

FORWARD EDUCATION TRUST NEWSLETTER

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Summer

IN THIS EDITION:

Welcomes & introductions

Trust News

Regular features

General update

School news

Looking ahead



Simon Dilkes CEO
Forward Education Trust
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As we approach the end of another busy and rewarding academic year, I am delighted to welcome you to this edition of the Forward Education Trust newsletter. It provides a snapshot of the achievements, experiences and developments across our schools and central team, celebrating the dedication of our staff and the success of our pupils.

This term has once again demonstrated the strength of working as one Trust. Across all our schools, colleagues continue to show remarkable commitment to supporting pupils' learning, development and wellbeing. Our shared focus remains clear: ensuring every child feels safe, valued and able to achieve to their potential.

Our work is guided by a commitment to high-quality education, supporting staff development, and strengthening our role within the communities we serve. This year, we have seen the positive impact of increased collaboration, investment in our people and continued engagement with families. I remain immensely proud of what we achieve together.

As many of you know, I recently shared that I will be stepping down as CEO at the end of this calendar year. It has been an enormous privilege to lead Forward Education Trust. I am deeply grateful to our dedicated staff, supportive families and committed Trustees, whose partnership has helped shape a Trust built on teamwork, respect and ambition for every child. Until my successor is ready to take over, I will remain dedicated to my role, supporting pupils and their families, and all of our staff.

As you read this newsletter, I hope you enjoy the many stories that showcase the achievements and opportunities across our Trust. Thank you for your continued support, and I wish all our families a restful and enjoyable summer break.



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Welcome from the Chair - Oliver Cofler

I am thrilled to be part of Forward Education Trust, and to have the privilege of being its Chair.

I have spent most of my career outside the education sector, working in operations in the private sector (mainly Cadbury's), but in recent years have tried to spend more of my time working in education and healthcare. I have been a Trustee and Chair of another schools trust, which gave me a real insight into the opportunities and the challenges of the education sector. I have also had a lot of personal experience of SEND challenges, both in my personal family life and through voluntary work. The opportunity to join FET and be able to use my personal and professional experience to support its journey and ongoing success is exciting.

I officially took over as Chair at the Trust Conference on 5th May, where I had the opportunity to meet staff. I have also been out to some of the schools. It's been brilliant to see the work that focuses on each child as an individual, that creates a positive environment for children to flourish.

I am impressed by the Trust's strategy - our mission and values, and by the desire to work together with purpose, to be more than the sum of our parts. In various roles in my career, I have seen, and been fortunate enough to be part of, teams and organisations where getting this right has created the best environment to work in, and the best outcomes. In this Trust, it's so important, of course, because the best outcome is the best possible chance for every child. For me, leading the Trust Board is about doing everything that I can to support this, to support the Executive Leadership Team and everyone in the Trust to be the best that they can be, and be continually focused on the children in our care.

It's an exciting time to be part of this Trust, with the Government White Paper and SEND reform plans setting out a strong ambition and giving us a chance to be part of that, to lead on that, to have the opportunity to shape the future positively for our Trust and our schools.

I'm very much looking forward to meeting everyone over the coming weeks and months. I'd love to hear your views and hear how we as a Trust Board can support you in the journey that we go on together. I think this is a fantastic Trust and I'm so excited to be part of it in the months and years ahead.





Update about: Mission, Vision & Values - Simon Dilkes CEO

Over the last few months, Trust Executive Leaders have worked in close partnership with Headteachers and Trustees to revisit and refine our Mission, Vision & Values. This has been an important opportunity to step back, reflect on who we are, and ensure that what we stand for is both clear and meaningful for everyone across the Trust and in our schools.

Our Mission defines our core purpose. It captures why we exist and keeps us focused on what matters most - creating the conditions where every pupil and every colleague can truly flourish. Simply put our Mission is:

Empowering children and young people to live their best lives.

Our Vision sets out our shared ambition for the future. It describes what we are working towards together and gives us a clear sense of direction as a Trust.

Our Vision

We **inspire ambition** and nurture curiosity, creating inclusive communities where every young person feels seen, heard, and valued. We **open doors** to opportunities that spark confidence and unlock potential, so **everyone can flourish**.

As leading educators, we **work better together** - empowering pupils, families, and staff through exceptional learning and collaboration. Our commitment is simple: inclusion at the heart, aspiration for all, and a **future full of possibilities**.

Our Values are the foundation of everything we do. They shape our relationships, guide our decisions, and influence the experiences and outcomes of every pupil. They are not just words, but principles we live by every day.



Working together with purpose

We collaborate with clarity and commitment, building strong partnerships that drive meaningful change and create opportunities for all.



Nurturing Potential

We invest in the growth of every individual, providing the support, skills and encouragement needed to unlock talent and inspire confidence.



Inspiring Success

We set high expectations and lead with passion, empowering learners and staff to achieve excellence and shape brighter futures.

Together, our Mission, Vision and Values provide a simple but powerful framework. They unite us, guide our actions, and ensure that, across all our schools and teams, we are working with purpose, consistency and care.



Emma Arnott
- Director of Governance
and Development

What does being the Director of Governance and Development mean to you, and how does the role help shape the Trust's vision and support our schools?

I feel privileged to be the Director of Governance and Development. It is a varied and rewarding role that combines supporting effective governance with helping colleagues develop and thrive.

At its heart, governance is about doing the right thing and doing things right. Strong governance underpins everything we do as a Trust, ensuring we meet our statutory responsibilities while maintaining effective systems and processes. This provides the foundations our schools need to focus on delivering the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

Our staff are our greatest asset, so investing in their development is essential. We are committed to ensuring colleagues feel valued, supported and empowered to grow. One of the most rewarding aspects of my role is seeing people build their skills, confidence and expertise, enabling them to take the next steps in their careers. In turn, this strengthens our schools and improves experiences and outcomes for pupils.

What are your key priorities for the next academic year, and how do they support continued improvement?

A key priority for the coming year is supporting the transition to our redefined local tier of governance, Academy Community Councils. These committees will strengthen stakeholder and community engagement while providing valuable insight to the Board of Trustees to support Trust-wide decision-making.

Another priority is continuing to enhance our staff development offer. This includes strengthening support for early career teachers, expanding access to professional qualifications and identifying development opportunities that can be delivered across the Trust. We are also exploring more flexible approaches to professional learning.

Together, these priorities will help ensure strong governance, empowered staff and continuous improvement, creating the best possible opportunities for every child.



Jennifer Walters
- Director of Finance &
Operations

What attracted you to join the Trust?

I was attracted by the Trust's strong moral purpose and collaborative culture. My role is to ensure that our financial and operational arrangements are sustainable and effective, enabling leaders and teachers to focus on what matters most—supporting children and young people to achieve their potential.

It is a privilege to contribute to an organisation that plays such an important role in both education and wider life opportunities. I am particularly keen to help the Trust secure best value, plan confidently for the future and make the most of the resources entrusted to us. I am excited to be joining the Trust at this point in its journey.

What does being the Director of Finance and Operations mean to you, and how does the role help support the Trust's schools?

It is about creating strong foundations that allow our schools to focus on teaching, learning and inclusion. This means ensuring finances are well-managed, systems are effective and operational services support what happens in classrooms every day.

My aim is to provide practical support, consistency and clarity, helping schools operate efficiently while retaining their individual strengths and priorities.

What are your key priorities for the Trust, and how will they support continued improvement?

My key priority is ensuring the Trust continues to make the best possible use of its resources. Good planning, clear reporting and a focus on value for money will help leaders make informed decisions that support pupils and staff.

I want to build successful partnerships, by working closely with school leaders and colleagues, so that we can ensure our services remain practical, responsive and aligned to the Trust's values.



