Newsletter

Cumbria Education Trust

Autumn Term 2026

www.cumbriaeducationtrust.org

















Plus: Message from Lorrayne | Golden Apple Awards | Trust Improvement Plan
Governance Update | School Highlights | Employee Spotlight | & more

Respect | Responsibility | Resilience

Message from Lorrayne



It has been a busy but rewarding start to the academic year, with so many achievements to celebrate across our schools.

We have enjoyed success at the Golden Apple Awards, where four awards were won by pupils, colleagues and schools from across the Trust. Congratulations to Isaac Jackson, Ellie Sutton, Leah Dodd and everyone at **The Whitehaven Academy, Secondary School of the Year**, on their fantastic achievements. It is always wonderful to see the hard work taking place across our schools recognised and celebrated.

I am delighted with the fantastic outcome of **Workington Academy's recent Ofsted Inspection**, which reflects the hard work of pupils, staff and leaders at the academy, alongside the support of governors, trustees, families and colleagues from across CET. You can read more about the report and some of the wonderful comments made by inspectors in this edition of the newsletter.

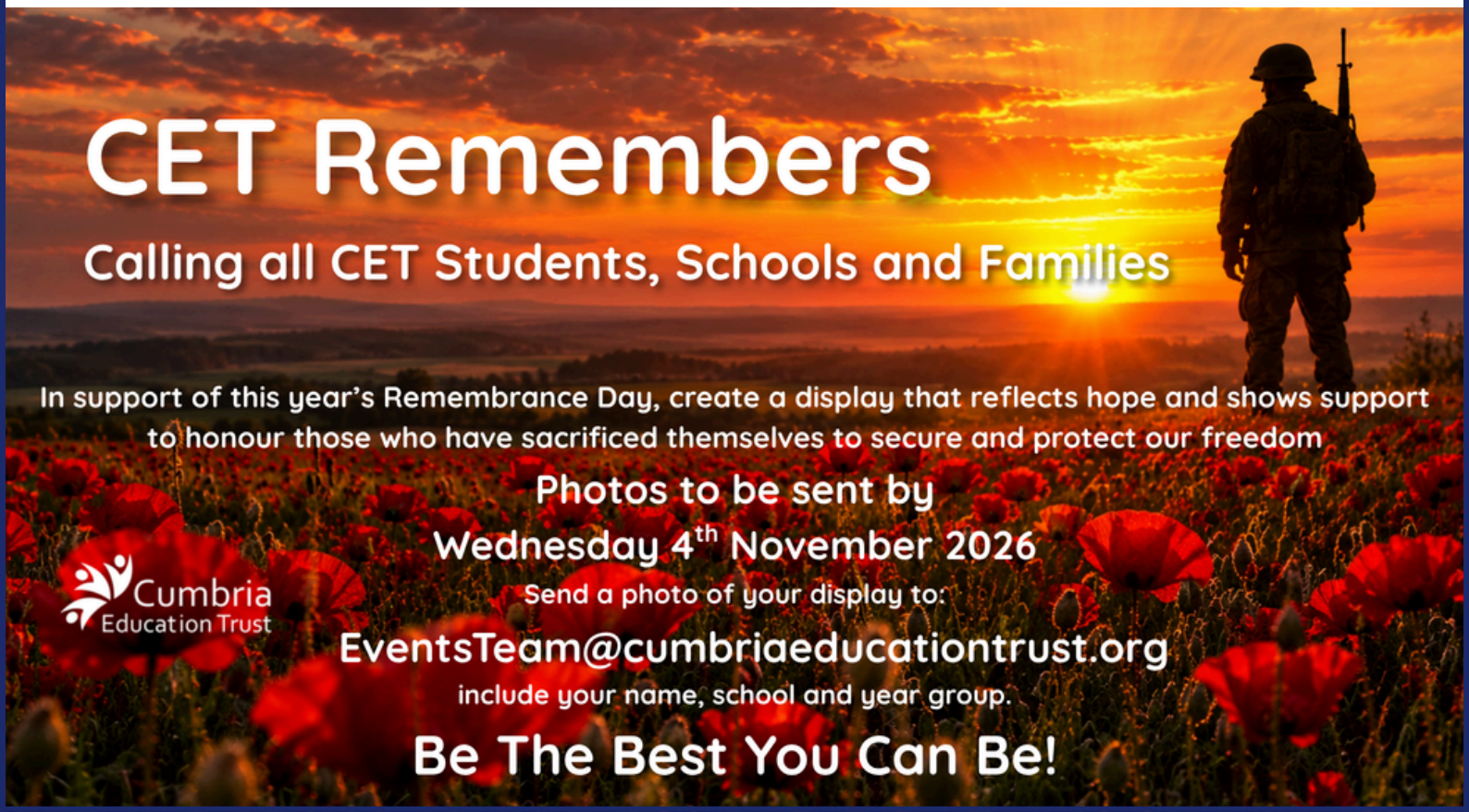
In September, our 17 schools came together once again to support Macmillan Cancer Support through its annual Coffee Morning. Thanks to the generosity of pupils, families, staff and our wider school communities, almost £5,000 was raised. This is an incredible achievement and a brilliant example of what we can accomplish when we work together.

