

# YCAT AUTUMN NEWSLETTER

Issue 14  Dec 2024

## CEO Update *Jo Robinson*

As we near the end of a long and busy term, it's clear that our schools have continued to provide a wide range of opportunities for our pupils. Once again, our dedicated staff have filled the term with high-quality teaching and learning, along with enriching curriculum enhancements that have supported our pupils' growth and development.

It has been a pleasure getting to know the staff and pupils at Threshfield School this term. We were also thrilled to welcome Osmotherley Primary School as the newest member of our family on 1 December. We look forward to working even more closely with the Osmotherley team in the coming months. Additionally, we are excited about Cononley Primary School joining the Trust on 1 January 2025.

Since September, our focus has been on oracy and the significance of high-quality adult interactions within the classroom. The YCAT Primary Curriculum Quality Mark has played a key role in helping our schools strengthen these areas, providing resources and materials on the YCAT website. I hope you have found these beneficial for staff meetings and discussions, further enhancing our collective approach to teaching and learning.

I'm pleased to share that Hawes School underwent an Ofsted inspection on 19 November. The findings have now been published, and we are extremely proud to announce that the school has maintained the high standards achieved during the previous inspection. This newsletter offers updates but also highlights the wide range of extra-curricular activities taking place across the Trust. It is inspiring to see the diverse opportunities our students are engaging with; our pupils are certainly having enriching and exciting experiences outside the classroom.

At the heart of our shared commitment to very good education is the strong, collaborative partnership between children, parents, staff, governors, trustees, and members. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to every one of you for your invaluable contributions to our schools. Together, we are creating an environment in which our children can thrive. On behalf of the Trust, I wish you all a joyful, restful, and well-deserved Christmas break.

With very best wishes, Jo



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'Working and learning together to improve children's lives'



## Chair of Trustees' Update

*Jenny Baynes*

Dear Governors, headteachers, schools' staff and the central team,

The Board of Trustees and Members are deeply appreciative of the immense commitment shown by governors, leaders, and staff in ensuring our children's safety and delivery of a high-quality education. Your dedication plays a vital role in the continued success of our schools, and we are truly grateful for your ongoing efforts.

As we move forward, we remain focused on supporting our family of schools in developing children's personal growth, wellbeing, and learning through systems and approaches that are both manageable and effective. Our aim is to create environments that foster the development of well-rounded, confident individuals while maintaining a strong emphasis on academic excellence.

We continue to prioritise the improvement of the fabric and security of our school buildings. With this in mind, we are actively pursuing additional funding again through the Condition Improvement Fund to support enhancements across all our schools.

Over the past six months, there have been changes to our Trust Board membership. We were sad to bid farewell to Neil Lancaster and Emma Nicholson as Trustees at the end of the last academic year. Both have made invaluable contributions to YCAT over many years, and their expertise and dedication will be greatly missed. We are pleased that Emma has agreed to continue as a Member of the Trust. Following these changes, we are excited to welcome three new Trustees to the board: Vicki Lickley, Andy Stanley, and Lizzie Oliver. Although we are just beginning to work with them, they have already made valuable contributions, and we look forward to leveraging their knowledge and skills to further enhance the work we do.

As we approach the end of this long and busy term, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to everyone for your tireless support of our schools. We are immensely proud of our ethos of strong collaboration and collective effort. Looking ahead to 2025, our aim is to ensure that governance at all levels remains supportive, effective, and aligned with the continued success and growth of our Trust.

Best wishes,

Jenny

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# OTHER NEWS

## Welcome to Osmotherley and Cononley

On 1<sup>st</sup> December 2024, Osmotherley Primary School officially joined the YCAT family of schools. We have



worked closely with Osmotherley for some time and it's wonderful to have them under the YCAT umbrella. Cononley Primary School is scheduled to convert in the new year, which will bring us up to 11 schools in the Trust.



Here are some more YCAT facts and figures:

- Pupils on roll across our Trust: 1258
- Staff working in our Trust: 200
- Closest YCAT schools: 3 miles
- Furthest apart YCAT schools: 60 miles
- Attendance: Trust average is 96.1% - amazing!!!