Forward Education Trust Teaching Network - Leanne Mahony, Director of Education

We are excited to introduce the Forward Education Trust Teaching Network – a recently established group of teaching leads from across our schools, working collaboratively to strengthen teaching and learning across the Trust.

The network has been developed with a clear purpose: to deepen our shared understanding of how children learn, viewed through a special school lens. Bringing together expertise from across our settings, the group has been designing a high-quality, accessible platform of professional learning materials tailored specifically to the needs of our pupils.

Over the coming months, colleagues will have access to a growing suite of engaging resources, including blogs, videos and podcasts. These will explore key areas such as attachment theory, schema, and working memory, helping staff connect theory with classroom practice in meaningful and practical ways.

Alongside this, the network is developing a Trust-wide teaching framework to support all staff in becoming experts in evidence-informed teaching. This framework is structured around six key components, including adaptive and responsive teaching and communication-rich, inclusive learning environments. It will provide practical guidance and shared language to strengthen consistency and impact across all schools.

This work represents an important step in our commitment to continuous professional development and collaboration across the Trust. By investing in our collective expertise, we are ensuring that every pupil benefits from the best possible teaching and learning experience.

We look forward to sharing more as this exciting work continues to develop.

Meet Our Trust Members

Our Members are statutorily responsible to the Secretary of State for Education for ensuring the governance of the Trust is effective, including appointing Trustees to run Forward Education Trust.

They can be described as the “guardians of the governance of the Trust”, so while their role is more “eyes on, hands-off”, Members participate in a mid-year update provided by the Trust CEO and Chair of the Trust Board, as well as the Annual General Meeting held in December each year.

Our Trust benefits from the fact that one Member has a longstanding association with the Trust, from its inception. The three other Members are former Trustees who, due to changes in work commitments or personal circumstances, felt that they wanted to continue to be involved in the life of the Trust, but in a slightly different way.



Our Chair of Members, **Patrick Ricketts**, is an accomplished businessman with wide-ranging experience across the commercial sector.



Helen Redican is a retired education professional who was a school improvement adviser. She brings a wide range of experience across education and volunteering roles.



Constance Henry has substantial executive leadership experience in regulatory roles and brings her enthusiasm and strong ethics to this role.



Ian Tuddenham is a property professional currently working to support the health sector who brings strong experience to support the Trust.



Trust Conference 2026 – helping our staff to flourish, so our pupils can flourish too!

We are really pleased to share the success of our Trust Conference 2026, which brought together staff from across all our schools to learn, connect and reflect on how we continue to support every child to flourish.

Feedback from colleagues was overwhelmingly positive, with almost 9 in 10 staff describing the Conference as an effective and valuable experience. Staff particularly valued the opportunity to come together as one Trust, strengthening collaboration and sharing ideas that will directly benefit pupils in our classrooms.

Highlights

Our keynote speaker

- The inspiration of the day was guest speaker Musharaf “Mushy” Asghar, whose story about overcoming challenges at school and the life-changing impact of supportive teachers and school staff deeply resonated with staff. Many described it as inspirational and a powerful reminder of how much of a difference school staff make to every child’s future.

Strong sense of community

- Colleagues spoke very positively about coming together as a “Trust family”, celebrating achievements and feeling part of something bigger. This sense of shared purpose helps ensure that pupils across all our schools benefit from a consistent, high-quality approach.

High-quality professional development

- Workshops gave staff practical ideas and strategies they can take straight back into their schools – from supporting communication and reading, to improving wellbeing and behaviour approaches. Staff who flourish help children to flourish.

Focus on staff wellbeing

- The conference also included dedicated time for wellbeing, recognising that when staff feel supported, they are better able to support pupils. Many staff valued the opportunity to reflect, learn new techniques, and spend time with colleagues in a positive environment. We know that staff who thrive help children to thrive too.



Why this matters for pupils

While the Conference is a staff event, its impact is very much felt in our classrooms. Staff left feeling:

- inspired about the difference they make in children’s lives
- better equipped with new ideas and strategies
- more connected with colleagues across the Trust
- motivated to continue improving outcomes for pupils

Many staff reflected on how the day reinforced a simple but powerful message: Every child can achieve when they are supported, understood and inspired.



Celebrating Achievement Across Forward Education Trust

On Friday 3 July, we proudly hosted our annual Pupil Celebration Awards Ceremony, this time at The Heights Academy, bringing together pupils, families, staff, and trustees to recognise the remarkable achievements of young people from across our schools. The event showcased not only academic progress, but also the personal qualities, determination and resilience that define our pupils and make our school communities so special.

The ceremony was held across two sessions, welcoming pupils from each of our schools in either the morning or afternoon. Guests were invited to enjoy refreshments and a display of pupil work, providing an opportunity to celebrate the creativity, talent and successes that take place every day across our Trust.

The event opened with a welcome from Leanne Mahony, Director of Education, who introduced the Trust Showcase Video, highlighting the breadth of opportunities and achievements across Forward Education Trust. This was followed by a welcome address from Simon Dilkes, CEO, who reflected on the importance of recognising individual success and celebrating the unique journeys of every pupil.

Awards were presented in six categories at each school: Most Improved in Reading and Communication; Most Improved in Numeracy and Problem Solving; Most Improved in Independence; Kindness and Working Together, Contribution to School; and Achievement/Inspiration Award. These categories ensured that pupils were recognised not only for academic progress, but also for the character, teamwork, independence and positive attitudes that contribute so much to school life.

A particularly powerful theme of the day was the celebration of personal growth. Many award winners were recognised for the progress they have made in overcoming challenges, building confidence and developing the skills needed to thrive both in school and beyond. The applause and encouragement from families and staff reflected the pride felt across the Trust in the accomplishments of every pupil nominated and recognised.

The ceremony concluded with closing remarks from Oliver Cofler, Chair of the Trust Board, who congratulated all award recipients and thanked families, colleagues and supporters for the vital role they play in helping pupils achieve their potential.

Our Pupil Celebration Awards is a wonderful reminder of the values at the heart of Forward Education Trust. By recognising achievement in all its forms, the event highlighted the incredible talents, determination and kindness demonstrated by our pupils every day. We extend our congratulations to all award winners and look forward to celebrating even more success across our Trust in the year ahead.





Summer Projects Update Across Our Trust

The summer break provides a valuable window for completing some of our most significant refurbishment and improvement works, and this year is no exception. Alongside opportunities for general upgrades and refreshes, we are making substantial investments across our schools to enhance learning environments and improve facilities for both pupils and staff. These developments reflect our ongoing commitment to ensuring that every child benefits from a high-quality, safe and inspiring educational setting. We are pleased to share an update on key projects currently taking place across the Trust.

Leycroft Academy

At Leycroft Academy, two major projects are progressing well. Firstly, an underused area of the school is being fully refurbished and transformed into brighter, more modern learning spaces. These improved classrooms are being designed to support high-quality teaching, encourage greater pupil engagement, and provide a more flexible environment for learning.

In addition, a brand-new playground installation is being introduced. This exciting development will offer pupils a significantly enhanced outdoor space that is both safe and stimulating. The new playground will support pupils' physical activity, social interaction, and overall wellbeing, providing a vibrant area for play and recreation throughout the school day.



The Bridge

At The Bridge, we are undertaking important driveway improvements. These works will enhance access to the site, ensuring a safer and more efficient experience for everyone who visits. By improving traffic flow and site accessibility, we aim to create a more welcoming environment for pupils, families, staff, and visitors alike. Safety remains a key priority, and these upgrades will play an important role in supporting that commitment.

Brays School

At Brays School, a programme of classroom refurbishments is underway. These refreshed facilities will ensure that both staff and pupils have well-equipped spaces that support success and achievement and contribute positively to pupils' learning experiences and wellbeing.

Together, these projects represent our continued investment in our schools and our determination to provide environments where every member of our community can thrive.

