



South Cumbria Multi-Academy Trust

NEWSLETTER

JAN/FEB 2026

*Inspiring young people and changing lives through
excellence in education in South Cumbria*



Excellence



Respect



Innovation



Celebration



Ambition



Support





UPDATING OUR PARENTS AND CARERS

School success and catering update

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we come to the end of another busy half term, I would like to thank you for your continued support and to recognise the hard work of our staff and pupils across our schools.

This term, pupils have been able to take part in a wide range of enriching experiences, including Cumbria Schools Cross Country, the FESP Careers Day, our SCMAT Maths and Computing Masterclass and the annual SCMAT Superstar Awards, to name just a few. These opportunities play an important role in supporting pupils' wider development, and it has been wonderful to see their enthusiasm and engagement.

A particular congratulations goes to South Walney Junior pupils, who won the award for best and most positive long-term impact in the Cumbria Bright Stars project – a fantastic achievement.

We are also pleased to let you know that in March our schools that use an external catering service will be welcoming a new provider. Caterlink is a well-established education catering provider already working in the area. They bring significant experience and a strong track record of investing in food quality, kitchens and catering teams. Current staff will move over to the new provider so your children will see the same faces. Please watch out for details of new payment platforms that will be sent to you in due course. There is no change in the price of meals and this change does not affect Vickerstown where Jayne and the team will continue to provide an excellent in-house service. *Photos and more detail on p6 below.*

You may be aware that we are currently waiting to hear from the Department for Education following the decision to rebroker. While this process continues, I would like to reassure you that it is very much business as usual in our schools. Our focus remains firmly on providing the best possible education and care for your children. You can read more about these updates in this newsletter. I hope you and your family enjoy the final few days of term and have a restful and enjoyable half term break.



Steve Jefferson
Acting Chief
Executive Officer
South Cumbria
Multi-Academy Trust

SCMAT SUPERSTARS 2026



Pupils from across South Cumbria Multi-Academy Trust (SCMAT) were celebrated for their outstanding achievements and everyday brilliance at the SCMAT Superstars Awards. The special event recognised children from six SCMAT schools who consistently live out the Trust's values of excellence, respect, innovation, celebration, ambition and support in their daily school lives.

More on Page 3 or [Click here to read the full story.](#)



Excellence



Respect



Ambition



Support

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram
for more news from our schools



SPORTS UPDATE FROM ORMSGILL SCHOOL

It's been a busy time for sport at Ormsgill. Children from Year 5 & 6 attended a Basketball SGO Festival, while pupils from Reception and Year 1 took part in an Object Control Festival – both held at Furness Academy. This month five KS1 children will be attending a Panathlon event at Furness College. The Year 5 basketball team are also heading out for their first competition, which they've been working hard towards in after-school club and some of our Year 3 & 4 pupils will be putting their cricket skills to the test. A fantastic effort!

THINKING OF BECOMING A PRIMARY TEACHER?

Apply now for September 2026

www.scmat.org.uk/thinking-of-becoming-a-primary-teacher



TEACHER TRAINING APPLICATIONS OPEN

Applications are still open for our PGCE Primary programme in partnership with the University of Cumbria and launching at Chetwynde from September 2026. If you hold a degree and are considering a move into teaching - or know someone who is - please do get in touch or visit our website www.scmat.org.uk/thinking-of-becoming-a-primary-teacher

Brilliant Learning Conversations

Pupils in Years 3 to 6 at Vickerstown Primary School have recently taken part in Brilliant Learning Conversations, a Trust-led project designed to give children a meaningful voice in their learning.

Through a carefully structured focus groups, pupils shared their views on school life, classroom experiences and lessons, helping staff to better understand what supports them most as learners. The feedback covered a wide range of topics, including favourite subjects, areas they find more challenging, and what they enjoy most about being at school.

The children also reflected on how teachers help them to understand new ideas, as well as the different ways they learn and remember information. This valuable insight will help the school to identify strengths, recognise staff expertise and pinpoint areas where learning gaps may exist. By understanding these gaps, teachers can adapt approaches to encourage higher levels of recall, boost confidence and ultimately raise attainment for all pupils.

This project marks the beginning of a long-term commitment to Pupil Voice at Vickerstown Primary School. As well as supporting learning and progress, it empowers children by giving them a say in school life, including ideas for clubs, trips and future opportunities.

We are proud of our pupils for sharing their thoughts so thoughtfully and look forward to building on their feedback as we continue to develop the learning environment.

