



**Northern Arch**  
LEARNING PARTNERSHIP



# Annual **REPORT** 24-25



[www.northernarchlearningpartnership.org.uk](http://www.northernarchlearningpartnership.org.uk)



Since our launch in April 2024, Northern Arch has come a long way, **improving standards**, **attracting new partners** and **laying the foundations for future successes**.

All of our academies are now rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted and our central team has developed to provide the leadership and support that our academies need.

Colleagues across the partnership collaborate in ever more ingenious ways to realise the benefits of being part of a true learning community.

Our financial position is strong with £1.2 million capital investment during 2024/25. The success of our growth strategy will also trigger additional capital funding from April 2026, enabling us to deliver even more exciting projects across our estate.

**481**  
staff

**6**  
academies

**4319**  
students & pupils

We've had a great year and there is plenty more to come from Northern Arch Learning Partnership in the future.

## Welcome to Mowden Infant & Junior Schools

On March 1st 2025 we were delighted to welcome Mowden Federation of Schools to the Partnership. It has been fantastic to see them integrate so quickly into the collaborative practice we share, as well as bringing new ideas, great colleagues and, of course, a wonderful group of young people into the Northern Arch community. Tim Fisher, CEO comments:

“ Mowden are a great cultural fit for our partnership. They always put children first, they care passionately about their community and they recognise the significant advantages that come from working together. ”



## Our **Vision**

To build a learning community that shapes young people's development into happy, productive, independent adults.



## Our **Values**

Whilst the character and individuality of each academy is celebrated within Northern Arch, we share collective values through our commitment to:

### **Aspiration**

We are determined that all of our people aim high and we strive for educational excellence in all that we do.

### **Inclusion**

We care for every individual, value diversity and respect each other.

### **Collaboration**

We work co-operatively and constructively as a team to serve our local and wider communities.

### **Empowerment**

We believe in building every individual into a confident, capable and healthy citizen.



# Governance



We welcomed **two new Directors** to the Partnership Board - **Tarryn Lloyd Payne**, who **Chairs the People & Environment Committee**, and **Asma Shaffi**, who is **Vice Chair of the Board**



Our inaugural **Governance Development Event**, "Northern Arch, a Learning Community" was a **great success**, with attendees from all of the Local Governing Bodies; Board of Directors; Members and Trust Executive Team



Work has begun on **Partnership Power BI Dashboards**, which will enable Directors to see at a glance the **standards across the entire Partnership**

# Operations



We have invested **£600K** in **IT** across the **Partnership**



All academies now have **solar panels** in place, meaning **lower energy bills** and we're doing our bit for the **environment**



We've **revamped our risk registers** and appointed a new **Internal Audit Service**

# Finance & IT

## Finance

**Our total income for 2024/25 was £31m**, with the majority received **from the Department for Education** and additional **SEN funding** from **Local Authorities for SEN funding**. The remaining balance is a combination of **trading income** and **investment income**.

## Capital Investments

During 2024/25, **£1.2m** was invested across all of our **academies**. This has been funded by **revenue contributions** and **grant applications**.

As we look forward to 2025/26 the Partnership will receive **School Capital Allocation funding**, enhancing our ability to provide excellent teaching and learning environments throughout Northern Arch.

## IT

We have **migrated to a MIS system** for all schools that has enabled **improved data analysis** and a **cloud based system**

Additionally, we have **invested £600k** in the installation of Windows 11 compliant desk tops across the Partnership

## Expenditure

The largest part of the Partnership's expenditure is spent on **staff salaries**. For 2024/25, this figure was **76.5% of total expenditure**.

Other major costs include areas such as **curriculum spend**, **estates management**, **IT**, **school and college transport** and **utilities**.



**£31m**  
total income

**£1.2m**  
capital investment



# Estates

A **partnership wide Estates Strategy** is currently in development to highlight key areas of refurbishment and enhancement we aim to invest in within our estates. These projects will include refurbishment, development and upgrade of areas, systems and building fabric and also enhance ICT and digital standards across sites. These projects will **future proof our buildings** and ensure they continue to be **great learning environments for our students**.

