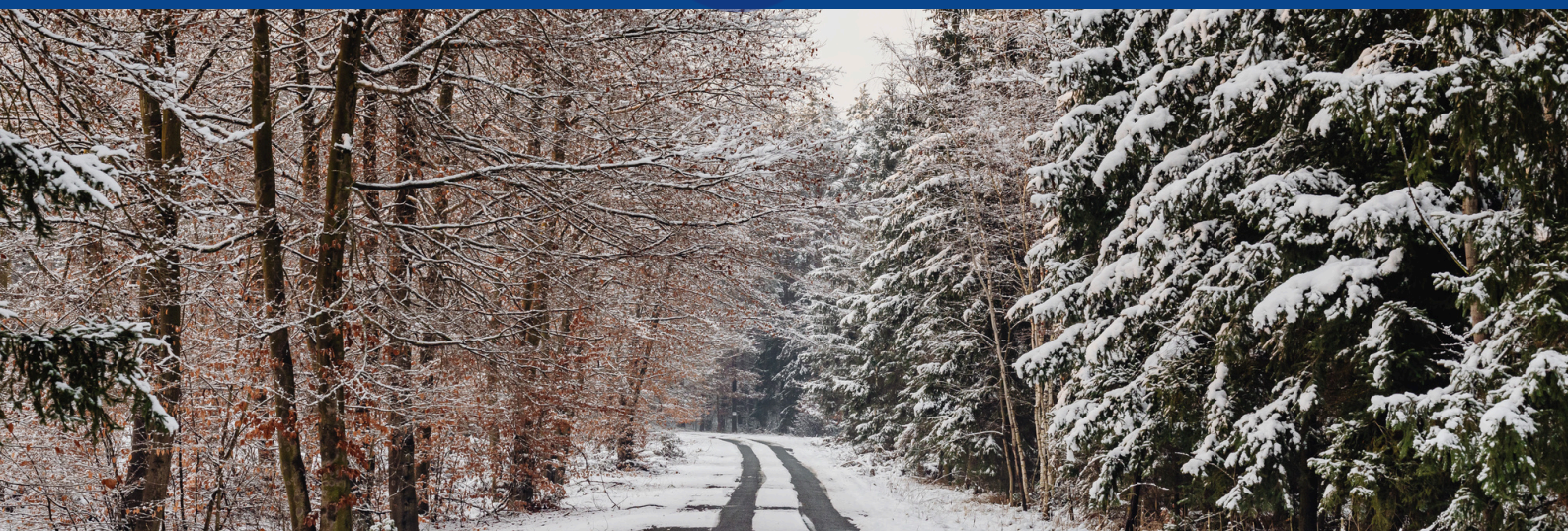


YCAT Autumn Newsletter

News, updates and training from across our family of schools



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CEO Update

By Jo Robinson

As we come to the end of another long and busy term, I want to express my sincere thanks for your hard work, commitment and resilience—especially amid the winter illnesses that have affected so many of us and our school communities.

Across YCAT, you have continued to give our pupils the very best, regardless of the challenges we face. Your dedication to our shared vision of continual improvement is what makes our Trust schools such special places to work and learn.

This term has brought many successes—large and small—across all our schools. Each one reflects the teamwork, professionalism and care demonstrated at every level of our organisation. I am incredibly proud of what we achieve together and excited about the opportunities that lie ahead in the new year.

Over the festive break, I hope you can take time to rest, recharge and enjoy moments with family and friends. You have more than earned it.

On behalf of the Trust Board and myself, thank you for everything you do for our children and communities. Wishing you a joyful Christmas and a happy, healthy New Year.

