

Northern Lights

End of term magazine
for parents and
carers
Autumn
2025

SHINE

REACHING FOR THE TOP
FROM DECORATING CHRISTMAS TREES TO HELPING
OUR COMMUNITIES

We're shining stronger together



Dear parents/carers

We are delighted to share with you a flavour of all that has happened across Northern Lights in the Autumn term. In our Trust we really value collaborative working and this is why it's important to us to share with everyone across Northern Lights an insight into all the schools in our Trust. This is borne out in our vision of 'Shining Stronger Together'. We have held many events across our Trust this term that bring our staff and children together, in different ways, and it is wonderful to see and hear the way everyone benefits from this collaborative, shared working.

We also really value our partnership with yourselves as parents and carers. This year we have one Trust shared priority across all of our schools and that is to further develop this partnership working. We know the impact that effective partnership working can bring - impacting on ensuring everyone can flourish, which is our Trust purpose.

Each of our schools are approaching this in their own unique ways, that are right for their local communities, and I am sure you will see and hear things develop over the course of this year, in your own child's school.

This is also the time of year when we take stock. The world takes a breath and pauses - for a moment, a day, or a week or more. Our schools close for

the Christmas break and many of us have the opportunity to spend time with our loved ones. For those of our families who work across the Christmas period, giving their time to serve our communities, we thank you, and hope that you get a moment to pause, and breathe too.

We can take this space to reflect on the year that has gone by and all that we are grateful for, and the year that is to come and all we want to achieve.

We are looking forward to welcoming a new school into Northern Lights. Firthmoor Primary School in Darlington will become part of our Trust on 1 January.

Our schools are grateful for all of your support. We are also grateful for the wonderful children and young people that we have the privilege to work with.

Our staff, in every school and support team in Northern Lights, work incredibly hard to provide the best they can for our pupils. I am incredibly grateful to them for their hard work and dedication.

Each of us celebrates Christmas, or this holiday season, in our own special way. I hope that however you celebrate, you feel gratitude, joy and peace and you take a moment to see beauty and joy, and to truly 'Find Christmas' - see Donna Ashworth's beautiful poem on page 2.

Wishing all of our families a Christmas full of love, Best wishes,

Mrs J. Heaton OBE

OUR SCHOOLS DECEMBER 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: Year 6 children decorate their Christmas tree at Hart Primary School

HOW TO CONTACT US

Call Northern Lights on
0191 5947033

Email: info@nllt.co.uk

Our address: Northern Lights Learning Trust, Marcross Drive, Sunderland SR3 2RE

Website:
www.northernlights.education

Finding Christmas

You won't find Christmas,
perched on shelves,
or made in a grotto,
by hard-working elves.

You can't find Christmas,
in glittering wrap,
or nestled in boxes,
so beautifully packed.

You can't fail Christmas,
or not have enough,
there are ways to bring cheer,
without all of that stuff.

The Christmas you seek,
is a feeling my friend,
and it lives in the thoughts
and the greetings we send.

It glitters in kindness,
at charity's door
and glimmers in deeds,
we were never asked for.

Christmas you see,
is a magical thing,
which no pot of money,
can actually bring.

It's grace and humanity,
goodwill and cheer.
But most of all, peace,
and all those you hold dear.

It's opening your door,
then your heart opens too
and it's not in the things.
Christmas lives,
within you.

- Donna Ashworth



Early years children
at St Helen's Primary
School enjoy the run up
to Christmas with their
"Santa's workshop" as
well as using technology
to create festive art.



Our objectives for 2025-26

*The focus of this year's work
will be centred around the
Trust-wide theme of*

COMMUNITY

There will be an emphasis on engagement with parents and families,
reflecting our shared commitment to strengthening relationships and creating
a sense of belonging through inclusive environments across all our schools.