**Capital investments** have been made in all our academies with **many more exciting projects in planning phase for 2026**.

Launch of our **new compliance software** across the partnership has created a **robust and automated training opportunity** for all staff. Future development of this system is well underway to also utilise it for monitoring estates compliance and provide an easily accessible library of useful documents.

A **new contract with catering experts** from Durham County Council commenced this academic year to ensure our menu offerings across all phases were **nutritional and appealing to students**. Work continues to involve pupils in what they would like to see on menus.

**Cleaning tender** process were completed which saw a new partnership with North Yorkshire County Council commence in three of our academies.

The procurement and implementation of a **new MIS system** took place at our Primary and Secondary academies earlier this year to **modernise our in house systems**.

**Solar panels** have been installed at various academies to provide a renewable source of energy, **bring down costs** and **reduce our carbon footprint** and **greenhouse gas emissions**.





# Educational Improvement

## Quality Improvement Reviews



A **programme of quality improvement reviews** has been implemented across the partnership. Each academy receives **three reviews per year** with the review team consisting of **cross-phase school leaders from across the partnership**. Review themes are established between the Headteacher/Principal and the Executive Director of Education.

## Professional Learning Network



An online and **Professional Learning Network (The Arch)** has been developed and implemented across the whole partnership. This consists of regular videos, articles and podcast episodes all focused on **improving the quality of classroom practice and educational leadership**. The online platform lets staff like and comment on posts in a social media style interface which can be accessed on computers or mobile devices for ease of access.

## Podcast



Alongside the Professional Learning Network, we have also developed and launched our very own **professional learning podcast** that is available publicly on Apple Podcasts and Spotify. This aims to **bridge the gap between educational research and classroom practice**, by **connecting people with pedagogy**. There have been 8 episodes so far featuring educational experts from the UK and across the world.

## Video Coaching & Steplab



All academies have subscribed to **Steplab** which is a **professional development and classroom coaching platform** that offers step-by-step instructional content and videos to help teachers improve their practice via evidence-informed methods. We are also **filming our own exemplar footage of high impact classroom strategies** and creating **annotated coaching videos** using some of our very **own expert practitioners**.

## Data Dashboards



As part of our commitment to using data to drive decisions that impact on high quality learning experiences, we are developing an innovative suite of **data dashboards** containing a range of live data ranging from **educational standards** to **business analytics**. Visualising data in a more accessible and digestible way will allow us to **target school improvement support and intervention**, create a **consistent measurement of progress** against trust priorities, and help us **identify and share best practice** across schools. From a business perspective, it will allow us to **integrate** finance, estates, and HR data for informed strategic planning; **improve efficiency and long-term cost savings through better resource allocation**; and have a **better understanding of building utilisation, energy efficiency, and operational costs**.



# Marketing & Admissions

A series of **targeted marketing campaigns** have been launched across all academies to promote their **Open Events and application processes**, and these have already shown strong impact. Open Events have taken place at each academy, with **additional personalised tours** and **application workshops** offered to families to further support them in submitting applications. **Marketing strategies continue to be reviewed and refined** in line with each academy's priorities.

Hurworth and Longfield have **introduced newly designed logos**, with updates implemented across uniforms, websites, and buildings to ensure consistent branding. **Branding work for Mowden and Rydal's Wrap Around Provision** is well underway and on track for launch in the New Year.

A range of **cross-partnership** projects will also be launched in 2026, aimed at **strengthening collaboration, sharing best practice**, and **further enhancing outcomes** for pupils across the Trust.

**Significant improvement works** are also taking place across our sites. At Hurworth School, upgrades have been completed at the pupil entrance, main reception, and main hall to enhance the overall aesthetic. At QE, work continues to improve the courtyard area, and the food cabin will be relaunched as QEat.

**Suspension and Exclusions training** for Governors, Headteachers, and key staff has been scheduled for 17<sup>th</sup> December. We are privileged to welcome **specialist lawyers** with **expertise in Governing Board Disciplinary Committees and SEND**, who will co-deliver the session.