With very best wishes, Jo



Chair of Trustees' update

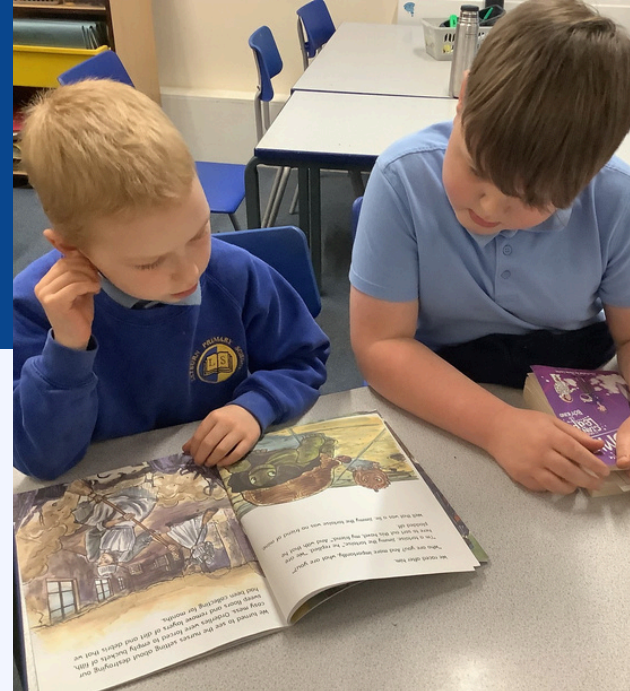
By Jenny Baynes

As we reach the end of the autumn term, I want to extend my sincere thanks to everyone across YCAT for your continued commitment to keeping children safe and delivering high-quality education. At our recent AGM, Trustees and Members reflected on—and celebrated—the dedication shown by governors, leaders and staff across all our schools. Your efforts are truly appreciated. Our Trustee Governance Working Party has been acting on the feedback received from school leaders and governors over the summer. Current priorities include strengthening induction resources, improving communication around training and NGA access, and exploring further opportunities for Trustee engagement with Local Governing Bodies. We hope the additional support for Link H&S, SEND and Safeguarding Governors, alongside the bitesize training sessions, has been helpful this term.

"Your efforts are truly appreciated."

We also continue to prioritise the condition and security of our school buildings. Full condition surveys have been commissioned across all schools, and we are grateful to staff who supported this work during the half-term break. While we await the final reports, we have already been able to submit several Condition Improvement Fund applications.

Thank you once again for everything you do. I wish you all a restful and enjoyable Christmas break when it arrives.



Governor Training

Our online bitesize session on 11 November was well attended and gave Governors a full update on school funding and the finance information YCAT shares with each LGB. If your LGB would benefit from further support in this area, YCAT can offer bespoke follow-up training tailored to your needs.

Dates for the diary:

1. WEARING TWO HATS: BALANCING STAFF, PARENT and GOVERNOR ROLES

Thursday 8 January 2026 – 7:15 to 8:00pm

2. EYES ON ATTENDANCE – A GOVERNOR'S ROLE

Wednesday 4 Feb 2026 – 6:30pm to 7:15pm

3. UNDERSTANDING THE NEW OFSTED FRAMEWORK

Thurs 12 March 2026 – 6:30pm to 7:15pm

4. SEND & INCLUSION – WHAT EVERY GOVERNOR SHOULD KNOW

Weds 29 April 2026 – 6:30pm to 7:15pm

Please note all Governors are automatically issued with a TEAMS link to these training sessions.

Inclusion at YCAT



Inclusion continues to be a central priority for YCAT and for every one of our schools. This term, we have taken time to look more closely at the vulnerable children within our communities and to deepen our understanding of the barriers they face—whether these relate to learning, wellbeing, access or belonging.

Across the Trust, leaders and staff have been reflecting on the additional support and adaptations children may need to achieve, belong and thrive in their school. Our Inclusion Strategy, **STRIVE**, is a key driver of this work, ensuring that our values translate into meaningful action in every classroom.