Prefects appointed to lead school



A new team of Year 6 Prefects have been appointed at Vickerstown Primary School. This important role recognises pupils who consistently demonstrate our school values of living, learning and playing together, and who act as positive role models for others across the school. As prefects, the children will take on added responsibilities, including supporting younger pupils, helping at school events and contributing to the smooth running of the school day. Through this role, they will continue to show respect, kindness and cooperation in everything they do. Good luck in your leadership roles everyone.

IMPROVING OUTCOMES

Secretary of State for Education Bridget Phillipson has written to Headteacher Steve Jefferson after Chetwynde School was placed in the top 25 per cent of those nationally based on outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

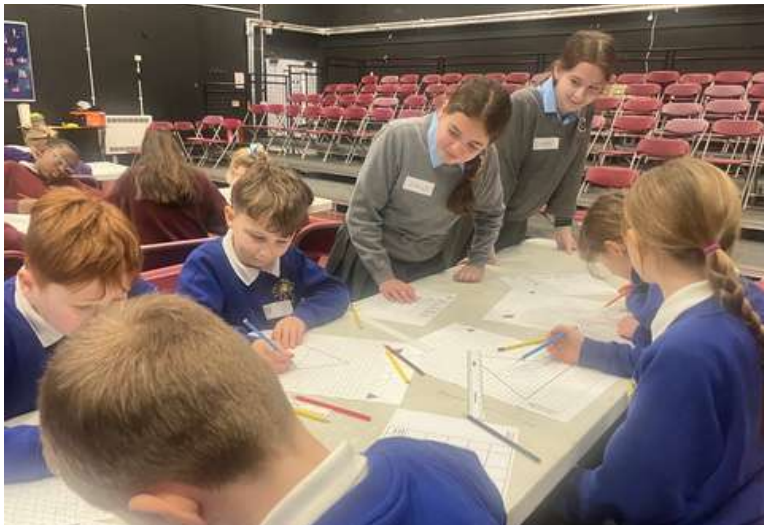
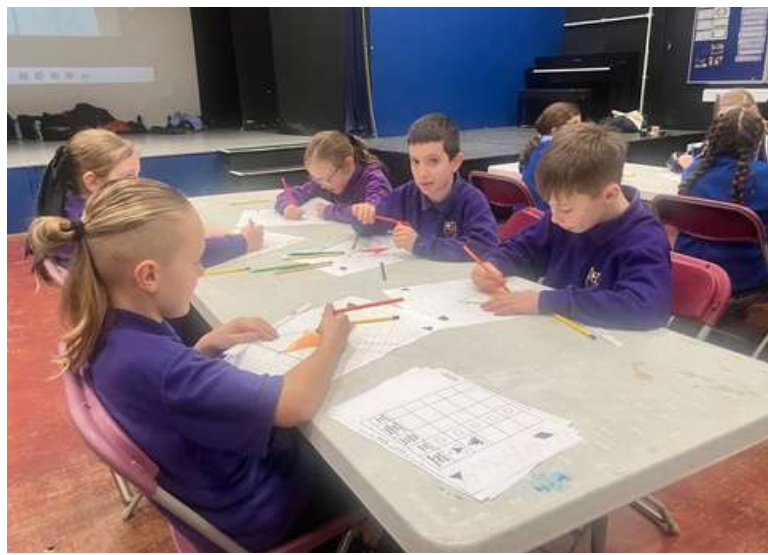
The school is among 3,326 schools who received these letters. Congratulating staff on their "significant achievement", she urged them to help share their experience and best practice with other schools by engaging with local RISE networks, and contributing to roundtables and other groups.



**SCMAT
Superstars
2026**
[READ MORE HERE](#)



**CAMBRIDGE
PUPIL'S DOUBLE
WIN - [READ
MORE HERE](#)**



Year 5 Masterclasses

Primary pupils from across the Trust have been immersed in the world of logical thinking and mathematical patterns.

Staff from Chetwynde School and Lancaster University teamed up to deliver computing and maths masterclasses to give the Year 5 pupils a taste of higher-level thinking.

The day began with a computing session focused on algorithms, led by Chetwynde's Teacher of Computing Sheila Coull in the style of practical games designed to help develop their coding skills.

Pupils then moved on to a maths masterclass delivered by Lancaster University, where they were introduced to the concept of fractals through the striking example of Sierpinski's Triangle.

The session was led by Lancaster University fourth-year Physics master's student Farzanah Parker. "It is good to be back to deliver the masterclass and to continue to inspire young people to see that maths as something that exists beyond the classroom – it's everywhere around us," she said.