## YCATering update

Our in-house catering has been in operation since February 2024 and there are many successes to celebrate. The cooks have adapted brilliantly to having more ownership over menus and budgets, and families tell us they appreciate the better-quality meals on offer. It's a challenge to make healthy, tasty school meals within tight budgets, but we're determined to keep them affordable. We get detailed monthly profit and loss reports from our management team, and schools are already starting to bring costs down in line with income without compromising quality. The recent increase in Government funding for Universal Infant Free School Meals will contribute to this. Because we receive funding based on the number of infants who have a school dinner on census day, it's vital we get all infants to take a meal on **16<sup>th</sup> January**. Our kitchens will put on a really tempting menu and school staff can help by encouraging children who might not normally have a school meal to have a try on this day.



## Finance team

Introducing a new member of the central team, Barbara Gill. Barbara has been supporting the finance team since September, to cover for Suzanne and to provide some additional capacity into the spring and summer terms.



# Goodbye and thank you!

Maureen Greensit has been part of the Bilton Grange Primary School family for over 19 years. Come rain or shine, Maureen takes her lollipop out daily to steer children safely across the road. Maureen is retiring at the end of term, and we wish her all the best and thanks for her service.



## Peter Huff

Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> November was the final Governors meeting for Peter Huff as he retired from Threshfield School's governing body after an incredible 35 years of service. Peter has guided, praised and fought to save the school many times over the years, and he was heavily involved in the planning and building of both newer sections of the school building. Our thanks to Peter for everything he has done.



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# OTHER NEWS

## YCAT Health and Wellbeing survey

**Thank you to all staff who took the time to complete the Staff Health and Wellbeing Survey in October.** Developed by North Yorkshire HR with input from trade unions, the survey aimed to identify potential organisational issues impacting staff health and wellbeing. Based on the DfE Wellbeing Charter, it focused on five key areas: mental and physical health, working conditions, the organisational environment, support and relationships among colleagues, and staff's sense of belonging and purpose in their roles.

While the response rate was lower than expected at 48%, limiting the ability to analyse results at the school level, the overall findings have been shared with school leaders for dissemination to all staff.

The survey results highlight several positive outcomes. Staff in YCAT and its schools generally enjoy their work, with a strong commitment to doing their best. Notably, 100% of staff feel safe and have positive relationships with pupils. However, the feedback indicates areas for improvement, particularly in communication. The Trust will work with school leaders to identify opportunities for improvement in this area.

Work-life balance emerged as another key issue, with many staff, especially teachers, struggling to switch off after work. The Trust is collaborating with HR to explore recommendations and strategies to better support staff in this area, with a focus on support planned for our February training day.

## Fundraising

Sarah Johnson and Kerry Young in the central team are running a half marathon in Barcelona in February to raise money for two charities close to our hearts. Many of us know colleagues, family and friends living with a cancer diagnosis or dementia, and all donations will be split between Cancer Research UK and the Alzheimer's Society.



[Kerry's Cancer Research JustGiving Page](#)  
[Sarah's Alzheimer's Society JustGiving page](#)



## Let's Collaborate

Our Trust networks allow subject leaders to come together, share expertise, and collaborate on priorities. We're proud of the diverse range of networks and would like to thank all colleagues who have attended, contributed, and driven improvements across the Trust. Here's a glimpse of the exciting work happening:

- **Designated Safeguarding Leads:** Creating resources for contextual safeguarding, as well as developing a calendar for DSL duties and staff training.
- **Personal Development:** Sharing valuable insights from visits and external visitors that support children's understanding of different faiths and beliefs. This spring, we're excited that Shirvani from Bilton will lead a Trust-wide online assembly on the Hindu celebration of Holi.
- **Maths:** Collaborating on strategies to improve multiplication outcomes across our schools, alongside recommendations for enhancing early maths.
- **English:** Working together to strengthen Oracy progression planning across schools, ensuring pupils develop their speaking and listening skills with confidence.
- **EYFS:** Focusing on Communication and Language development, with guidance from Julian Grenier's 'Putting the EYFS curriculum into practice'.
- **Teaching Assistant Network:** Exploring high-quality adult interactions through the EEF's ShREC approach, helping TAs support learning in the most effective ways.
- **SENCO:** Supporting SENCOs create accessible and parent-friendly SEND information reports using SWAY.

The networks are a testament to the commitment and passion of our staff, driving improvements in every aspect.