Hallmoor School



Hallmoor School's new immersive room will provide a fully interactive, multi-sensory environment where pupils can explore, learn and engage in exciting new ways. Through large-scale projected visuals, sound and interactive technology, the space can be adapted to support curriculum learning, sensory exploration, communication, wellbeing and relaxation.

Designed around the needs of our pupils, the immersive room will offer engaging experiences that encourage participation, creativity and emotional regulation. As part of Hallmoor's commitment to delivering exceptional learning opportunities for children with complex needs, this innovative space will help bring learning to life while supporting each child's individual development and wellbeing.



Emma Arnott - Director of Governance and Development.

A new chapter in local governance: Academy Community Councils

From September 2026, our Trust will introduce a new approach to local governance with the transition to Academy Community Councils (ACCs). This change, approved by the Trust Board in May, builds on the strengths of our current Local Academy Councils (LACs) while creating a more streamlined, community-focused model.

The new model is designed to be flexible, welcoming and inclusive, bringing together parents, carers and community members who are interested in supporting their school. ACCs will play an active role in five key areas: enhancing the school experience, championing equality, diversity and inclusion, building strong community partnerships, providing valuable local insight to the Trust Board, and promoting the wellbeing of pupils and staff. Meetings will be streamlined, purposeful and focussed on meaningful conversation. Each ACC will develop a simple annual community impact plan to guide their work.

ACCs will meet termly, but their role goes beyond meetings—members will be encouraged to spend time in school, meet staff and pupils, and really understand what makes their school special. Each ACC will be led by an elected Chair, working closely with the Headteacher and a linked Trustee to ensure strong communication between the ACC and the Trust Board.

This is an exciting step forward for us as a Trust, and we are keen to build on the passion and commitment already shown by our LAC members.

We warmly encourage current LAC members to continue their involvement, and we also welcome new voices. If you are a parent, carer or member of the community and would like to get involved, please contact your school's Headteacher to find out more.



Cavelle Burris - Trust Safeguarding & Attendance Lead

Safeguarding and attendance update

At Forward Education Trust, we recognise that good attendance is fundamental to every child's success.

Being in school every day supports learning, wellbeing, and a strong sense of belonging. We work closely with families to promote positive attendance and ensure that every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential. Our staff are committed to creating a welcoming and supportive environment, where barriers to attendance can be identified early and addressed together.

By working in partnership with parents and carers, we aim to build positive habits that help every child thrive both in school and beyond.

In line with DfE attendance guidance we take a 'support first' approach through the implementation of the Inclusive Attendance programme, which we believe is key to supporting pupils' learning and success.

Good attendance is a key part of safeguarding, helping to ensure every child is safe, supported, and able to thrive. When children attend school regularly, staff are able to build strong relationships, notice any changes or concerns early, and provide timely support. This helps ensure every child is safe and supported.

Recently, a group of pupils from across the Trust took part in the "Barriers to Bridges" pupil voice event at St Andrews, organised by Inclusive Attendance in partnership with Birmingham City Football Club. Pupils proudly represented their schools and the Trust, sharing their views on school, the barriers they may face in attending, and how these can be successfully overcome.





Simon Dilkes - CEO

The Schools White Paper and SEND Reform – What It Means for Our Community

Earlier this year, the Government published its Schools White Paper, *Every Child Achieving and Thriving*, alongside proposals to reform the SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) system. Together, they set out an ambitious vision for a more inclusive education system.

At its heart is a simple but powerful idea: high standards and inclusion go hand in hand. Our place as a specialist educator is assured and we believe the planned significant investment in staff training and access to specialist services can help us to be better.

For families, the Government's aim is to enable earlier help, clearer information, and a system that feels less adversarial. A key strength of the reforms is the emphasis on partnership between schools, parents and wider services.

We welcome the ambition, particularly the move towards earlier, more consistent support and a system focused on children flourishing. This can be delivered with strong health, social care and specialist services working alongside education.

Specialist provision will remain a vital part of the system for some children. As a Trust, we fully support the principle that every child should feel they belong, are supported, and can succeed. We will continue to engage closely with these developments, ensuring that we remain focused on delivering high-quality education for every child in our care.



Ofsted: Staying Informed, Staying Focused
Leanne Mahony, Director of Education

The national conversation around Ofsted continues to evolve, and many readers will already be aware that the inspection toolkit has recently been updated. As a Trust, we are taking a proactive and informed approach to ensure that our schools are well prepared, particularly given that some of our settings are likely to be inspected over the next academic year.

Across Forward Education Trust, leaders have been engaging in focused professional development to deepen their understanding of inspection in special schools. This includes familiarising themselves with the updated toolkit and what it means in practice for our unique contexts. We recognise that special schools require thoughtful interpretation of the framework, ensuring that the quality of provision for our pupils is fully understood and reflected in the evidence we present.

Alongside this, we are strengthening our approach to school self-evaluation. Through our school review days and targeted training, leaders are being supported to reflect honestly and rigorously on their provision, using evidence to identify strengths, priorities and next steps. This work is helping to build consistency across the Trust and ensuring that evaluation is meaningful, not just for inspection, but for continuous improvement.

Importantly, while we are preparing for inspection, our core focus remains unchanged. Our priority is, and will always be, doing the very best for our pupils—meeting their needs, supporting their wellbeing and enabling them to succeed.

Inspection matters, but it does not define us. The work we do every day, in every classroom and every interaction, is what truly makes the difference for the children and young people we serve.



Mothers' Day at The Bridge School

Our recent Mother's Day 'Read with Me' Event was a truly special celebration of family, connection and the joy of reading. Across the school, families enjoyed cosy reading spaces, bag books, sensory stories and opportunities to simply relax together with a favourite book.

Teachers spent time alongside family members, sharing strategies that families can use at home to support their child's literacy journey. This gave parents and carers a valuable insight into classroom practice and helped build confidence in supporting reading beyond the school day.

The event highlighted the importance of shared reading in building relationships and fostering a lifelong love of books. Most importantly, it created meaningful moments of togetherness for our pupils and their families in this Year of Reading.



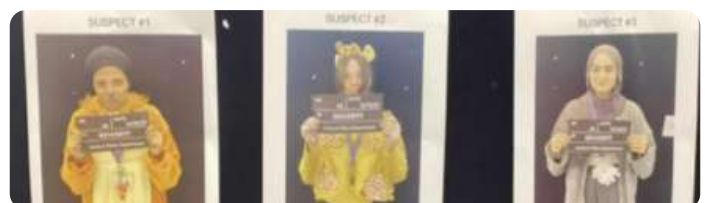
Celebrating the National Year of Reading at Forward Education Trust.

As part of the 'National Year of Reading' campaign, pupils across the trust have been engaging in a wide range of initiatives designed to foster a love of reading. A variety of enrichment activities are taking place throughout the year, including themed events linked to national celebrations such as National Storytelling Week, World Book Day and World Poetry Day.

These events have provided meaningful opportunities for pupils and families to engage with reading in creative and memorable ways. For example, Brays School marked World Book Day with an immersive story experience, while The Bridge School welcomed parents into school on Mother's Day to share and enjoy their children's favourite books together.

World Book Day at Brays School

To celebrate World Book Day, Cheeky Cheetahs took part in an immersive literacy experience centred around a mystery "crime scene" in the classroom. When the children discovered that all the lunch bags had mysteriously disappeared, they became detectives, using inference skills to examine clues, analyse witness statements from key characters in the story, and take part in interrogations. After a careful investigation, healthy debate and deliberation, the class concluded that a mischievous giraffe was responsible!



Our family of schools



Brays School

Primary Special School

Brays School is a school for children with profound and multiple physical or learning disabilities. There are 110 children in this school, including in nursery.



The Bridge School

Primary Special School

The Bridge School is for children with profound and multiple physical or learning disabilities. There are 90 children in this school.