"We structured this year's session so there was more of a step-by-step approach at the beginning and they have done really well grasping the concept and developing patterns." The pupils learned how the fractal is created by repeatedly removing a central equilateral triangle, revealing a pattern that looks the same at every scale. They explored the concept through drawing, colouring



and building up increasingly complex layers of the triangle. Pupils from Newbarns, Vickerstown, South Walney Juniors, Ormsgill and Chetwynde took part supported by two Year 8 pupils from Chetwynde – Sienna and Gabrielle. The sessions were hosted in the theatre at Chetwynde and led by Head of Maths, Stefan Olphert who said the masterclass encouraged pupils to think beyond the curriculum.

"The pupils gained a high-level understanding of a complex mathematical idea, and the outcomes were not only thoughtful but visually stunning," he said. "Approaching maths in this way helps develop deeper thinking and the pupils responded extremely well to the challenge."

Junior pupils win award



Pupils from South Walney Junior School are celebrating after winning a county-wide award for a social enterprise project that raised £505 for a lifesaving charity.

The Year 6 class organised a whole-school arts and crafts fundraising event called The Happy Hearts focused on heart health as part of Cumbria's Bright Stars programme. Starting with an initial £50 seed funding, they created handmade items including wooden and felt hearts, bookmarks, friendship beads, tree decorations, bracelets, and decorated cookies - all themed around a red heart.

Pupils received the award for Best and Most Positive Long-Term Impact in the awards, organised through the Centre for Leadership Performance.

The total raised will fund seven heart screenings for local young people through CRY (Cardiac Risk in the Young), a charity backed by the family of Wilson Shepherd whose mum is a former staff member at South Walney Juniors.

For more information about the charity and how to donate [click here](#).



Pupils raised £153.42 for CancerCare Barrow through donations to the Trust Tree at the Dalton Christmas Tree Festival, inspired by this year's theme, "Our Town – All Kinds of Everything."

From local landmarks to community favourites, their imaginative decorations were full of Barrow pride. One of our favourites is from Vickerstown School, who designed the fabulous Festive Seagulls.

Well done to everyone involved in the project and thanks to the pupils at Chetwynde for counting up the donations.



Pupils at Newbarns Primary and Nursery School are being given even more reason to pick up a book thanks to a £1,000 donation to restock the school library.

The donation has been made by local councillor and school governor Les Hall, who has chosen to give his full ward allowance for the year to support reading at the school. Councillor Hall, who represents the Hawcoat and Newbarns ward on Westmorland and Furness Council, said he was proud to support the school to help make reading a positive and exciting experience.

"I've always been a keen reader and I know how important it is for children to enjoy reading, not just see it as schoolwork," he said. "When I saw that increasing literacy was one of the council's priorities, I felt donating my ward allowance for books was a great way to help."

Victoria Fitzgibbons, Headteacher at Newbarns School which is part of South Cumbria Multi-Academy Trust, said the donation would make a real difference.

"Reading for fun is incredibly important for children's development, confidence and wellbeing. Our pupils really value their reading time and with the support of our school librarian we work hard to ensure they have access to books that inspire and excite them. We're extremely grateful for this support."



Newbarns Primary School pupils enjoyed a visit from a Viking as part of their topic in history, pictured below. He spoke about life as a Viking and demonstrated axe skills.



After a careful selection process, SCMAT has chosen Caterlink as the new catering provider for five of our six schools starting this March. This change does not affect Vickerstown Primary which will continue to enjoy the excellent in-house catering from Jayne and the team. Heads and pupils unanimously agreed on Caterlink when they pitched to the Trust including trying a sample menu. Moving to Caterlink will mean tastier, fresher food cooked on site, more choice, themed menu days and healthy eating promotions. They also care strongly about sustainability and reducing food waste. For our catering staff this change will bring new investment in kitchens and better support and training. Caterlink work closely with schools and aim to feel like part of the school community, not just an external service. Several local schools already use Caterlink and feedback has been positive. Overall, this new partnership is about better food and a more positive experience at lunchtime for everyone.



Building workplace skills

Year 5 pupils from Cambridge Primary were among those from across our Trust who enjoyed a visit to Furness College to take part in the FESP Children's Skills Conference. They got to take on different challenges while learning about different businesses, work place skills and be inspired by the wide range of careers in the area.



COUNTY CROSS COUNTRY



Well done to pupils across our schools who qualified for and competed in the Cumbria Schools Cross Country at Sedbergh School. It looked like a challenging course but we heard you were all brilliant - one courageous runner even finished with no shoes after they came off in the mud! Pictured above is Emma from Year 6 at Ormsgill School who was 23rd out of 91 runners and, below, the team from Chetwynde Primary.