MEET OUR REPRESENTATIVES:

Benedict Biscop CE Academy		Dame Dorothy School		Grange Primary School		Hart Primary School		Holley Park Academy			
											
Ethan	Hannah	Esme	Charlie	Summer	Alfie	Henry	Theo	Lara	Leo		
Ian Ramsey CE Academy		St Aidan's CE Academy		St Helen's Primary School		St Peter's Elwick CE Primary School		Tilery Primary School		Venerable Bede CE Academy	
											
Eli	Jake	King-Edmund	Iyinowula	Liva	Scarlett	Olivia	Bobby	Scarlett	Tora	Dan	Libby

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.

Trust Parliament celebrates democracy in action

This term our Trust Parliament has truly shone as a beacon of leadership and inclusion, inspiring pupils across our schools to engage with democracy. As part of UK Parliament Week, pupil representatives worked to raise awareness of how parliament works and why it matters.

What makes this work even more impressive is the confidence and skill our pupils have shown. Throughout the term, they have honed their presentation and public speaking abilities, taking part in development sessions, and their recent assemblies and meetings showcased just how far they've come.

This learning will also support their understanding ahead of a visit to the Houses of Parliament in the Spring term, where they will see democracy in action and deepen their appreciation of how decisions are made at a national level. Well done to all our pupil representatives - you are making a real difference!



Children start to learn about craftsmanship in their art

Class 4 children at Benedict Biscop CE Academy have worked with outstanding focus, creativity and collaboration during their recent art sessions, says Headteacher Sarah

Armstrong. "Children have been exploring the beauty and craftsmanship of ancient Greek pottery, studying the patterns, shapes and stories found in traditional designs. Working in small

groups, they demonstrated exceptional teamwork to create their own handcrafted clay pots, thoughtfully shaped and carefully decorated in the style of classical Greek ceramics."



Year 11 students from St Aidan's CE Academy became mini-scientists when they took part in a heart dissection experiment.

Now hear this: Holley Park's podcasts



Listen up: Year 4A at Holley Park Academy have had a great time planning and creating their own podcasts. This very modern way of storytelling was brought to life by our accomplished youngsters.



Grange's magical Christmas



Christmas performances at Grange Primary School – including the Key Stage 1 Christmas performance of a Magical Christmas Journey – was a huge success. Congratulations to all the children and staff who worked so hard from learning lines and dances to creating amazing costumes. It was a lovely experience to share all their hard work with the school community.



Gymnastic talent at Dame Dorothy



These Year 5 pupils from Dame Dorothy Primary School have been working on their gymnastic sequencing, linking different skills they have been working on into an independent performance. These were then performed in front of the rest of the class – to great encouragement from their friends.



Families join with children in Hart's special poetry class

Year 5/6 pupils at Hart Primary School had a great time sharing their learning with family members during a special poetry class. Together they explored synonyms, inference and deduction using Gwen Dunn's poem "Spinner."

A big thank you to all the families who joined in – your support makes these moments even more meaningful!



Bowling reward at Ian Ramsey

As a celebration of their hard work and positive attitude this term, Year 9 pupils from Ian Ramsey CE Academy enjoyed a fantastic rewards trip to a bowling alley.

The evening was filled with excitement, laughter and plenty of strikes as students showcased their

competitive spirit.

It was wonderful to see everyone engaging, encouraging each other and making the most of the experience. What stood out was the impeccable behaviour – the young people represented the school brilliantly, showing respect,

teamwork and enthusiasm at every stage. Staff were incredibly proud of how well they conducted themselves, making the day enjoyable for everyone involved.

This outing was not only a reward but also a reminder of the importance of community and celebration.

Generosity at St Peter's Elwick



Everyone at St Peter's Elwick would like to say a huge thank you to all those who contributed to their collection for the Mission for Seafarers. Reverend Janet has now collected all the wonderful gifts and will be delivering them to the mission, where they will bring joy and comfort to seafarers spending Christmas far away from their families. "Your generosity truly makes a difference," says Vikki Wilson, Headteacher.



Doors make an entrance amid festive fun

As one door opens at Venerable Bede CE Academy – so too does another. That's because Christmas spirit has officially arrived at the academy with staff and students transforming their classroom doors into festive masterpieces. It's just the start of a Christmas door decorating competition, bringing fun to the festivities.