This half term has also seen the first of our Leadership Development conferences, bringing together senior leaders from across CET to share ideas and discuss how we can continue improving attendance across our schools. **Collaboration** is one of the greatest benefits of being part of a trust, and it was wonderful to see colleagues learning from and supporting one another.

I would like to thank all of our staff for their continued hard work and commitment throughout this half term. The many stories featured in this newsletter demonstrate the positive impact you have on our pupils, schools and communities every day.

I hope you all have an enjoyable and well-earned half-term break.

Lorrayne Hughes OBE
Chief Executive



Trust Improvement Plan 26/27: Our Journey from Good to Great

We have developed a new Trust Improvement Plan (TIP), setting out how everyone in our Trust will work together to improve education for every child. The TIP brings together priorities shared across CET with plans developed by individual schools and departments.

Cumbria Education Trust exists to transform lives and livelihoods through learning. Everything we do is rooted in a simple ambition: that every pupil, and every person who works in or with the trust, can be the best they can be. That ambition is held together by our values - respect, responsibility and resilience - which run through the culture of every one of our schools.

Respect
To be tolerant and understanding of ourselves, others and society.

Responsibility
Self-motivated to drive learning and be good citizens.

Resilience
To understand and embrace challenge for personal growth.

In 2025, we celebrated the trust's tenth anniversary and reflected on the remarkable, transformational progress made over the decade. Building on those foundations, we set out the next phase of our journey: from Good to Great.

Over the past year, we have been developing a shared Education Model - one that has grown from professional conversations and a collective commitment to doing right by every pupil.

Our model is built upon what we already do as a trust and points to where we can take our school improvement work together, as one team. What follows is a summary of how it is structured and what it means for all of us.



The education model sets out how we drive school improvement at scale - a living framework that combines what we already do well with what we know we must strengthen to realise our ambition. The strategy house illustrates the model and starts with one clear goal; beneath it, the two mantras that shape how we approach barriers, and the three opportunities that focus our effort. The four pillars describe how we build and harness the trust's collective capacity, and the whole house rests on two foundations: exceptional leadership and governance, and sector-leading trust services.

At its heart is our ambition to move from good to great, represented by the goal of **90.5**:

90% of pupils reaching the expected standard at the end of Key Stage 2

At least +**0.5** progress at Key Stages 4 and 5

0 gaps between the outcomes of different groups of pupils

Two mantras - how we approach the barrier to our goal

Underpinning the goal are two mantras that guide our approach. "What will it take?" is our strategy mantra - a call to action that keeps us solution-focused, challenges us to be bold, and pushes us to realign our resources to what matters most. "100%" is our delivery mantra - a commitment to rigour and high expectations in everything we do, from the way we implement strategies to how we meet the needs of our most vulnerable pupils.

Three opportunities and the big bets

We use our three strategic opportunities to focus our attention and effort: making sure pupils arrive, are present and are able to engage; building the teaching expertise of all our staff; and using every available minute purposefully. Within each sit our big bets - the specific initiatives we believe unlock the path to 90.5, and the multi-year focus for our resource and improvement plans.

PREPARING PUPILS TO LEARN	PREPARING STAFF TO TEACH	MAXIMISING LEARNING TIME
Securing school engagement	Shifting from teaching to learning	Maximising in-lesson time
Securing foundational learning	Intensifying intellectual preparation	Leveraging curriculum time
Addressing vulnerabilities	Embedding deliberate practice	Extending time for learning

Four Pillars - how we amplify our work as a Trust

Four complementary portfolios organise the work we lead collectively, alongside improvement led in schools and service departments. They build shared practice, deploy support, reshape trust services and develop partnerships - helping us respond to growth, funding pressure and national reforms.