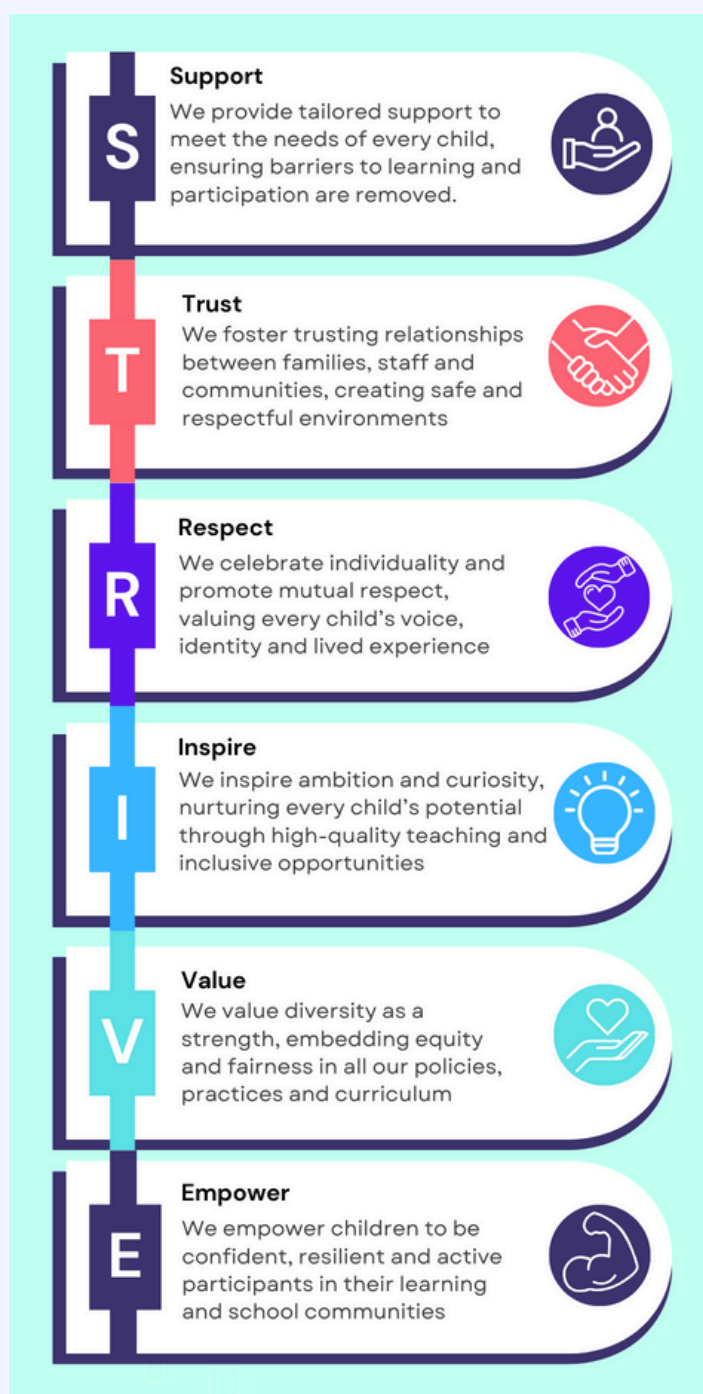
This term we have also strengthened our use of case sampling as a powerful lens through

which to understand the lived experience of vulnerable pupils. These observations offer a window into the school world for these children and help us check that classrooms are consistently getting it right. All schools should continue to prioritise

"If we get it right for our most vulnerable children, we get it right for all children."

this important activity as part of their ongoing monitoring and evaluation. A significant part of our professional learning has focused on the Education Endowment Foundation's 7-step model, supporting staff to make informed, evidence-based decisions for pupils with SEND and other vulnerabilities. This shared learning is already shaping practice across the Trust.

Our commitment to inclusion will continue strongly into the new year. As Sir Martyn Oliver, HMCI, reminds us: "If we get it right for our most vulnerable children, we get it right for all children." This remains our ambition—and our moral purpose—across the YCAT family of schools.



Early Years — Strengthening the Foundations



Providing the strongest possible start for our youngest learners remains a key priority at YCAT. Whilst there are clear examples of strong practice in all schools, this term we have worked together to build a clearer, shared understanding of what high-quality early years provision looks like, including how enabling environments help children to flourish.

A number of important steps have been taken:

- **Headteachers and EYFS teachers completed CPD with Andrew Yeomans**, Education Consultant, gaining valuable insight into effective early years pedagogy.
- **YCAT EYFS principles for effective practice are being developed** and will give all schools a shared foundation and common language.
- **Our EYFS network has focused on the quality of indoor and outdoor continuous provision**, exploring the question: “Is it effective—and why?”
- **CEO monitoring visits this autumn reviewed EYFS and KS1 foundations**, ensuring strong progression and alignment across early learning.

Together, these actions mean we are developing a much stronger, more consistent understanding of what provides the best possible start in school life for our pupils. Getting these foundations right is essential, and it is work that must continue to be a shared focus for all our schools as we move into the new year.

"Getting these foundations right is essential"

Wellbeing Survey

A huge thank you to all colleagues who took the time to complete the Trust Staff Wellbeing Survey this term. Your honest feedback is incredibly important and helps us understand what is working well and where we can continue to improve.

We are currently reviewing all the comments and themes that have come through. This will allow us to build a clear picture of staff experiences across the Trust. The outcomes will be shared with you in the new year, once we have fully captured the feedback and our Trustees have met to consider next steps.

Thank you once again for your openness, insight and continued commitment—your voice genuinely supports school leaders in being able to make improvements where they can.



Leyburn award

Leyburn Primary school has been awarded the Healthy Schools Platinum award from the Energy & Sustainability team at North Yorkshire Council. To achieve Platinum, a school is required to identify a health and wellbeing priority and develop new actions to target this. Well done to staff and pupils.