Hallmoor School

An All-through Special School

Hallmoor School is for children with learning difficulties, autism and complex needs. Ages range from 4-19 including a thriving Post-16 program. There are nearly 300 children in this school.



The Heights Academy

Junior / Secondary Special School

The Heights Academy is for children with autism, with a secondary SEMH need. The school is growing, it has 80 places in September 2025 and will grow to a capacity of 116 places.



High Point Academy

Secondary Special School

High Point Academy is for children with autism. There are 106 children in this school with further plans for limited expansion to a maximum of 118 children in 2025.



Leycroft Academy

Primary Special School

Leycroft Academy is for children with autism. There are 170 children in this school.

Inclusion in Action: Firsts That Open Doors to Success at Brays

This term has been one of celebration, progress, and “firsts” at Brays.

We are incredibly proud to share that one of our pupils, Caius, has received his very first NHS-funded VOCA (Voice Output Communication Aid). This milestone has been the result of over two years of dedicated collaboration between Caius’ family, our school team, and speech and language therapists. The VOCA will enable Caius to communicate using a voice output, opening new possibilities for connection, independence, and self-expression.

Our second “first” this term reflects our determination to ensure equitable opportunities for all learners. This year, we successfully ran our first residential visit specifically designed for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. While Brays has a history of residentials for ambulant pupils, we set out with intention to extend this experience to Key Stage 2 pupils who had not previously had this opportunity.

Four pupils visited The Wingate Centre in Wrenbury, Cheshire, for a two-night residential stay. We recognise that for families, the idea of their children staying away from home for the first time can feel daunting. To support this transition and build confidence, families were invited to join us.



The Wingate Centre provided a fully accessible environment, including a rise-and-fall bath and multiple electric ceiling hoists, ensuring that all pupils could participate safely and comfortably. During their stay, the children enjoyed a range of engaging activities, including rebound therapy, Boccia, a campfire with toasted marshmallows, and time in the sensory room.

The residential offered meaningful opportunities for each pupil to work towards their individual education plan (IEP) targets in a new and exciting setting. It was a truly fantastic experience.

At Brays, our staff strive to bring Forward Education Trust behaviour of inclusivity to life and these two “firsts” highlight what can be achieved when we work together.

We are already looking forward to building on this success and are excited to make our inclusive residential an annual event.

What are we looking forward to next year?

Continuing our alignment with our Trust behaviour principles by working with educational psychology to become a trauma-informed school.





Celine Cooper - Brays School Attendance Lead

Why is good attendance so important in your school, particularly for the pupils you work with?

Good attendance strengthens pupils' learning, wellbeing, and emotional regulation by ensuring access to structured teaching, therapeutic support, and social interaction.

For our pupils at Brays, regular attendance provides routine and predictability, helping them feel safe and regulate emotions and sensory needs. It also supports inclusion and belonging. Regular attendance helps pupils build relationships, share experiences, and feel part of the school community (#Braysbelonging).

As a special school, we recognise attendance is individual. Even small increases can significantly improve wellbeing, stability, and progress (#smallnumbersbigchanges).

How does your school support pupils and families to attend regularly, especially when there are additional challenges or barriers?

Brays takes a supportive, collaborative approach, recognising that barriers to attendance are complex. We work closely with families to understand their circumstances and provide tailored support. This may include flexible or gradual reintegration plans to help pupils return confidently. Strong relationships with families enable open communication and early identification of concerns.

We also work with NHS, Social Care, and other services to ensure coordinated support (#Teamwork).

Our aim is a nurturing, inclusive environment where pupils feel secure and able to attend regularly.

What are some of the common challenges families face around attendance, and how do you work with parents and carers to address these together?

Many of our families face challenges including health needs, appointments, sleep disruption, transport issues, and caring responsibilities.

We respond without judgement, working with families to find practical solutions that prioritise the pupil's wellbeing.

What has worked well in your school to improve attendance, and what positive changes have you noticed for pupils as a result?

A consistent, pupil-centred approach has been most effective. By working with families, we understand circumstances and create individualised plans.

When pupils cannot attend, video calls with their classes help maintain belonging and remind families that their child really matters to us. This means that when they return to school the connection has been maintained and it makes the transition into school much easier.

What helps your school community – staff, pupils, and families – work together to build a positive culture around attendance?

A positive attendance culture stems from trust, consistency, and shared values across the whole school community. Our work with Inclusive Attendance outlines that attendance at school is everyone's responsibility, with an emphasis that attendance is part of wellbeing and inclusion, rather than compliance alone.

Open, honest communication with families is essential. Regular contact helps build strong relationships, ensuring that parents/carers feel informed, listened to and involved in decisions. This collaborative approach supports early identification of concerns and promotes shared responsibility for attendance.

We celebrate effort and small improvements, recognising progress, rather than focusing solely on targets, resulting in a profound sense of achievement and motivation across the school community.

This year has been an exciting one at The Bridge School as we have continued to develop opportunities for our pupils to communicate, connect and thrive.

A particular highlight has been our work towards the National Year of Reading. Throughout the year, pupils have taken part in a wide range of reading experiences designed to inspire a love of stories and books. From World Book Day celebrations and immersive storytelling experiences to family reading events and themed curriculum activities, reading has been brought to life across the school.

We were especially proud to welcome families into school for our 'Read With Me' events, giving parents, carers and pupils the opportunity to share stories together and celebrate the joy of reading. These events have strengthened home-school relationships and highlighted the important role that reading plays in communication, wellbeing and learning.

Alongside this, we have continued to invest in communication across the school. Staff have received specialist training from speech and language professionals, and we have begun developing a whole-school approach to explicitly teaching core and fringe vocabulary. This work will continue to grow next year, ensuring that every pupil has the tools they need to express themselves and engage meaningfully with the world around them. The year has also been full of memorable experiences, including visits, themed curriculum days, community events and opportunities for pupils to learn beyond the classroom. These experiences continue to build confidence, independence and a strong sense of belonging within our school community.

Looking ahead our commitment to reading and communication will continue to grow in the coming year. We are delighted to be working with the Libraries for Primaries initiative, which will support us in developing a dedicated school library for our pupils. This exciting project will create an accessible, welcoming and inclusive reading space where children can discover books, develop a love of reading and enjoy shared storytelling experiences. The library will become a central part of school life, supporting communication, literacy and language development across all pathways. We look forward to sharing updates as this exciting project develops and seeing the positive impact it will have on our pupils for years to come.



This year, we have taken the first exciting steps on our journey towards becoming a UNICEF Rights Respecting School. Staff and pupils have begun exploring the principles of children's rights and how they connect to everyday life at The Bridge School. This work has provided an opportunity to recognise and celebrate the many ways in which children's rights are already reflected in our school values and daily practice, whilst helping us identify further opportunities to strengthen this work across the school community. Looking ahead to next year, we are excited to continue developing this work as we work towards achieving Silver: Rights Aware status. The Rights Respecting Schools Award places children's rights at the heart of school life and supports schools to build a culture of respect, participation and wellbeing. Throughout the year, pupils will have opportunities to learn more about their rights through assemblies, classroom learning, themed events and pupil leadership opportunities.

We will continue to strengthen pupil voice across the school, ensuring that all children, including those with complex communication needs, are supported to share their views and contribute to decisions that affect them. As part of our journey, we will work closely with families, and the wider school community to embed children's rights into all aspects of school life. By doing so, we aim to create an environment where every child feels safe, empowered and able to reach their full potential. Working towards Silver: Rights Aware status will help us to further embed the values that are so important to our school community. It will provide opportunities to celebrate the strengths already evident across The Bridge School whilst continuing to develop a shared understanding of children's rights among pupils, staff and families.

We look forward to progressing on our Rights Respecting Schools journey and sharing our achievements as we continue to build a school community where every child is valued, respected and supported to thrive.