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# YCAT and HART Professional Development

## *Dates for the diary*

|  |                                |             |
|--|--------------------------------|-------------|
| HART members meeting                               | 9 <sup>th</sup> January 2025   | 9.30-11.00  |
| Aspiring leaders                                   | 20 <sup>th</sup> January 2025  | 3.45-4.45   |
| Safeguarding network                               | 21 <sup>st</sup> January 2025  | 3:45-4:30   |
| PCQM KS1 meeting                                   | 22 <sup>nd</sup> January 2025  | 3:45-4:30   |
| Pedagogy and assessment for TAs                    | 28 <sup>th</sup> January 2025  | 2.00-3.00   |
| English network                                    | 28 <sup>th</sup> January 2025  | 3:45-4:30   |
| SENDCo network (online meeting)                    | 29 <sup>th</sup> January 2025  | 3:45-4:45   |
| EYFS network                                       | 29 <sup>th</sup> January 2025  | 3:45-4:30   |
| Review oracy considering the Ofsted English Review | 3 <sup>rd</sup> February 2025  | 3.45-4.45   |
| Maths network                                      | 6 <sup>th</sup> February 2025  | 3.45-4.45   |
| Teaching assistants termly network meeting         | 26 <sup>th</sup> February 2025 | 2.15-3.00   |
| HART members meeting                               | 6 <sup>th</sup> March 2025     | 1.30-3.00   |
| Personal Development network                       | 6 <sup>th</sup> March 2025     | 3:45-4:30   |
| DHT/senior leaders network                         | 20 <sup>th</sup> March 2025    | 3:45-4:30   |
| PCQM KS2 meeting                                   | 28 <sup>th</sup> April 2025    | 3:45-4:30   |
| English network                                    | 29 <sup>th</sup> April 2025    | 3:45-4:30   |
| SENDCo network (F2F meeting)                       | 30 <sup>th</sup> April 2025    | 1:30 - 4.00 |
| EYFS network                                       | 30 <sup>th</sup> April 2025    | 3:45-4:30   |
| Maths network                                      | 1 <sup>st</sup> May 2025       | 3.45-4.45   |
| Safeguarding network                               | 6 <sup>th</sup> May 2025       | 3:45-4:30   |
| Teaching assistants termly network meeting         | 7 <sup>th</sup> May 2025       | 2.15-3.00   |
| HART members meeting                               | 22 <sup>nd</sup> May 2025      | 9.30-11.00  |
| Personal Development network                       | 5 <sup>th</sup> June 2025      | 3:45-4:30   |
| DHT/senior leaders network                         | 26 <sup>th</sup> June 2025     | 3:45-4:30   |

For full information, including booking links, please see the [HART CPD](#) page of the YCAT website

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## Educational research blogs

*Daisy Christadoulou*

### The decline of students studying English Literature

In recent years the number of students taking maths A level has considerably increased and the number of students taking English Literature has considerably decreased. In fact, maths and English Literature have replaced each other on the charts showing the most popular and least popular A level subjects.

Daisy Christadoulou suggests two plausible reasons:

1. Because of the weak economy students think maths will provide a greater financial return.
2. Reading is in decline. Half of British adults don't read regularly. The use of social media has changed the way we spend our time; if you spend a couple of hours scrolling through apps on your phone that's time not available for reading. It's also possible that this affects our ability to concentrate for long periods.

This is a concern because we know writing and reading are vital in helping us to extend and deepen thought. The challenges shown highlight even more than ever the need for primary schools to foster children's love of reading before they move to secondary school.

See [Daisy's blog](#) for full details.

### End of term Competition

David Nicholl's award-winning book *You Are Here* published in April 2024 includes the place name of one of our schools. The first person who emails the correct name of the school to Kerry Young, Operations Manager, will receive a sumptuous box of chocolates. Please note only one attempt allowed per school!



### The government's review of curriculum & assessment

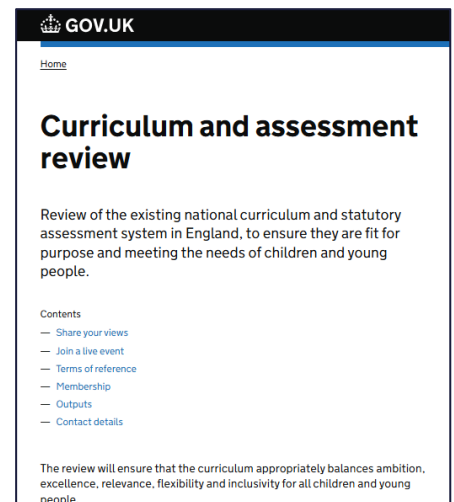
In part 1, Daisy focuses on assessment design. One of the main challenges of designing a good assessment system is that there are a lot of important and competing purposes of assessment. An assessment that is perfectly designed for one purpose will not work well for another.