1. Aligned Practice

Builds shared capacity that grows as schools contribute their learning. Reusable strategies, resources and professional learning help strong practice reach more schools, with deliberate choices about what to align, how closely and when.

2. Enhanced Support

Directs capacity to new and existing schools where it is most needed. Integration, acceleration and stabilisation respond to trust growth and the needs identified through monitoring.

3. Trust Transformation

Delivers coordinated, time-bound structural change across trust services, creating the efficiencies and new ways of working needed to manage growth and financial pressure.

4. System Leadership

Develops our civic contribution beyond CET through school improvement and partnerships across Cumbria and the wider system. Scope and pace depend on opportunities, partner readiness and capacity.

Together, these areas will help CET make the best use of its collective expertise and resources, while ensuring that pupils remain at the centre of every decision.

Strong Ofsted Result at Workington Academy



Workington Academy has been praised by Ofsted for its inclusive ethos and commitment to helping young people succeed.

Following the new Ofsted framework, the school has been judged to be at the **Strong Standard in four areas** and the **Expected Standard in three areas**.

The DfE's definition of 'Strong Standard' is "excellent, consistent work that's making a real difference for children and learners", which inspectors found that WA met in Attendance and behaviour, Inclusion, Leadership and governance and Personal development and wellbeing.

They also met the 'expected standard' in Achievement, Curriculum and teaching and Post-16 provision. The DfE defines this as "the school is doing everything that it should be doing. It's a high standard, to make sure your children are receiving everything they need and deserve".

The inspectors, who visited on 15th September 2026, praised the school's strong culture and noted that "pupils and students are proud to belong to this school community", with many describing WA as "a family" and "a team".

The report also recognised the academy as a "place of safety and security" and noted that pupils are "extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training".

The report also acknowledges the strength of leadership across the academy, along with the wider Cumbria Education Trust leaders, trustees and governors. Importantly, inspectors recognised that some of the successful approaches developed here are now being shared with schools both locally and nationally.

Mr Mark Bedford, Executive Headteacher at Workington Academy, commented: "This report reflects the collective efforts of our whole school community and all that we have achieved together. Our focus moving forward is to continue raising our standards and providing the best educational experience for all of our students."

Celebrating Success at the Golden Apple Awards

The very best of Cumbria's education sector was celebrated at the 2026 Golden Apple Awards in early October - with several of our pupils, colleagues and schools receiving top honours on the night.

The awards highlight the incredible work which takes place within Cumbria's education sector and recognise outstanding pupils, inspiring colleagues and exceptional schools that make positive impacts in their communities every day.

CET was proudly represented across a number of categories, with four award winners from across the Trust:





Against All Odds Award

Isaac Jackson
(The Whitehaven Academy)

Education Professional Newcomer of the Year

Ellie Sutton
(The Whitehaven Academy)

Secondary School of the Year

The Whitehaven Academy

Student of the Year

Leah Dodd
(Petteril Bank School)

Nigel Youngman, Headteacher at The Whitehaven Academy, commented: "The Golden Apple Awards showcase the incredible talent that exists across our county's education sector, and it was a privilege to be part of such a positive celebration. This award is a testament to the deep commitment of all staff, the huge talent of our students and the incredible support from the community of Whitehaven.

"We were delighted to see both individual achievements and the collective success of our school recognised once again. I would like to congratulate Isaac and Mrs Sutton on their well-deserved awards, as well as all the finalists and winners who were celebrated on the evening."



Jemma Nicholson, Headteacher at Petteril Bank School, said: "We are absolutely delighted that Leah, a fantastic role model and valued member of our school community, has been named Student of the Year.

"As a school, we are incredibly proud of her achievement and hope it inspires other pupils to believe in themselves and their potential."

All of us at CET are immensely proud of everyone who represented the Trust and look forward to continuing to celebrate the achievements of our pupils, colleagues and schools throughout the year.

CET News

School Communities Raise Vital Macmillan Funds

On Friday 25th September 2026, all of our schools participated in Macmillan's annual Coffee Morning fundraiser, baking and sipping their way to support the almost 3.5 million people in the UK living with cancer.

Thanks to the support of
Pupils, parents, staff and communities,
Our schools raised nearly
£5,000!