Understanding Hindu



Years 3 and 4 at Benedict Biscop CE Academy had a fantastic trip to the Hindu temple and loved getting to explore the music, drums, clothing and look at the different holy texts. Pupils learned a lot about the many Hindu deities and were able to re-enact different stories using the dolls and costumes.



Exploring creative options

Year 10 Art and Drama students at Ian Ramsey CE Academy had the incredible opportunity to spend a day at The Northern School of Art, taking part in a series of creative and hands-on workshops.

The visit was designed to give our young people a taste of exciting job possibilities within the creative industries. Students immersed themselves in a variety of activities led by experienced professionals. Art students explored the world of painting, learning new techniques and experimenting with colour and texture. Others had the chance to design and create costumes, based around the story of Alice In Wonderland, gaining insight into the craftsmanship required in theatre

and film production.

Meanwhile, the Drama students stepped into the world of filmmaking. They learned about the process of planning, shooting and editing a short film. From storyboarding to acting in front of the camera, the experience gave them a real sense of what it takes to bring ideas to life on screen.

The atmosphere throughout the day was buzzing with creativity and enthusiasm. Students commented on how inspiring it was to work in such a professional environment and to learn from experts who are passionate about their craft. Many left feeling motivated and excited about the potential career paths available in the arts.



Hart's festive tradition

Early December means only one thing at Hart Primary School – the “Decorate the Christmas Tree” assembly. In this tradition, Year 6 children, who are about to have their last Christmas at Hart, take centre stage to decorate the Christmas tree while the whole school fills the air with festive songs. “We’re sure you’ll agree that they’ve done a wonderful job and we’re now all well and truly in the Christmas spirit!” said Marie Crowe, Headteacher.

Looking at fossils



Year 1 children at Dame Dorothy Primary School have been creating their own fossils out of clay and then using adjectives to describe them. Pupils drew the fossils in their books then wrote about what creature they thought they were from. Year 1 have been drawing dinosaur skeletons using pastels.

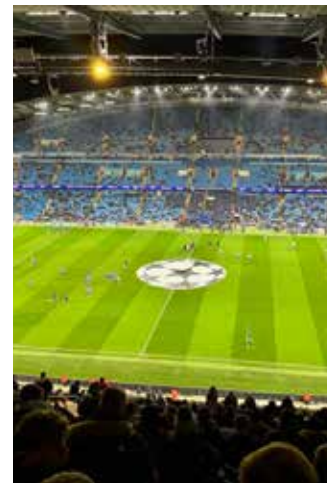


Champions League game is one to remember



The sports department at St Aidan's CE Academy took 37 students to The Etihad stadium, Manchester, to watch Manchester City take on Bayer Leverkusen in the

UEFA Champions League. According to Adam Goodwin, Head of Physical Education: “Although the result was not what we had expected, as City went down 2-0, we had great



seats and were treated to watching some of the world's best footballers, like Haaland and Foden, in action. It was a brilliant evening with a fantastic group of students.”

Quite a day to be in Year 1 at St Helen's



It was quite a day to be in Year 1 at St Helen's Primary School! As well as sporting a fantastic selection of Christmas jumpers, there was a wonderful festive performance followed by a delicious Christmas dinner.

Venerable Bede's community delivers Christmas cheer

For some years Venerable Bede CE Academy have had the privilege of collaborating with St Patrick's church in Ryhope, Sunderland, and The Salvation Army to provide presents for families in the city who are struggling at Christmas time.

This year our whole school community gave so generously. Presents were delivered in time for St Patrick's carol service in early December and then distributed around the city.

Senior prefects helped to bag the presents and also read the Bible readings at the carol service.



Fun in the snow

STEM Club children at St Peter's Elwick CE Primary School took on a ten-minute snow model challenge – and their creativity was amazing!

They built mini snowmen, volcanoes, igloos, turtles and even a snow dog!

The school's Early Years children loved teaming up with their fantastic STEM (Science, Technology and Engineering) supporters to bring these frosty creations to life.

It was a fun way to combine imagination and STEM skills!

Celebrating Hartlepool's future poets at Grange



Children at Grange Primary School were thrilled to welcome Matt Abbott, a poet and author of "A Hurricane in My Head", as part of the Northern Children's Book Festival.