# Working Together

Northern Arch Learning Partnership currently has **19 active network groups**. With **169 group slots** filled by staff from across the Partnership taking advantage of our bespoke professional learning communities.

Our network groups operate as the driving force for Partnership development, bringing together teaching and support staff as well as leaders from across Northern Arch. Each group acts as a strategic partner for their area of focus, harnessing the combined expertise of the Partnership to research, innovate and identify best practice. Network groups are pivotal to the development of the Partnership as a learning community.

**19**  
active  
network  
groups

Our groups currently range from the subject specific to broad areas of provision across the Partnership:

- Computing
- English
- Maths
- Personal, Social, Health and Relationships Education (PSHRE)
- PE & Sport
- Reading & Phonics
- AI for Teaching and Learning
- Assessment
- Attendance
- Careers
- Curriculum Development
- Inclusion (SEN)
- Looked After Children/Previously Looked After Children
- Pastoral
- Safeguarding
- Teaching for learning
- Transition
- Wellbeing







**Principal:** Lexi Wilkinson  
**No. of Pupils:** 462

### Reception Open Event Success

Our Open Event was a fantastic, well-attended evening with very positive feedback from those who attended. Further opportunities, including Personalised Tours and Application Workshops, have also had high uptake, giving families a great chance to see the school in action.

### Celebrating 200 Years of the Railway

Our whole school came together to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway. Classrooms were transformed into stations, rail tracks ran through corridors, and our own Mowden Locomotion and whole-school dance performance made it a truly memorable event.

### Pupil Leadership

A real strength of our school is our pupil leadership programme, including Sports Captains, House Captains and Reading Buddies. Through these roles, pupils develop key skills such as confidence, responsibility, teamwork and communication, while acting as excellent role models and a true asset to the school community.

### Mowden Infant Library

At the beginning of the year, the school invested in a new library for pupils in the Infant school. This was officially opened by Tim Fisher on 7<sup>th</sup> March. It is now a well-used, inviting space with an excellent choice of rich texts.

### Mowden Fest

A live music event that happened at the end of the Summer term - whole school event. All year groups performed outside on the school field. There were a range of musical experiences for the pupils including singing and dancing.





# The Rydal Academy



**Principal:** John Armitage  
**No. of Pupils:** 579

## Pupil Outcomes and Enrichment

In 2025 the percentage of pupils gaining Expected+ across Reading, Writing and Maths at the end of Key Stage 2 was the second highest in the schools' history. And the highest percentage of pupils since the test began three years ago passed the Multiplication Tables Check. Pupils have excelled in Christmas Carol Concerts and Year 6 Leavers Productions. Extra curricular sports, arts and technology clubs continue to thrive and have been rebranded as Sports Academy, Arts Academy and Learning Games.

Pupils careers education offer has become a strength of the school with regular assemblies from visitors from education, industry and former pupils to share their pathways and collaboration projects with Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College.

## Closing the Technology Gap

In the last year we have purchased almost 500 iPads including an individual device for all KS2 pupils to allow them to enhance the reach of their learning and improve their use of technology. This has led to some amazing achievements including the school coming in the top 50 schools in the country and top 5 in the North East for the Timestables Rockstars England Rocks event.

## Early Years Enhancements

In the last year we have invested over £30,000 in replacing our furniture in Reception and to improve our Early Years outdoor learning environment, resulting in exciting spaces for the children to learn and play in for years to come.

## Exceptional Support of Young Carers

The school has regained its Young Carers Charter Gold Standard. The quality of inclusive practice and breadth of integrated provision across the school has been recognised as being exceptional by Local Authority and regional Multi-Academy Trust expert advisors.







# Hurworth School

**Headteacher:** Rachel Somerville  
**No. of Pupils:** 621

## Matilda the Musical

Our production of Matilda was a phenomenal success, with sell-out performances that highlighted the incredible talent, creativity, and dedication of our students and staff.