Attendance Update

The Department for Education has introduced a new measure this year called the Attendance Baseline Improvement Expectation (ABIE). It's a simple idea designed to help schools keep improving attendance in a supportive, non-punitive way.

In short, ABIE gives each school a small but meaningful improvement target based on last year's attendance—for example, an increase of around 0.3 percentage points. Even this small rise adds up quickly: across a whole school, it can mean hundreds of additional days of learning for pupils. ABIE is all about lifting the floor nationally and encouraging steady, achievable progress for every school.

We're also making the most of Arbor, our new MIS system. When teachers log in each morning to take their registers, they can instantly see the attendance picture for every child in their class. This real-time visibility helps staff notice patterns early, celebrate good attendance, and ensure pupils feel supported if they start slipping.

Across our Trust, we are ambitious. We want every school to reach 96% or above by the end of the year, and our longer-term goal is to return to our pre-Covid attendance of

97%. Winter illnesses have taken their toll, and our Trust average has dipped to 95.6%, lower than last year's final figure of 96%. That's why every member of staff plays a vital role. By being alert to absence, welcoming pupils warmly each day, and helping them feel valued and connected, we can make a real difference. When children feel that school is a place where they belong—and where people notice and care—they want to be here.

Together, we can keep nudging attendance in the right direction and ensure our pupils enjoy every opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive.



Ofsted's Focus on 'Strong Foundations'

Ofsted has renewed its focus on ensuring all children build strong foundations in the early years and Key Stage 1. Their recent report highlights how the knowledge and skills children gain in their first years of school have a profound and lasting impact, particularly in reading, language, communication and early maths. High-quality early education, delivered consistently, has been shown to make the biggest difference — especially for disadvantaged pupils or those with delayed language or early learning gaps.

As a Trust, we're already leaning into this focus. A simple practical Strong Foundations

Checklist has been shared with all Headteachers. This will help every school evaluate in the first half of the spring term where they are against the key "non-negotiables"; the essential features of high-quality early education that should be agreed by the whole staff team and visible in every classroom, every day.

Our aim is to ensure all children receive the very best start to their education, grounded in secure, consistent practice across our schools. By working together and keeping expectations clear, we can strengthen practice and help every child build the foundations they need to thrive.



YCAT CPD Opportunities

HART members meeting

13th Jan 2026

Ensuring an ambitious curriculum and provision for vulnerable pupils

28th Jan 2026

Understanding what ambition looks like, and materials to support your reviews and identification of appropriate adjustments, including Ordinarily Available Provision.

[Booking Link](#)

Supporting teaching assistants

9th Feb 2026

Updates on key provision, and how to ensure learning support improves children's fluency and recall of essential knowledge.

[Booking Link](#)

Evaluating the impact of your practice in the EYFS

2nd March 2026

What leaders and teachers need to know and implement consistently.

[Booking Link](#)

HART members meeting

5th March 2026

Making a Difference in PSED

16th March 2026

Making a difference in Personal, Social & Emotional Development: evaluating and enhancing your curriculum for greater impact. Reviews are provided and examples of schools' adjusting provision.

[Booking Link](#)