**The Bridge – Louise Wall
Family Support Worker**

Why is good attendance so important in your school, particularly for the pupils you work with?

At The Bridge, good attendance is closely linked to a pupil's sense of belonging. When pupils attend regularly, they build positive relationships with staff and peers, develop confidence and feel part of a supportive school community. These connections are particularly important for our pupils and help them engage successfully in school life.

Regular attendance also supports learning, wellbeing and social development. School provides important routines, interventions and support that help pupils thrive. Consistent attendance ensures pupils can access the opportunities and personalised approaches that help them make progress. At The Bridge, we truly believe that "The Bridge is the Place to Be".

How does your school support pupils and families to attend regularly, especially when there are additional challenges or barriers?

We take a personalised, supportive and non-judgemental approach to attendance. Developing strong relationships with families is at the heart of what we do, helping parents and carers feel comfortable discussing challenges and seeking support when needed.

Being visible and approachable at the beginning and end of the school day enables us to identify concerns early and offer support before difficulties escalate. As Family Support Worker, I work closely with families to understand their circumstances and find practical solutions that help pupils attend school regularly and successfully.

What are some of the common challenges families face around attendance, and how do you work with parents and carers to address these together?

Families can experience a range of challenges that affect attendance, including anxiety, transport difficulties, disrupted sleep patterns, medical appointments, morning routines and wider family pressures. Managing the needs of multiple children across different schools can also be difficult for some families.

Every family's situation is unique, so our support is tailored to individual needs. We work alongside parents and carers to identify barriers and explore practical solutions, whether through advice, reassurance, signposting to services or access to additional support. Our aim is to ensure families feel understood and supported rather than judged.

What has worked well in your school to improve attendance, and what positive changes have you noticed for pupils as a result?

A number of initiatives have had a positive impact on attendance this year. Our attendance mascot, Bertie, has helped make attendance fun and engaging, while our Inclusive Attendance approach reinforces the message that every improvement matters. We are also proud that 95% of staff have completed Inclusive Attendance training.

Strengthening relationships with families has led to improvements in punctuality, with some pupils who previously struggled to arrive on time now attending punctually each day. This means they are able to access important learning opportunities and support from the start of the school day.

The introduction of Attendance Champions in each classroom has also helped staff identify concerns early and support families effectively. Regular celebrations through Dojo and discussions with pupils about what they enjoy most about school have further increased engagement and strengthened their sense of belonging.

What helps your school community – staff, pupils and families – work together to build a positive culture around attendance?

Our positive attendance culture is built on partnership, encouragement and support. The message that "The Bridge is the Place to Be" is shared consistently across the school community, helping everyone understand the importance of attending school every day.

Attendance is a whole-school priority. Pupils are recognised through celebrations, rewards, Attendance Champions and Bertie, while families are encouraged and supported throughout their attendance journey. Strong communication between home and school ensures that parents and carers feel able to seek help when challenges arise.

Hallmoor Summer Fayre

Our Summer Fayre took place on Wednesday 13th May and was held throughout the day, allowing families to attend during both morning and afternoon sessions. The event was extremely well attended, creating a real sense of excitement among pupils and bringing our school community together.

The fayre provides far more than a fundraising opportunity. It gives pupils valuable chances to develop independence, practise life and functional skills, and build confidence through social interactions in a safe and familiar environment. Children were able to engage with both familiar and new people, helping them grow in confidence and communication.

The success of the day was the result of a whole-school effort. Older students in Key Stages 4 and 5 worked alongside staff to prepare and set up stalls, while pupils in Enterprise, Food Technology and Textiles created a range of items to sell, showcasing their creativity and practical skills. We were also incredibly grateful for the generosity of families who donated cakes, samosas, curry, biryani, plants and toys. Local businesses contributed by selling flowers and fidget toys and providing sporting activities, while the ever-popular "Soak the Teacher" proved a highlight for pupils and staff alike.

Staff worked hard throughout the day to ensure every child had the opportunity to visit stalls and purchase something to take home, reflecting our commitment to inclusion and participation for all.

We are delighted to share that the event raised an impressive £1,267.22. Funds will support future school events, including our leavers' prom in July.

Most importantly, the fayre celebrated connection, community and belonging. It was wonderful to see pupils, families and staff from across the school come together to create such a memorable and enjoyable day.

Exciting Times Ahead...

In the Autumn term, we are looking forward to welcoming our new pupils and their families to the Hallmoor community, as well as the return of staff currently on maternity leave. Transition arrangements have been carefully planned for 1st July and will include opportunities to meet our specialist staff, including Occupational Therapy, Family Support, and Speech and Language teams, alongside our Hallmoor teachers and support staff.

We are also delighted to welcome our new Occupational Therapist, Michelle Armstrong, who will be in school two days per week. Michelle brings a wealth of experience and has already spent time at Hallmoor over the past few weeks, beginning to support staff in delivering appropriate provision for pupils who require occupational therapy input.

In addition, we have been successful in appointing a number of new staff members who will be joining us in September, including Jordan Ames, who will become a valued member of our Sixth Form teaching team as well as our Specialist PE teacher. Looking ahead, one of our key priorities for the Autumn term is to organise our first residential trip. We are thrilled to have successfully secured funding from the Clara Martineau Foundation, enabling us to offer this valuable experience to our pupils. In addition, we are excited to continue developing our sensory spaces and enhancing the use of technology across the school.





Helena Beards - Hallmoor School - Attendance team

Why is good attendance so important in your school, particularly for the pupils you work with?

At Hallmoor, I see good attendance as essential because pupils can only fully access learning, specialist support, and social opportunities when they are in school. Many of our pupils benefit from predictable routines and consistent relationships. Regular attendance helps them understand what to expect, who will support them, and how their day will unfold. This consistency supports pupils to feel safe and secure, which in turn helps with emotional and sensory regulation.

Being in school also allows pupils to learn alongside their peers, build friendships, and develop communication and social skills in a supportive environment. These experiences are key to building confidence, independence, and a strong sense of belonging within the school community.

How does your school support pupils and families to attend regularly, especially when there are additional challenges or barriers?

At Hallmoor, we take a supportive and preventative approach to attendance, recognising that many pupils and families experience challenges linked to SEND, health, anxiety, or sensory needs.

We identify concerns early through regular attendance monitoring and ongoing communication with families. We aim to understand the barriers first and then work collaboratively with families to find solutions. Where needed, we offer personalised support such as phased returns, adapted timetables, additional pastoral input, or gradual transitions back into school. This flexible approach helps ensure pupils feel supported rather than pressured, enabling them to re-engage with school at a pace that works for them.

What are some of the common challenges families face around attendance, and how do you work with parents and carers to address these together?

We recognise that there are many factors that can impact attendance, including anxiety, health needs, medical appointments, sleep difficulties, or transport issues. Rather than making assumptions, we focus on understanding each family's individual circumstances.

Our approach is to work in partnership with parents and carers, using open and non-judgemental communication. Through tools like ClassDojo, our class teams can maintain regular contact, share updates, celebrate successes, and respond quickly to any concerns.

By building strong, trusting relationships with families, we can problem-solve together and support pupils in a way that feels manageable and positive. I find that attendance improves most when families feel listened to and supported.

What has worked well in your school to improve attendance, and what positive changes have you noticed for pupils as a result?

One approach that I believe has worked well is helping pupils to understand and take ownership of their attendance. For example, using individual attendance trackers allows pupils to visualise their progress and feel a sense of achievement through effort, not just perfect attendance. We have noticed that some pupils who previously had limited awareness of attendance are now motivated to improve and even encourage support at home.

There have also been positive emotional outcomes. Pupils report feeling safe in school, and friendships have been a key motivator for attending. Families have shared appreciation for the consistent, compassionate support provided by staff, particularly during periods of anxiety or transition back into school. Overall, the biggest impact has been increased confidence, improved engagement, and a more positive attitude towards attending school.