## Academic Excellence

Hurworth School achieved outstanding academic results, performing above the national average in Maths and English at Grade 4+; three years in a row, and excelling across a range of other subjects.

## Student Destinations

All of our Year 11 students successfully secured their next steps, progressing onto college courses, apprenticeships, and other high-quality pathways that support their future aspirations.

## IGNITE Programme

Through our IGNITE initiative, students enjoyed enriching experiences beyond the classroom, including cultural trips to Paris, Berlin, and London, alongside community engagement projects and a diverse range of enrichment activities.

## Staff Development

We continued to invest in our staff, including the development of specialist trauma practitioners and embedding the Choices Philosophy, which is embraced by staff and students to ensure learning remains at the heart of all that we do.







# Longfield Academy

**Headteacher:** Angela Sweeten  
**No. of Pupils:** 660

## Ofsted Success

Longfield was delighted to have been rated "Good" in all four areas by Ofsted. This fantastic achievement reflects the dedication of our staff, the hard work of our pupils, and the continued support of our families, as well as the high standards and strong teamwork across our whole school community.

## Year 9 Graduation

For the first time, our Year 9 pupils had their own graduation to celebrate the completion of their pledges and to recognise the importance of transition into the GCSE years. It was a fantastic event, shared with families as we recognised the hard work and achievements of our pupils.

## Big Big Project

Our pupils won the Big Big Project, funded by the Department for Education and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Ten schools were challenged to explore the Local Authority's three key areas for long-term success and research their own ideas for what Darlington should look like by 2040, when they will be of working age. From research to model-making, our pupils gave it their all and were crowned champions.

## Longfield Fit for Royalty

We were honoured to welcome Prince Edward, The Duke of Edinburgh, to Darlington as part of the celebrations for the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway. It was a truly historic moment to be part of and a wonderful reminder of how special our community is.

## Longfield Festival - Open Event

Our Open Event was a fantastic evening and has already had a very positive impact on the number of school preferences received. It was a great opportunity for prospective pupils and their families to visit and to showcase everything that makes Longfield so special and the journey we have been on.







# QE

## QUEEN ELIZABETH

Sixth Form College

**Principal:** Laurence Job  
**No. of Pupils:** 1997

### Ofsted Success

QE has been awarded the highest possible grade of "Outstanding" in all aspects of provision, with no recommendations for improvement. This includes Outstanding ratings for Overall Effectiveness, Quality of Education, Behaviour and Attitudes, Personal Development, Leadership and Management, Education Programmes, and Provision for Learners with High Needs.

### Exam Results

We are proud to report strong exam results across our provision. In the national GCSE re-sit rankings for progress from grade 3, GCSE English was ranked 1<sup>st</sup> out of 219 colleges, and GCSE Maths 12th out of 223 colleges. In Art Foundation, all 36 students achieved the top grade of Distinction.

### Student & Parent/Carer Survey

We are delighted to share strong levels of satisfaction across all aspects of QE's provision, with 99% of students and 99% of parents/carers saying they would recommend QE to others.

### Student Successes

Our students have enjoyed outstanding success in awards and competitions at local and national level. Highlights include Adiy Ahmed winning Young Citizen of the Year and the Interact Group being named Exceptional Young Volunteers at the Stronger Communities Awards. Niamh Bage was crowned Student of the Year at the Tees Businesswomen Awards, Michael Smith was named One to Watch at the National Film Awards, Ethan Fletcher recognised as a future journalism star, and Amani Hussain as a National Young Reporter.

Students' artwork has featured in show homes, the QE Reign Team won national awards, the Men's Football Team became double champions, and our Robotics and Swimming Teams reached national finals.

### Volunteering and Community Work

Volunteering and community work has continued to be a real strength and was celebrated at our Volunteering Awards Evening. The VE Event was also a great success in welcoming the local community into QE. The Interact Group supported hospitals, food banks and charities, including a sleep-out for a homeless charity. Students also contributed to the Power of Women event, refurbished the Age UK community centre, supported Community Christmas events and local care homes, and made a positive impact as Sports Leaders.