Matt worked with pupils to spark creativity and promote literacy through the power of poetry. "Let's celebrate Hartlepool's future poets!" says Head of School Samantha Musgrave.



Pizza the action at Holley Park



Yummy: Year 3 children at Holley Park Academy made pizzas in DT.

Over 2,300 volunteering hours

Ian Ramsey CE Academy's entire Bronze and Silver Duke of Edinburgh 2024-25 cohorts have all successfully completed their Award.

Their achievement was celebrated in their annual awards and certificate evening where they were presented with their certificate, pin badge and exclusive Ian Ramsey DofE mug.

Between the Bronze and Silver cohorts, Ian Ramsey pupils have completed over 2,300 hours of volunteering and community work, with an estimated social value of over £14,000 this year alone.

In September, the academy's Duke of Edinburgh Silver



cohort travelled to the Lake District to complete their practice expedition. They had unseasonably sunny weather

– for a change – and the four expedition groups successfully planned and navigated a section of the Ullswater Way.



Cooking outdoors



Early Years children at Benedict Biscop CE Academy cooked tomato soup outdoors. With close adult support, they talked about the warm smells and crackling sounds. When the soup was ready, they enjoyed tasting it together, proudly sharing something they had helped to make while learning about safety, teamwork and outdoor cooking.

Families join Holley Park reading café

What a lovely morning these Holley Park Academy children had with their families at their Reading Café!

Hart have an-ice time...

Children from Hart Primary School had a wonderful time taking part in the Tees Valley Ice Festival at the Billingham Forum. There were lots of smiles, plenty of teamwork – and a whole lot of fun on the ice! It was a brilliant experience for everyone involved.



Pastries go down well

Year 4 at St Helen's Primary School had a fantastic afternoon designing and baking their very own Greggs-style festive pastries in DT. They look amazing – and even better, they can't wait to taste them!





Christmas spirits are high at St Peter's Elwick

St Peter's Elwick children looked festive and fabulous in their Christmas jumpers.

They were also supporting Save the Children. It was the perfect day for jumpers

because it was also Christmas Dinner Day. The school's incredible catering team – Miss Harding and Miss Gowland – pulled out all the stops to serve a Christmas feast with

all the trimmings. From crackers and hats to Christmas music, the atmosphere was magical. Everyone had the best day, full of festive cheer and delicious food.



Behind the first door

They're counting down to Christmas in the nursery class at Dame Dorothy Primary School. Children have been opening the doors to their advent calendar – and it was Cree's turn to find the candy cane hidden behind door 1.

Venerable Bede students set to visit Krakow, Poland

The history department at Venerable Bede have announced a trip to Krakow, Poland.

Year 9 and 10 students will be visiting Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, Wieliczka salt mine, Galicia Jewish museum and will meet a concentration camp survivor or relative, plus many more historical and cultural activities.

"There has been a real buzz around school about this trip and we are thrilled to be providing this fantastic opportunity for students to visit sites they have been learning about in their studies of the Holocaust and Nazi occupation of Poland," said history teacher Beth McAneny.



Grange's Year 6s are up for the challenge of the great outdoors



"We didn't realise we were making memories. We just knew we were having fun" – so say Grange Primary School's Year 6 pupils as they set off for their residential to Carlton Adventure Centre, which included a range of memorable outdoor activities.

They all showed great resilience and togetherness to support each other – for many, it was their first experience away from home, out of their comfort zones. At the end of each day, children were able to nominate their peers who had stood out the most that day.



Back in school afterwards was a photo premiere, where parents and carers were invited in to watch video montages of photographs taken during the event.

Families sat together and it was great to hear the conversations between the children and their adults as they relived their experiences.

St Aidan's explores careers in STEM



Year 8 students from St Aidan's CE Academy attended a Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) event in Newcastle. They were able to work with different STEM companies, try out new technologies and learn about different careers in this rapidly growing sector.

“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 or visit northernlightstsh.co.uk

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FIND *YOUR* CALLING IN TEACHING



Northern Lights
TEACHING SCHOOL HUB

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