It is always incredible to see what our CET school community can achieve together, and this year's Macmillan Coffee Morning was no exception - here are some photos from some of the events:











Record-Breaking Results at Two CET Schools

KS4 national data was released in mid October, and it brings some brilliant news: two CET schools have achieved their best ever Attainment 8 score since the measure was introduced in 2015!

The Whitehaven Academy: a journey of continuous improvement

The Whitehaven Academy joined CET in 2018 in a very challenging position, with outcomes well below where they needed to be. Under the leadership of headteacher Nigel Youngman, the school has stabilised and moved forward year on year, supported by colleagues across the Trust. Its 2024 progress outcomes placed it among the top ten most improved schools in the country, and now, in 2026, comes its best ever Attainment 8 score.

The result is built on really strong English and maths outcomes. Whitehaven is in the top five schools in Cumberland on four key measures: overall attainment, and the percentage of pupils achieving English and maths at grade 4+, 5+ and 7+.

Headteacher Nigel Youngman said: “I’m delighted for our students and staff, who have worked incredibly hard to reach this milestone. The English and maths results are especially pleasing, because those thresholds open doors for our young people and help them move on to their next steps. The support from across CET has been valuable along the way, and I’m looking forward to continued success next year.”

Kirkby Stephen Grammar School: clear priorities, strong results

Kirkby Stephen Grammar School joined Cumbria Education Trust in 2024, and 2025/26 marked its first full academic year as part of the Trust. Over the last year, Head of School Nic Tweddle and the KSGS staff team have worked strategically to implement a range of assessment, revision and intervention strategies aimed at securing the very best outcomes for every student.

The impact of this work can be seen in the school's latest exam results. Published data places KSGS amongst the top three performing schools in Westmorland and Furness across a number of key threshold measures, including overall attainment (A8) and the percentage of students achieving strong outcomes in English and Maths at Grades 4+, 5+ and 7+.

Head of School Nic Tweddle said: “We are incredibly proud of our students and what they have achieved. When I joined KSGS, improving outcomes and ensuring every student achieved their full potential was one of our key priorities. These results reflect the hard work and commitment of our students, staff and families, alongside the support and challenge provided through CET. Whilst we are pleased with the outcomes achieved, we know there is still more to do. Our focus now is on embedding the strategies and approaches that have contributed to this success across every year group, ensuring that high standards, strong achievement and positive outcomes become consistently embedded throughout the school.”

The results provide further evidence of the positive direction of travel at KSGS and the school's continued commitment to delivering high-quality education and opportunities for all students and its community.

Congratulations to Nigel, Nic and everyone at both schools on a well-earned milestone.

More to come

KS2 national data is released in December, so look out for more success stories from our primary schools in a future edition.

Senior Leaders Collaborate at Conference

Senior leaders from across the Trust came together at Workington Academy for a series of Leadership Development conferences taking place throughout the 2026/27 academic year. These events, attended by leaders from every CET school, have been designed to strengthen leadership, focusing on aligned practice and strategic thinking.



The inaugural session focused on attendance, an area that remains central to ensuring every child can access the full benefits of education. Leaders explored how schools can continue to strengthen attendance strategies and remove barriers to learning for pupils.

Lorrayne Hughes, Chief Executive, welcomed attendees at the start of the conference before handing over to Thomas Martell, Director of Education: School Improvement, who oversees CET's strategic approach to School Improvement.

Commenting on the evening, Thomas said: "Being part of a trust presents unique opportunities for deep, sustained collaboration where expertise can spread between schools. While we focused today's session on attendance - a key aspect of preparing pupils to learn - we also used it as an opportunity to introduce a refined process for our aligned practice.

"Our work on aligned practice is underpinned by a philosophy of intelligent alignment. This means we don't align work across schools for the sake of alignment, but we do it where there are demonstrable benefits."

Matthew Crouch, Assistant Headteacher at Yanwath Primary School, said: "It was good, as always, to connect with other CET colleagues and discuss key areas of practice.

"The session was particularly useful at this time of year, especially in light of the new government benchmarks and expectations.

"It was interesting to hear perspectives from both primary and secondary colleagues, and helpful to leave with some tangible actions, such as developing a bank of questions and sentence stems for conversations with relatives."

These leadership events continue to support CET's endeavour to collaborate and share best practice across the Trust in an effort to further enhance the educational experiences of pupils in all of our schools.

CET News

Train to Teach with CET - Applications Now Open

Applications to our Train to Teach programme are now open, helping those who would like to inspire and make a difference to children's lives achieve their dreams. The programme, run in partnership with Ambition Institute, allows trainees to:

- Qualify as a primary or secondary teacher in 11 months
- Achieve qualified teacher status (QTS) with a postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE)
- Gain hands-on classroom experience and start your career with confidence

Why Train to Teach?