What helps your school community – staff, pupils and families – work together to build a positive culture around attendance?

At Hallmoor, we believe a positive attendance culture is built through trust, consistency, and shared values across the whole community. Staff are well supported with systems that help us notice patterns or changes in attendance, allowing us to respond early and have meaningful conversations with pupils and families. We focus on creating a child-centred approach where pupils feel safe, heard, and involved in finding solutions.

We emphasise celebrating effort and progress, for example through individual attendance certificates, which help pupils feel recognised and motivated. Open and honest communication with families is key, alongside a shared understanding that attendance is everyone's responsibility. When pupils feel valued, supported, and part of a positive community, they are more likely to engage and attend regularly.

It has been a significant and transformative year at The Heights, marked by a clear commitment to school improvement and a renewed sense of purpose across the community. With a refreshed leadership team in place, the school has embarked on an ambitious journey focused on strengthening provision, introducing new initiatives, and building meaningful partnerships that enhance opportunities for all pupils.

Central to this progress has been the school's proactive engagement with a wide range of local partners. Collaborative work with organisations such as Solihull Inclusion Services, the Police, Birmingham City Football Club, Birmingham Repertory Theatre and the Mental Health in Schools Team has enriched the school's offer and supported the development of a well-rounded provision. These partnerships have enabled pupils to benefit from wider experiences, specialist support and meaningful connections beyond the classroom.

A key focus throughout the year has been on pupil wellbeing. The Heights has worked diligently to ensure that every child feels a strong sense of belonging and inclusion within the school community. Through a range of attendance and inclusion initiatives, pupils have been encouraged to engage confidently with school life. Alongside this, the introduction of new approaches to pupil voice has created valuable opportunities for children to share their ideas, concerns and experiences. The establishment of a School Council, alongside ongoing work with mental health practitioners, has been instrumental in helping pupils to express themselves and feel heard.

This emphasis on wellbeing and inclusion has also been reflected in whole-school events. During Autism Acceptance Month, the school celebrated individuality and self-worth through activities such as the 'Dress as Yourself' day, which encouraged pupils to take pride in who they are. A Special Interests Quiz further highlighted the diverse knowledge and passions of pupils, ranging from bus routes to tornadoes, reinforcing a culture that values uniqueness and celebrates strengths.

The School Council has played a pivotal role in shaping the direction of the school. Regular pupil voice activities have ensured that children remain at the heart of decision-making processes. Their contributions are already influencing the development of a new outdoor provision plan, designed to reflect their preferences and interests. In addition, pupils are actively involved in shaping a revised school vision and values, ensuring that these reflect the aspirations of the whole community. Planned sessions, including interviews with the school cook and discussions with the ICT teacher about online safety, will further empower pupils to engage with key aspects of school life.

Trust Behaviour & Relationship Principles



Belonging

Every individual is welcomed and valued for who they are. We foster inclusive environments where individuals feel accepted, connected, and part of a collective purpose.



Kindness

Kindness is demonstrated through empathy, compassion, and thoughtful actions. We promote positive interactions where language and behaviour reflect care and understanding.



Empowerment

We support individuals to develop confidence, independence, and ownership of their learning and actions, enabling them to make informed choices and contribute meaningfully to the school community.



Respect

We hold high expectations for all learners and staff, encouraging ambition and perseverance. Through tailored support and challenge, we enable meaningful progress and success.



Safety

We prioritise physical, emotional, and psychological safety in all settings. Creating secure environments is essential for wellbeing, learning, and personal growth.

The Heights is poised for an exciting new phase of development. The school will continue to build on its current successes while expanding its offer in several key areas. Mental health provision will be strengthened further through additional sessions for both pupils and staff, alongside enhanced training opportunities.

The opening of a Key Stage 4 department will mark an important milestone, with Year 10 pupils beginning to work towards recognised qualifications. The launch of the Duke of Edinburgh Award will provide valuable opportunities for older students to develop independence and resilience.

In addition, new partnerships will broaden the enrichment offer, including instrumental lessons delivered in collaboration with Solihull Music Service. The arrival of new staff will also bring fresh skills and interests, particularly in areas such as art and dance, further enhancing the curriculum.

Overall, it has been a year of strong foundations, collaboration and growth. The progress made at The Heights reflects a shared commitment to ensuring that every pupil is supported, valued and given the opportunity to thrive.





Elysha Hughes - The Heights school Attendance Focus

Why is good attendance so important in your school, particularly for the pupils you work with?

Each day at The Heights Academy, we strive for inclusive attendance. To have high attendance in school, pupils must feel like they belong. Part of our journey this academic year has been to build and nurture a true sense of togetherness and belonging for all in our Heights community. Our attendance data patterns may look different to other non- SEND schools, but we understand the story that the data is telling us and respond to this with care. Each of our young people has a unique attendance pattern, and we as inclusive educators are here to ensure they receive a well-rounded, consistent plan to increase time spent in school. We are on a journey at The Heights, and this is supported by a multi-agency team from the Trust and our Solihull partners.

How does your school support pupils and families to attend regularly, especially when there are additional challenges or barriers?

Over the past year, we have adapted our attendance approaches, with the help of Inclusive Attendance. Reasonable adjustments are considered for all cases, and we aim for the most comfortable plan to support families and pupils. By working with families as partners, we have adapted a “work with” rather than “tell” approach. An example of this in practice - we have a family that have recently begun meeting with the pastoral team every 4 weeks, to plan, share ideas and thoughts, with the aim of increasing attendance. Within this, we are capturing pupil and family voice strongly. We are already seeing a positive outcome from this and are proud of the work being done. We respond to barriers through a trauma-informed, inclusive lens and always take into account the voice of the parent and pupil.

What are some of the common challenges families face around attendance, and how do you work with parents and carers to address these together?

One of the most common challenges I believe that families face at The Heights that becomes a barrier to attendance is mental health concerns. We have a partnership with Solihull Schools Mental Health Team, who support with drop-in sessions, 1:1 support for young people and families, and offer advice and training to our staff team. We listen to families concerns to gather context, and then build bespoke support plans to ensure we are providing the best possible outcomes. At our school we see students that may have been through mainstream schooling for some of their education but this has had a negative impact on their well-being as they may have been ‘masking’ their neurodivergence to manage each day. This takes a toll over time and when we meet children we work sensitively to help them ‘unmask’ and be their true selves in school.

What has worked well in your school to improve attendance, and what positive changes have you noticed for pupils as a result?

Working with Inclusive Attendance has been a vital key to improving our attendance strategy. All staff have received training and the understanding of the importance of attendance is growing daily. We have been using the resource “miss school, miss...” in classrooms, and have seen an improvement in attendance data alongside engagement and wellbeing. This has allowed for greater impact without pressure for pupils. Form groups are given clear understanding as to the attendance patterns in their classrooms and we are beginning to work together to put action plans in place.

What helps your school community – staff, pupils and families – work together to build a positive culture around attendance?

At The Heights Academy, we have a school community dedicated to the best outcomes for all young people. We ensure we are having open and honest communication with families and celebrate the efforts and achievements of all within our school. Attendance is everyone’s responsibility and as we continue to grow and progress, the offer we provide will continue to improve.



Celebrating Our Year 11 Leavers

As another academic year draws to a close, we are incredibly proud of our Year 11 pupils as they complete their journey with us and move on to the next exciting chapter of their lives. Throughout their GCSE studies and wider curriculum experiences, they have shown determination, resilience and maturity, achieving success through both examinations and a wide range of Unit Award accreditations. Their hard work, perseverance and personal growth have been truly inspiring. We wish every one of our leavers the very best of luck for the future and congratulate them on all they have achieved. You leave us with many wonderful memories, and we could not be prouder of your accomplishments.