Four important purposes of assessment:

1. To give schools information about a child's attainment; that is the summative function.
2. To give teachers, children and parents information about how the child can improve; that is the formative function.
3. To give the government information about which schools are doing well and which are not doing well; that is the accountability function.
4. To give everyone information about whether educational standards are improving; that is the national standards function.

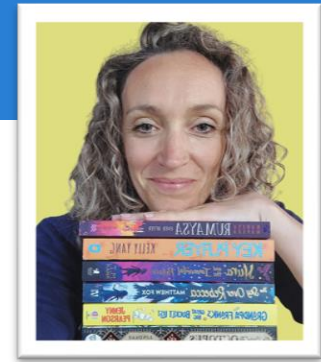
Daisy feels there is more scope for reform in primary schools; there are unresolved problems around writing assessment and an overreliance on assessment frameworks that are full of progression statements.

See [Daisy's blog](#) for full details.



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# Book corner



## Mrs Brown's Books

*Esther Brown, KS2 teacher at Hawes Primary School and book lover @mrsbrownsbookbox*

The latest CLPE Reflecting Realities report has shown that the percentage of books published with representation of (in their terminology) ethnically minoritised characters has fallen from 30% to 17%. For schools, this means purposefully seeking out quality representation across all genres to create inclusive shelves that provide both windows and mirrors for children. Here's a few recommendations:

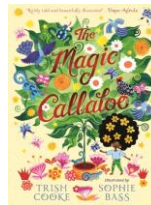
### EYFS

#### ***Luna Loves Gardening* Joseph Coelho & Fiona Lumbers**

The Luna series is lovely and this is filled with family, community and connection as Luna and Dad visit the community garden where Luna is wowed by the fruit and veg grown from around the world.

#### ***The Magic Callaloo* Trish Cooke & Sophie Bass**

Based on Rapunzel and tales of enslaved Africans, this tells of a Magic Callaloo and what happens when a greedy man steals it. Vibrant illustrations and language bring this longer picture book to life.



### LKS2

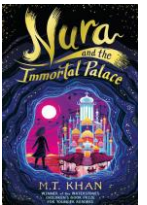
#### ***Rumaysa* Radiya Hafiza**

A fantastic fairytale, this book weaves together Rapunzel, Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty and features a feisty, adventurous Muslim protagonist, who uses her hijab to escape the tower where she is forced to spin straw.

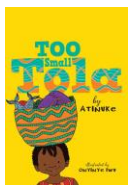


#### ***Nura and the Immortal Palace* MT Khan**

This is a magical 'other world' adventure rooted in Muslim culture and tradition. Nura has worked all her life in the mica mines, but when a terrible accident traps her best friend, Nura goes in search of him into the magical and dangerous world of the jinn.

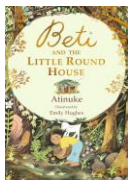


### KS1



#### ***Too Small Tola* Atinuke & Onyinye Iwu**

Tola may be small but she's determined! Tola saves the day in small ways in this book that contains three short stories about colourful character, Tola, her family and their life in Lagos.



#### ***Beti and the Little Round House* Atinuke & Emily Hughes**

Beti lives in the woods with Mam, Tad, Baby Jac, her cheeky goat Naughty and many other farm animals. This book contains four seasonal stories that are whimsical and gently humorous.

### UKS2



#### ***Safiyyah's War* Hiba Noor Khan**

When the Nazis invade Paris, the Grand Mosque stages a quiet resistance that saves hundreds of Jewish lives. The story is filled with compassionate characters, rich language and is based on real life events.



#### ***Birdie* JP Rose**

This heartwarming story, set in a pit village in the 1950s, tackles bullying and racism. Orphan Birdie is 'different'. When hiding from her tormentors, an old pit pony guides her to safety. When she learns it is destined for the 'yard' she is determined to save it.

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# Extended schools

*This term we are celebrating the broad range of stimulating clubs and activities being thoroughly enjoyed by our children*



Merry Christmas and Happy 2025 wishes to all!