- **Feel confident teaching**

You will spend a lot of time with subject experts, who will go into depth about how to teach your subject (or subjects, if teaching primary) in the most effective way.

- **Be guided by a mentor**

You will be paired with an experienced teacher who will make sure you are supported throughout your training.

- **Train in one school**

You will train to teach mostly in one school, either a CET school or a trusted partner school, giving you immediate opportunities to practise the theory you have learnt in a classroom, supported by teaching experts.

- **Have a balanced workload**

Our teacher training is designed to build your confidence in the classroom and give you real-life experience of the workload within a school environment.

- **Benefit from blended learning**

Benefit from excellent academic training that you would expect to receive from a university, with immersive classroom learning.

- **Develop your expertise with evidence-based training**

A high-quality curriculum, backed by the latest research and evidence, will help you focus on developing your expertise in your chosen subject (secondary) or phase (primary).

To speak to a member of the team, email traintoteach@cumbriaeducationtrust.org



CET News

School Highlights from This Half Term...

(Click a story to see the full post on Facebook)

OUR PRIMARY SCHOOLS



WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL | WORKING HARD



NATIONAL POETRY DAY | CRITICAL THINKING



COUNTY SHOW VISIT | CELEBRATING READING



HARVEST FESTIVAL | SMART STEMS



NEW EQUIPMENT | BAKING SESSION



JULIE MINNS MP VISIT | SPONSORED WALK



NHS CAREERS FAIR | FIRE SAFETY SESSION



STUDENT OF THE YEAR | AUTUMN ADVENTURES



READING OUTDOORS | ARTIST RESEARCH



BIKEABILITY SUCCESS | DEVELOPING MUSICAL SKILLS

CET News

School Highlights from This Half Term...

(Click a story to see the full post on Facebook)



DELIVERY OF NEW BOOKS | PICASSO PAINTING



FOOD BANK DONATION | ENRICHMENT WEDNESDAYS

OUR SECONDARY SCHOOLS



FOOD AND NUTRITION | 3D CREATURE MODELLING



FELL RUNNING NATIONAL CHAMPS | STUDENT OF THE WEEK



SUCCESS AT GOLDEN APPLES | UKMT CHALLENGE



CAREERS MORNING | WHS MOUNTAIN RUNNERS



PUPILS SHARE OFSTED RESULT | LANGUAGES CARD GAME



VISIT TO ST JAMES' PARK | NORTHUMBRIA UNI TALK

Cumbria Education Trust CHRISTMAS CARD COMPETITION

All students across CET are invited to submit designs for our Annual CET Christmas Card.

We would like the card to showcase '**A Cumbrian Christmas**', as well as reflecting on CET's values, key events or achievements from across the year, truly embodying the meaning of Christmas.

There will be two winners: One Primary entry and One Secondary entry.
The winners will receive a prize and their designs will be CET's official Christmas Cards for 2026

Design your card on A4 paper, take a photo of it, then email to: **EventsTeam@cumbriaeducationtrust.org**
Please submit your designs by Tuesday 1st December 2026 - good luck!

Governance Update

The Local Advisory Boards have now met for their first meeting of the school year and we hope new LAB members and Chairs found the experience both informative and enjoyable.

We have welcomed the following new Local Advisory Board (LAB) Chairs and members to CET:

- **Wendy Gibson**, Interim Chair, The Queen Katherine School LAB
- **Lynn Rooney**, Chair, Longtown Primary School
- **Jane Helliwell**, Staff LAB member, Castle Carrock School (interim)
- **Steven Byers**, LAB member, Castle Carrock School
- **Claire Tunstall**, Parent LAB member, Kirkby Stephen Grammar School
- **Claire Diggle**, LAB member, Kirkby Stephen Grammar School
- **Charlotte Reed-Brough**, Staff LAB member, Newtown Primary School
- **Mick Horton**, LAB member, Northside Primary School
- **Jane Townsend**, LAB member, Petteril Bank School
- **Robin Davies**, LAB member, The Queen Katherine School
- **James Pattison**, LAB member, The Queen Katherine School
- **Caroline Howsley**, LAB member, The Queen Katherine School
- **Fiona Ward**, LAB member, The Queen Katherine School
- **Wendy Gibson**, LAB member, Stramongate Primary School
- **Karen Hannah**, LAB member, The Whitehaven Academy
- **Jim Connelly**, LAB member, William Howard School

Thank you to **Paul Forshaw**, who stepped down as Chair after many years of commitment to The Queen Katherine School.