HART members meeting

21st May 2026



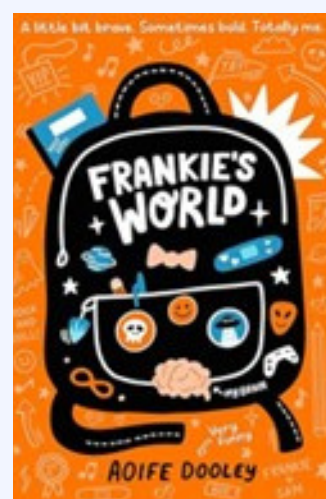
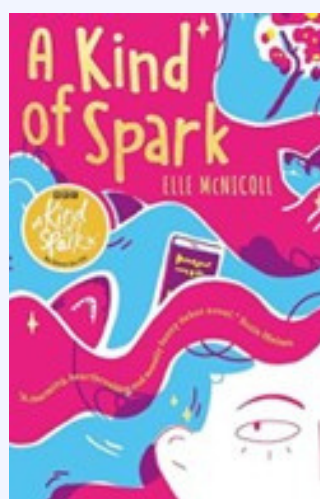
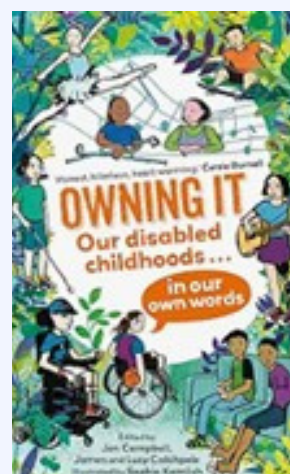
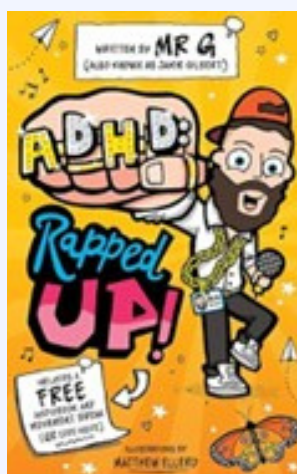
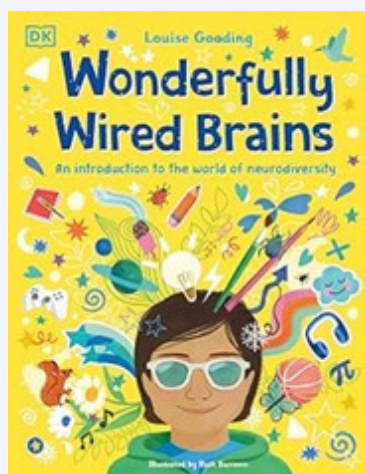
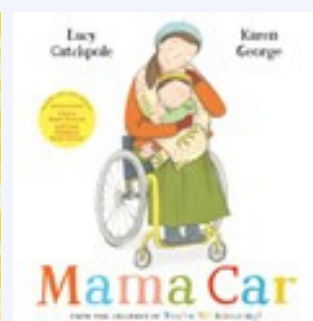
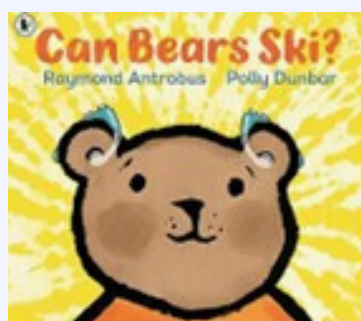
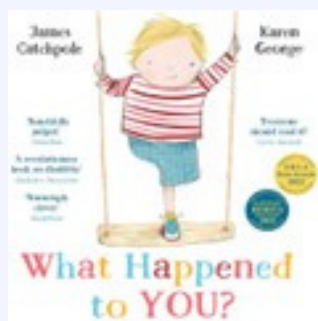
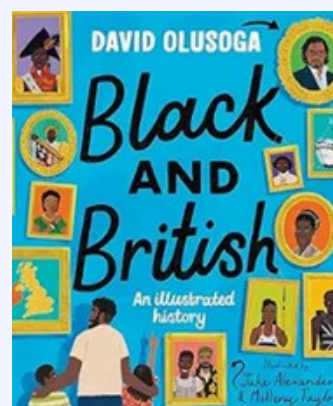
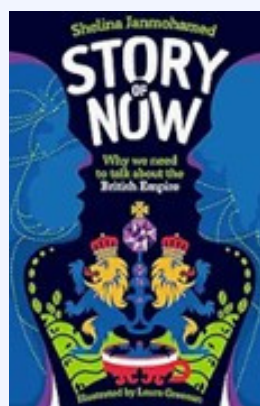
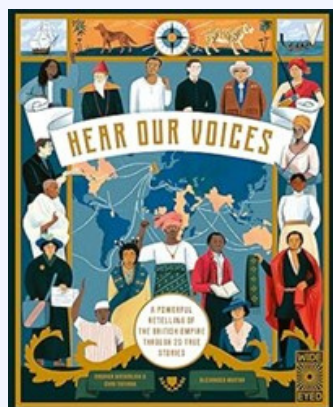
Networks

English subject leaders	12th Jan	3:45-4:30pm
Maths subject leaders	26th Jan	3:45-4:30pm
SENDSCO (f2f)	4th Feb	1.30-4.00pm
DSLs	11th Feb	3:45-4:30pm
EYFS leaders	25th Feb	3:45-4:30pm
Personal Development	17th March	3:45-4:30pm
DHT/senior leaders	23rd March	3:45-4:30pm
English subject leaders	20th April	3:45-4:30pm
Maths subject leaders	27th April	3:45-4:30pm
DSLs	6th May	3:45-4:30pm
EYFS leaders	3rd June	3:45-4:30pm
Personal Development	9th June	3:45-4:30pm
DHT/senior leaders	22nd June	3:45-4:30pm
SENDSCO	24th June	3.45-5.00pm





Some more great inclusive books to explore...





Pupil leadership in action

Across our family of schools