Commitment to Continuous Professional Development

At High Point Academy, we are committed to continuous professional development for staff to ensure our pupils receive the highest quality support and education. This term, our staff development programme has focused on Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA), sensory processing differences, and Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT) Blank Level questioning.

By deepening staff understanding in these key areas, we have strengthened our ability to recognise and respond to individual pupil needs more effectively. Staff are increasingly adapting communication, learning environments and teaching approaches to support engagement, reducing anxiety and improving access to learning. The use of Blank Level questioning is helping pupils develop their language, comprehension and thinking skills, whilst enhanced knowledge of PDA and sensory processing is enabling staff to support regulation and independence more successfully.

This investment in professional learning is having a positive impact across the school, helping pupils to feel understood, supported and confident, while maximising opportunities for progress and achievement.



Disneyland Paris Adventure

From June 15th–18th, 19 pupils from High Point Academy visited Disneyland Paris via Eurostar. The trip enhanced their independence, confidence, and resilience through public transport navigation. They displayed excellent behavior, received public praise, and developed life skills like budgeting and decision-making. The experience allowed them to apply school-learned skills in real-life situations, showcasing enthusiasm and teamwork.



Year Ahead:

High Point is looking forward to welcoming our new Headteacher, Mrs Tinsley who will begin her journey in September as part of the High Point Family. She is fully committed to continuing the wonderful journey High Point has been on and continues to develop.

Words from Mrs Tinsley: I am delighted to be joining High Point Academy as Headteacher from September 2026. With 16 years' experience in special education, including 7 years in senior leadership, I feel immensely proud to take on this role. I am passionate about creating ambitious, inclusive environments where every pupil is seen, valued and supported to thrive. I look forward to working in partnership with staff, families and the wider community to build on the school's strengths and lead the next stage of its journey.

We are also proud to be embarking on our Autism Accreditation in December 2026 and working to becoming an accredited Trauma Informed School in the next academic year. We are excited for all the developments on the horizon, and we are confident you will be as supportive as ever as we make these strides to the next phase of High Point Academy's achievements.



Ms Sharratt
- High Point Academy
Attendance Focus

Why is good attendance so important at High Point Academy?

We know that attendance is a key protective factor for educational success and wellbeing. For our pupils, learning, well-being and emotional regulation are closely connected, so being in school regularly helps pupils access the support they need to thrive. We provide personalised learning pathways, pastoral support, and strong relationships with trusted adults to help every pupil feel safe, valued, and ready to learn. We take an inclusive attendance approach, recognising that every pupil's journey is different and that attendance is most successfully improved through understanding, support, and partnership. Regular attendance provides consistency, routine, and a sense of belonging, and we work alongside families and professionals to remove barriers so that every pupil can achieve their potential.

How does High Point Academy support pupils and families to attend regularly, especially when there are additional challenges or barriers?

At High Point Academy, we know that every pupil and family is different. When attendance becomes difficult, our first step is to listen and understand. Our inclusive attendance strategy is built on strong relationships, early identification of barriers, and collaborative problem-solving. We work closely with families to understand what is making attendance difficult and agree supportive, personalised solutions together. This may include adapting routines, making reasonable adjustments, developing individual attendance plans, or working with external professionals. We keep communication open and focus on building trust so that families feel supported and pupils can experience success in school.

What are some of the common challenges families face around attendance, and how do you work with parents and carers to address these together?

We understand that attendance can sometimes be affected by a range of factors, including anxiety,

changes to routine, medical needs, sensory differences, communication needs, travel arrangements, or wider family circumstances. Through our inclusive attendance strategy, we focus on understanding each individual's situation rather than making assumptions. We listen carefully, work collaboratively with families, and identify practical and personalised ways to support attendance. By maintaining open communication, building trust and drawing on specialist support when appropriate, we help pupils feel safe, confident and ready to engage in school life.

What has worked well in your school to improve attendance, and what positive changes have you noticed for pupils as a result?

At High Point Academy, we have found that our inclusive attendance strategy, combined with strong relationships and personalised support, has had the greatest impact. By understanding individual barriers, responding early, and working closely with families, we help pupils develop confidence in attending school. We celebrate effort, progress and engagement through initiatives such as our attendance wheel, raffles, ice cream celebrations, and attendance awards. As a result, we often see pupils becoming happier, more settled and more confident. Families tell us that their children feel more positive about school, and we see improvements in wellbeing, friendships, learning engagement and a stronger sense of belonging within our school community.

What helps your school community – staff, pupils and families – work together to build a positive culture around attendance?

We believe that positive attendance grows through trust, strong relationships, and shared responsibility. Our inclusive attendance strategy helps us create a culture where pupils and families feel listened to, respected, and supported. We work together to understand individual needs, reduce barriers, and celebrate progress. Through open communication, compassion and consistency, we promote a shared understanding that attendance supports learning, wellbeing, and future opportunities. By focusing on connection, belonging and collaboration, we help pupils feel confident, included, and excited about being part of our school community.

This year has been filled with valuable learning opportunities that have helped bring our curriculum to life. We are incredibly proud of the enthusiasm, resilience and determination shown by our pupils throughout the year. One highlight has been swimming lessons, where children have developed an important life skill while growing in confidence and celebrating their achievements.

Pupils have also enjoyed a range of educational visits, including the Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum, Sea Life Centre, Cadbury World and a local gym. These experiences have helped children make meaningful links between classroom learning and the wider world, inspiring curiosity and a love of learning.

We have continued to strengthen our partnership with parents and carers, recognising the vital role that positive home-school relationships play in children's success. Events such as our Christmas celebrations and summer activities have been extremely well attended, providing wonderful opportunities for families to come together and celebrate children's achievements. Thank you for your continued support throughout the year.

Looking ahead, we are excited to expand from 16 to 19 classes, enabling us to reduce class sizes and provide more focused support for pupils. Alongside this, we will continue to refine our curriculum and develop teaching and learning so that every child experiences an ambitious, engaging and inclusive education. We will also be making improvements to our playground areas, creating stimulating outdoor spaces that support wellbeing, creativity and learning.

As we prepare for these exciting developments, I would like to thank our families, staff, the Trust and, most importantly, our wonderful children. Together, we are building a school where every child can thrive.



Rock Steady at Leycroft Academy

The introduction of Rock Steady at Leycroft Academy has created a motivating and structured musical environment for our Connector children. Pupils have shown significant progress in remembering their individual parts, demonstrating improved focus, confidence, and independence. Children who previously found it difficult to follow multi-step instructions are now recalling rhythms, lyrics, and instrumental patterns with increasing success.

A key area of development has been their ability to start and stop at the correct time. Through regular sessions, pupils have learned to watch their Band Leader, respond to musical cues, and perform together as a team. This has strengthened not only their musical skills but also their listening, attention, and social communication. Performing live arrangements has been a significant achievement. With the support of their Band Leader, pupils have learned to move between notes and sections during performances, developing memory, coordination, sequencing skills, and confidence. Many now embrace these challenges with enthusiasm and a growing sense of ownership.

Vocally, children have improved their ability to repeat melodic patterns with accurate pitch and phrasing, supporting both singing and communication skills. A highlight of the term has been learning and performing Green Grass and Firework for parents and carers. The children demonstrated perseverance, teamwork, and expressive performance skills. Overall, Rock Steady has enriched their musical, cognitive, and emotional development, providing a joyful platform for success and self-expression.





Keeley Fraser
- Leycroft Academy
Attendance Focus

Why is good attendance so important in your school, particularly for the pupils you work with?

At Leycroft we know that regular attendance plays an important role in helping children develop and achieve their individual potential. Being at Leycroft provides access to specialist teaching, communication opportunities, and structured routines that support learning, wellbeing, and emotional regulation. Everyday attendance in school provides valuable opportunities for growth, helping children to develop confidence, resilience, and the skills they need for the future.

How does your school support pupils and families to attend regularly, especially when there are additional challenges or barriers?