We recently said goodbye to the following LAB members:

- **Sally Fryer**, LAB member, Castle Carrock School
- **Clive Wickham**, Parent LAB member, The Queen Katherine School
- **Sharon Angland**, Staff LAB member, William Howard School

Thank you for all your support and commitment to CET and the schools.

LAB members have access to a comprehensive training programme throughout the academic year to support their ongoing development in the role.

Volunteering as a school governor offers a rewarding opportunity to make a significant impact on the education and development of young people.

You do not need to have a background in education; we seek governors from all walks of life. Your unique experience and perspective can bring valuable insights to a school.

We believe that being a governor is for everyone.

Make a difference today.

READ MORE



Employee Spotlight

Aidan Blackett
Communications and Engagement Officer

We caught up with one of our newest staff members to learn about what his role, a first for CET, entails.

Tell us a bit about yourself and why you decided to apply for a job at Cumbria Education Trust...

After working in educational settings within the public and private sectors for the last seven years, I decided that now was the perfect time to take on a new challenge.

CET was the perfect fit for me, and the trust's growth has constantly been on my radar throughout my entire career.

I have only ever represented a maximum of two schools at a time, so working with 17 of them (and counting!) brings lots of exciting new challenges.

The welcome that I have received across all of the schools I've visited so far (16 of them!) has been incredibly warm, and I'm really looking forward to helping out where I can.



Aidan attended Newtown Primary School as a pupil and now supports them, alongside all other CET schools, through his new Trust Services role.

What have you done at CET so far?

So far, I have visited all of the trust's primary schools and met with Headteachers to understand their strengths and local challenges. I'm now in the process of supporting schools and showing off all of the great things that pupils, staff and communities are achieving every day.

I've met two MPs so far, got lost in a few of our bigger schools, supported with Ofsted communications, and so much more. There's certainly never a dull day!

What has surprised you the most about CET?

The scale of the organisation has probably surprised me the most. Although there are currently 17 schools, each one has its own unique character and story to tell.

I've seen lots of collaboration between the schools too - sharing ideas, supporting one another and celebrating each other's successes, which creates a real sense of being part of one team.

What are you looking forward to most in the coming year?

I'm looking forward to getting to know all of our schools even better and helping to raise the profile of the fantastic work happening across CET.

There are so many great stories still to tell, and I'm excited to work with colleagues across the trust to share them with our communities!

Thanks for speaking to us - have a nice day and enjoy your time at CET!

CET News

Remembering Judy: The Whitehaven Academy LAB

This summer, we were saddened by the loss of Judy Davidson, a much-loved member of the Whitehaven Academy community and a dedicated member of the academy's Local Advisory Board.

Having served on the board since The Whitehaven Academy joined Cumbria Education Trust in 2019, Judy was a steadfast supporter of the academy and a passionate champion for the young people it serves. Her thoughtful contributions, knowledge of the local community and unwavering commitment were greatly valued by fellow governors, staff and leaders alike.

Judy's connection to The Whitehaven Academy stretched back many years through her role as a member of staff, and her affection for the academy never diminished. She cared deeply about its success and remained a proud advocate for the school and its community.

Judy's legacy lives on through the countless lives she touched and the lasting contribution she made to The Whitehaven Academy. She will be greatly missed and fondly remembered.

JOIN OUR TEAM

We are looking for talented individuals to join Cumbria Education Trust.

Explore the roles below and apply today! Join a forward-thinking trust, full of growth and excellent professional development opportunities.

Can't find a suitable job right now? Join our Talent Pool and be alerted as soon as the role you are looking for becomes available!

OUR CURRENT VACANCIES

KEY TERM DATES

Last day of half term
Friday 23rd October 2026

Half term
Monday 26th – Friday 30th October 2026

Autumn term ends
Friday 18th December 2026

You can view the rest of the key dates for next year, and each year up until 2028-2029 on our website.

TERM DATES

SHARE YOUR NEWS

At CET, we always want to publicise and celebrate success.

This includes students, parents, staff... everyone! Whether you are fundraising, have won an award or you want to raise awareness, we want to hear from you!

Send your news to **marketing@cumbriaeducationtrust.org**