make a difference to activity in every school.

"Hopefully, there will be a follow up and a continuation to this debate in the coming months and a genuine attempt to take action to improve the health and well-being of children throughout the country."

Jo Heaton, Chief Executive, said: "We are very proud of Iain and it is great to see him representing Northern Lights on a national level and sharing his expertise."



# Andrew's ultra-marathon for charity inspired by Sophia

An Assistant Headteacher at Grange Primary School has run 127 miles in 29 hours to raise almost £3,000 for the Children's Cancer North charity.

Andrew Beane's ultra marathon – the furthest the keen runner has travelled in a single session – was inspired by a Grange pupil, Sophia, who was diagnosed with cancer in November last year. Sophia's positivity and infectious smile helped Andrew cover 100 laps of the estate around his home.

Sophia has now received the news that she is cancer free.

Andrew's aim was to raise money that the charity could use to make children's time in hospital as comfortable as possible.

Children's Cancer North is dedicated to making life better for children with



cancer across the North East and Cumbria. Around 100 children from across the region are newly diagnosed

with cancer every year and attend the Great North Children's Hospital in Newcastle for their treatment.

## Concentrating on their crafts



Year 5 at St Helen's Primary School enjoyed a fun afternoon making crafts ready for their summer fayre.

## 'Thank you for being so special to me'



A Special Person's event at St Peter's Elwick gave the school's Early Years children a chance to say thank you to the important people in their lives.

Children sang songs and shared the poems they have been very busy learning, all in celebration of their fathers and other people special to them.



## St Aidan's amazing artwork

A group of Year 9 and Year 10s from St Aidan's CE Academy have taken part in an artist workshop led by Ian Murphy.

It was part of a collaborative project with Hopetown in Darlington, where pupils' work will form part of an exhibition about the rich heritage of Stockton and Darlington

Railway. Mixed media was explored together with a wide variety of materials and techniques.

Elysia Waller, Head of Creative Arts at St Aidan's, said: "Our links within the local community have enabled us to pursue this excellent opportunity. It is superb to see our young people so engaged and

proud of the artwork they have produced."

Lillie, in Year 9, said: "This workshop has taught me to be trusting of the process. I have really enjoyed using new materials and learning how to be more confident in my artwork - I am really pleased with what I have produced."



# Why beach is the best place to be

Key Stage 1 children from Benedict Biscop CE Academy enjoyed a fantastic trip to Seaham beach.

The recent hot weather meant everyone had lots of fun exploring the seaside and learning about geography. Physical features like the sea, sand and cliffs were discussed, together with human features such as the marina, shops and the museum.

Children enjoyed splashing in the water and laughing together, building sandcastles and going on scavenger hunts. Pupils also enjoyed cooling down with ice lollies – it was a fun and educational day for everyone.



## Year 10s' key role at Durham Cathedral

Year 10s from Venerable Bede CE Academy played an important role in a Year 6 leavers celebration at Durham Cathedral.

They helped hundreds

of pupils from around the North East of England who are about to leave primary school engage with prayer space activities in the historic Cathedral.

Many people from other schools and organisations came forward to say how the Year 10s were such fantastic ambassadors for our school.

## Children explore career options



Holley Park Academy's careers fayre was a great success. The school is really grateful to the many companies and professions who gave up their time to talk to the children about the world of work. Pupils thoroughly enjoyed asking questions.

## Durham Cricket Club offer an experience to remember

**HOWZAT:** St Helen's Primary School had an amazing experience with Durham Cricket Club, who spent the whole day at school running a full cricket engagement programme for children from Year 2 to Year 6. Pupils took part in a variety of exciting activities, including throwing and catching games, batting skills and much more – all while learning about teamwork and having fun! "A huge thank you to Matthew from Durham Cricket Club for providing us with this fantastic opportunity," said Marcus Newing, Headteacher. "Your energy and enthusiasm made the day extra special!"







## Breath of fresh air with Duke of Edinburgh scheme

**Ian Ramsey CE Academy pupils accepted the challenge of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and our pictures show them enjoying the great outdoors**



## The 'Brilliant Club' inspires Year 10s to consider Oxford

Throughout this term a group of Year 10 pupils at St Aidan's CE Academy have been working through the "Brilliant Club" scholars programme – an academic initiative that helps pupils develop university-style thinking and skills through intensive learning experiences.

As part of the programme, pupils worked with a PhD tutor on a university-level topic, attended weekly tutorials and completed a final assignment that is marked using university-style grading. All participating pupils received a pass in the assignment, with multiple receiving a grade 2.1 and two pupils, Varkey and Liam, achieving a first-class grade.

Within this programme, pupils also had the exciting opportunity to visit the University of Oxford where they toured historic colleges, engaged in academic workshops and gained a first-hand insight into

life at a top university. It was an inspiring experience that aimed to broaden their aspirations for higher education.

Pupils' conduct, effort, engagement and hard work was exceptional throughout the programme and is evident through the positive feedback received from individuals at the Brilliant Club who were glowing in their reviews. All of the pupils involved will be attending a formal graduation event later in July.



### On the right tracks

**As part of their history work on the railway revolution, Year 4 pupils at Grange Primary School visited Shildon Railway Museum. Children thoroughly enjoyed looking at and inside the trains and developed their understanding of the advancement from steam to electric engines.**



## Orienteering with a twist

Dame Dorothy Primary School enjoyed a hot, active and fun orienteering session when Year 4 had to use the map to find the quickest and most efficient way around a course. Finding the correct letter, they then had to think quickly and record something associated with physical fitness starting with that letter. There were some fabulous answers – and some very tired children at the end of the day. Well done Year 4!



## Hart on top of the world!

Year 3 and 4 at Hart Primary School had an amazing time at Roseberry Topping! They used their OS maps to track their route, learned about symbols and keys and measured some parts of the walk with a trundle wheel. Children observed the human and physical features and drew sketch maps. Pupils asked visitors why and how they'd travelled to complete their bar charts.



## Learning how to be a DJ

Music fans from Venerable Bede CE Academy had the incredible opportunity to step behind the decks and learn the art of DJing from a professional DJ.

From hip-hop to House, they explored how to mix tracks, scratch vinyl and craft their own unique sound.

Through hands-on sessions with top equipment and expert guidance, the young people learned about beatmatching, how to build "killer playlists" and discovered the creative energy that fuels every great DJ set.

No prior experience was needed, just a passion for music and a willingness to learn. Everyone agreed it was an unforgettable experience that inspired future music makers and performers alike.



## Coastal habitats call for field trip

The focus for Year 1-2 at St Peter's Elwick has been coastal habitats in science and in geography, "How do we get to the beach?"

This called for a field trip to North Gare beach where children followed the route they designed

in class – and were even able to tell the bus driver the directions they needed to go in order to arrive at Seaton. Pupils studied the features of a coast and habitats, including rock pools, where they were lucky enough to see a crab!



“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 considering 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](mailto:itt@nllt.co.uk) or visit [northernlightstsh.co.uk](http://northernlightstsh.co.uk)

# GET INTO TEACHING

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