Class of '25 honoured at Chetwynde School

Former pupils of Chetwynde School were encouraged to embrace the possibility of 'zig-zag' careers at the annual prizegiving. Guest speaker Claire Aindow from the University of Cumbria congratulated the Year 11s who left in the summer on their GCSE success. Claire, the Pro Vice Chancellor of Growth and Development at the university and soon to be appointed a Governor at the school on Rating Lane, said there was a growing trend of non-linear career paths. "Whatever it is that you're doing now, even if it doesn't end up being the thing you want to do, doing something will give you experiences, will give you knowledge," she said.



[Full story here](#)

Big School Birdwatch at Cambridge



New OPAL Playtime Project



Pupils on the School Council at Chetwynde Primary School have been brainstorming creative ideas to transform breaktimes. They consulted with classmates across all their year groups to gather ideas for making playtimes more fun, engaging and inclusive as part of the OPAL Primary Programme. OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) is a nationally recognised, mentor-supported initiative that helps schools develop rich outdoor play environments where children can be active, creative and social. The ideas put forward by pupils reflect a wide range of interests and ages. Suggestions include dinosaurs, trains and bubbles outside for Year 1 children, while older pupils in Year 6 proposed dens, outdoor art spaces and opportunities for tree climbing.

[Full story here](#)

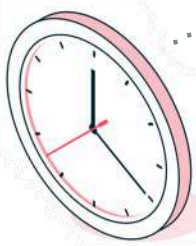


Some of the representatives from Newbarns School Council who have pitched an idea to improve the Key Stage 2 playground. Watch this space ...



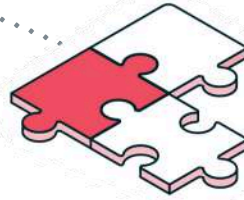
PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING

ENABLING BRILLIANT
LEARNING IN OUR
CLASSROOMS



DAILY REVIEWS

How do you incorporate time to revisit and retain key knowledge?

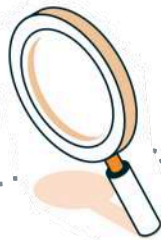


NEW MATERIAL IN SMALL STEPS

How are lessons broken down into small steps across the curriculum? How do you avoid overloading your pupils' working memories?

ASK QUESTIONS

How do you use questions within lessons to check and secure learning? How are they used for assessment?



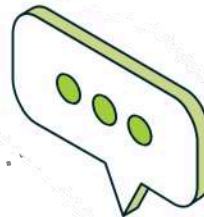
PROVIDE MODELS

How do you use modelling to support learning? Do your children model for each other?



GUIDED STUDENT PRACTICE

Where is time given for students to rephrase, elaborate and summarise new material? How do you build time into lessons for guided work?



CHECKING STUDENT UNDERSTANDING

How do you use strategies to check students understanding, before, during and after a lesson?

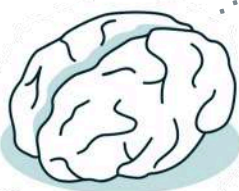
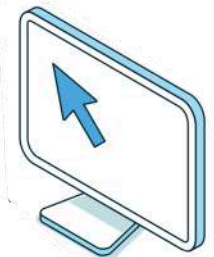
OBTAIN HIGH SUCCESS RATES

How do you decide if children have been successful? How do children know? What is done with this information? How are gaps closed for those who do not achieve within the lesson?



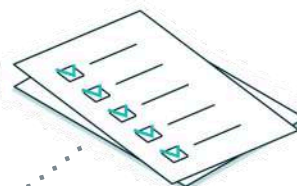
SCAFFOLDS

What temporary supports do you use to assist learning? How do you incorporate them into lessons?



INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

What are your independent practice procedures, where children recall and apply new material? How often? At what point in the learning journey - daily, weekly, at the end of a unit?



WEEKLY & MONTHLY REVIEWS

How do you incorporate time to revisit learning that has happened recently. Does the school plan to revisit ideas that connect to new material?

OUR STRATEGY

South Cumbria Multi-Academy Trust recognises that each school has its own educational character and ethos and we are passionate about retaining and nurturing this. Our schools have their own identities but all share a common approach to encourage pupils to reflect and embrace challenges, learn from mistakes and develop the resilience essential in our rapidly changing world.

OUR VISION:

Inspiring young people and changing lives through excellence in education in South Cumbria



OUR VALUES:



OUR AIM IS TO:



Each of our schools has its own vision and values that make it unique but contribute to the overall SCMAT strategy above. Please take time to read the strategy to see how the values fit with the ethos of your school.