Our priority is to listen to families first. Family engagement is very important. Parents and carers know their child best, and understanding their perspective is essential to finding effective solutions. During challenging periods, staff maintain regular, supportive communication through phone calls, emails, dojos. The focus is on collaboration, problem-solving, and shared planning. We work together as a team to find the best support possible for each family. Coffee mornings and parents' events have been a huge step in the right direction for us as it has allowed parents to become part of Leycroft academy. We do not want our parents to feel alone; we are the family's voice.

What are some of the common challenges families face around attendance, and how do you work with parents and carers to address these together?

We see lots of barriers such as transport issues, family breakdown and mistrust in schools from past experiences in mainstream. Our focus is on partnership rather than blame. We aim to build trust, reduce barriers, and support families to find sustainable ways for their child to access school.

We recognise that progress may be gradual, and we celebrate every positive step towards improved attendance, wellbeing, and engagement in learning.

What has worked well in your school to improve attendance, and what positive changes have you noticed for pupils as a result?

Strategies that have worked well include early intervention, consistent communication with families and close collaboration between education, pastoral, and external professionals. Creating a welcoming, predictable, and nurturing environment has also helped pupils feel safe and confident in attending school. We will fight for our families when sometimes all they have ever heard is the answer no.

As attendance improves, we often see positive changes in many areas of a pupil's development. Pupils become more settled in their routines, develop stronger relationships with staff and peers, and show increased confidence and independence. Many make greater progress with communication, emotional regulation, social skills, and learning because they are accessing consistent support and opportunities. Families frequently report reduced anxiety, improved wellbeing, and increased confidence in their child's ability to engage with school.

What helps your school community – staff, pupils and families – work together to build a positive culture around attendance?

A positive culture around attendance is built on strong relationships, trust, and a shared understanding that being in school helps pupils learn, develop, and thrive. At Leycroft Academy, we work hard to create a welcoming and inclusive environment where pupils feel safe, valued, and supported, and where families feel listened to and respected.

Open and honest communication is key. We encourage regular dialogue between staff and families so that concerns can be identified early and support can be put in place quickly. By working in partnership and focusing on solutions rather than barriers, we are able to develop a shared approach that supports each child's individual needs.

#Leycroftway#missadaymissout#inclusiveattendance



Simon Dilkes - CEO

Insights into next year's calendar

As we look ahead to the next academic year, we are excited about opportunities to strengthen and expand our work across the Trust. A key focus will be the continued development of our enrichment offer, working with school leaders to ensure every pupil benefits from meaningful experiences beyond the classroom.

We know that high-quality enrichment plays a vital role in fostering belonging, broadening horizons and developing essential life skills. Through sport, the arts, leadership opportunities and wider experiences, pupils build confidence, discover new talents and strengthen their connection to school. Over the coming year, we will work collaboratively to ensure our enrichment offer is inclusive, ambitious and consistently delivered across all schools. Our aim is that every pupil has access to a broad and well-rounded programme that celebrates participation and achievement.

Alongside this, we will continue to strengthen our professional development offer for staff. Building on this year's successes, the 2026–27 CPD programme will reflect the evolving needs of our workforce. Working closely with headteachers, we will balance school-led development with Trust-wide opportunities, enabling us to share expertise, support career progression and empower colleagues in their roles.

We will also continue our partnership with Edurio as part of our commitment to being a listening Trust. By actively seeking and responding to feedback from pupils, staff and parents, we can better understand our communities and drive continuous improvement across our schools.

Together, these priorities reflect our shared ambition to provide the very best for pupils and colleagues through collaboration, opportunity and a commitment to listening and learning.

Refining Our Approach to INSET Half days

The introduction of additional half-day INSET sessions was designed to give staff more dedicated time for professional development, curriculum planning and improving teaching practice—ultimately benefiting the quality of education our pupils receive every day.

Over the course of this year, the impact has been clear. Schools have reported stronger consistency in curriculum delivery, improved teaching approaches and more focused professional learning. This investment in staff development translates directly into better outcomes and experiences for children in the classroom.

We have listened carefully to feedback from families, who have given us their strong support. We recognise that 10 early finishes across the year presented practical challenges for some. We are very grateful for the flexibility and understanding shown by parents and carers throughout this period.

Our approach from September 2026 will move to six half-day INSET sessions per year - one per half term - alongside the existing five full training days. This retains the clear benefits of high-quality staff development, reducing disruption and providing greater predictability for families by scheduling sessions across Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

This balanced approach allows us to continue investing in our staff - because great teaching and support to children matters - while working in partnership with families to make school life manageable and consistent.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support as we refine and improve what we do.

The half-day dates for academic year 2026-27

Autumn 1	Tuesday	22nd September 2026
Autumn 2	Wednesday	25th November 2026
Spring 1	Thursday	4th February 2027
Spring 2	Tuesday	16th March 2027
Summer 1	Wednesday	19th May 2027
Summer 2	Thursday	1st July 2027



A Fresh Approach to School Meals

This summer marks an important step forward in how we provide school meals across our Trust. Following a thorough review, we are pleased to say that from September 2026 we will be working with a new catering provider, ABM Catering.

This change comes at the same time as significant national reforms to Free School Meals—creating a real opportunity to improve both the quality of food and the accessibility of meals for our pupils.

Why We Are Making This Change

Catering plays a vital role in supporting pupil wellbeing, readiness to learn and the daily experience of school life. ABM was selected because they offer the strongest overall balance of quality and value - their approach stood out for:

- Fresh, nutritious food made with high-quality ingredients
- A varied and flexible menu designed around pupils' needs
- A genuine commitment to partnership with schools and communities
- Strong experience across specialist settings
- A focus on sustainability, inclusion and continuous improvement

What Pupils and Families Can Expect

From September, pupils will begin to see a refreshed approach to school meals:

- Fresh, appealing menus with a wide range of choices
- Greater flexibility and variety, including themed days and engaging menu concepts
- Age-appropriate portions and presentation, helping younger and older pupils alike
- Opportunities for pupil voice, with feedback shaping menus over time
- Improved use of technology, making it easier for families to understand and engage with meal choices and selections

At the heart of this is a simple aim: to make school food something children enjoy, look forward to and benefit from every day.

Free School Meals: Supporting More Families

The Government is introducing important changes to Free School Meals from September 2026. The most significant change is that all children in households receiving Universal Credit will become eligible for a free school meal, regardless of income level.

This means many more families will be able to access support. There will be two categories of eligibility:

- Targeted Free School Meals (for lower-income households), which continue to attract additional funding for schools
- Expanded Free School Meals, giving more pupils access to free meals even if they are above the previous income threshold

For families, the message is simple: if you think you might be eligible, it is always worth applying. Our school teams will be encouraging parents to apply for support.



A Positive Opportunity for Our Schools

We strongly welcome these changes. A healthy school meal does much more than meet a basic need - it supports concentration, wellbeing and equality of opportunity.

The expansion of Free School Meals means:

- More children can benefit from a nutritious meal during the school day
- Financial pressures on families can be reduced
- Schools can strengthen support for pupils who need it most
- Lunchtimes can become a more inclusive experience for everyone

Our move to ABM ensures we are well prepared for change, with a catering model designed to be both high quality and sustainable as demand grows.

Looking Ahead

We will work closely with ABM to ensure a smooth transition across all our schools. There will be opportunities for pupils, parents and staff to learn more about menus, provide feedback and shape the service as it develops.

Taken together, these changes represent a significant and positive investment in our pupils - ensuring that every child has access to food that supports their health, their learning and their enjoyment of school life.





As the school year comes to an end,

we would like to thank everyone in our Forward Education Trust community for their support and dedication.

We wish everyone a safe, enjoyable and restful summer break.
We look forward to seeing you again in September, and to the opportunities a new school year will bring.

Location

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