



**Ben Rice**  
**Head of School**

Dear Children, Families, and Staff,

As we reach the end of the autumn term and prepare to welcome the Christmas holiday, I want to take this opportunity to reflect on the wonderful months we have shared together. This term has been filled with learning, celebration, and the warmth of our school community—qualities that feel especially meaningful at this time of year. Our children have worked incredibly hard since September, embracing new challenges and showing impressive resilience as the pace of the year increased. The lead up to Christmas has brought lots of festive fun culminating in two ice skating trips in the final week. The young people who participated behaved amazingly and gave their all on the ice rink with some impressive skills on show.

I want to extend heartfelt thanks to our staff, who have created such a nurturing and positive environment for our children, and to our families for your unfailing support throughout a busy term. I would like to express individual thanks to both Miss Johnson and Mr Akanni who have covered this term and have been brilliant. It is also with great sadness that we have to say goodbye to Miss Brown who has worked at the Links for over ten years as she moves onto a new role. We will miss her greatly.

One of the highlights of this term has been watching our community grow even stronger. The sense of partnership has been truly uplifting. These connections make a profound difference in the life of our young people, and I am grateful to each of you for the role you play.

As we rest and recharge over the holidays, we also look forward to a new term filled with fresh opportunities. We have exciting learning plans, events, and initiatives ahead, and we can't wait to welcome everyone back in January, refreshed and ready for the term to come.

To our young people: enjoy the break, spend time with family and friends, and take pride in everything you have achieved this term.

To our families and staff: thank you for your dedication, energy, and partnership. Your commitment ensures that our school remains a place of growth, joy, and possibility.

Wishing you all a peaceful Christmas, a joyful festive season, and a wonderful start to the New Year.

With warmest regards,

Head of School

## School Calendar

### Term Ends

**19th December 2025**

### Spring Term

#### INSET Day

**5th January 2026**

### Student Parent Review Day

**6th January 2026**

Form Tutors will have arranged a convenient time to meet with parents and students.

### Term Starts

**Wednesday 7th January**

**2026**

### Half term

**Monday 16th February 2026  
to**

**Friday 20th February 2026**

## Attendance at Links Academy – Understanding Authorised vs Unauthorised Absences

The autumn term began with a strong and positive start for student attendance across the Trust. After six weeks away, many children returned eager to get back into the rhythm of school. However, as the days became shorter, wetter and colder, some children found it harder to maintain consistent attendance. Poor behaviour choices by a small number of children also contributed to a drop in attendance as the term progressed.

### Why Does Attendance Decline Over the Term?

Any young persons absence from school will fall into two categories; authorised and unauthorised.

Authorised absences reasons will include:

- Illness
- Medical appointments
- School suspensions

Unauthorised absences reasons will include:

- “Too tired, up gaming all night”
- “Refusing to get out of bed”
- “Can’t be bothered”
- No contact or reason provided

Both types of absence reduce learning times and impact your child’s progress. Even when an absence is authorised, it still results in lost lessons and missed learning opportunities.

### What Does Attendance Really Mean?

It is a common misconception that 70% attendance is acceptable. In reality, 70% attendance means a child has missed 30% of the school year, which equates to:

- 57 days of lost learning
- Around 11 school weeks
- Nearly a whole school term

This level of absence creates significant learning gaps that are challenging to close and this affects a child’s academic progress and wellbeing.

At half term, parents were given an update of the number of days of school their child had missed, showing how small odd days here and there, repeated absences or suspensions quickly accumulate. If a child is absent from school for one day per week over a seven week half term period, then they have missed over a week (1 week and 2 days) of school.



### How Can I Support My Child’s Attendance?

There are some easy wins, which parents can access:

#### 1. Create a Healthy Sleep and Morning Routine

A simple step is to establish consistent routines. A traditional alarm clock can help children wake up independently and reduces the reliance on mobile phones. Setting a phone curfew, removing devices from bedrooms overnight, switching off Wi-Fi and maintaining a regular sleep schedule all support better attendance.



*Looking for a stocking filler this Christmas?  
An alarm clock not only could help with waking, but  
also great for helping to read the time!*

## 2. Deciding if Your Child Is Too Ill for School

If you are unsure whether to send your child to school, consider whether they could attend for part of the day, or whether they may feel better after a short rest. If your child must stay home, encourage independent learning such as reading or using resources like BBC Bitesize.

## 3. When a Child Is Suspended

Suspended children cannot attend school during the period of their suspension, but they can still access online learning through Google Classroom. Supporting your child to complete work at home during school hours, helps minimise learning gaps and relieve boredom.

### The Rule of 5 Activity

If your child is finding school attendance difficult, the **Rule of 5 Activity** encourages them to reflect on:

- What is stopping them from attending
- Identify 5 things they like about school
- Identify 5 things they dislike about school



This activity will be used again during the Student Performance Review Day (SPRD) in January to help families and staff identify barriers and put support in place.

If you have questions or need support with your child's attendance, please contact the school team.

**Mrs Porritt, Trust Attendance Officer**

## November Mock Exams - A Successful Start



We are pleased to share that the November mock examinations have gone very well. Our young peoples have approached the exams with maturity and focus and we are proud of the effort they have shown.

Attendance and punctuality have also been strong which is especially important as children get used to the routines and expectations of the real GCSE examinations in the summer.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all parents and carers for your cooperation and support. Ensuring that children arrive on time, in full uniform, and prepared to sit their exams has made a significant difference to how smoothly the process has run.

A heartfelt thank you also goes to our staff for their continued dedication in supporting and invigilating the exams each day. Together we are helping young peoples to develop the confidence, consistency, and resilience they will need for their final GCSEs.

Well done to everyone involved.-



**Mrs V Ulucay, Trust Exams Officer**

# VR Knife Awareness Session



On Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> October our Year 11 children took part in a virtual knife crime workshop, delivered by Hertfordshire Constabulary.

Children were immersed in a highly realistic scenario using virtual headsets, seeing incidents and their ramifications first hand, in a powerful thought-provoking session.

The discussion raised gave an insight into crime, the criminal justice system and the impact upon individuals. Well done to all our young people for the mature discussions that followed the session.

**-Mr Hajilambi**



# Knife Angel Visit

On Tuesday 14 October, Miss Monaghan and I were fortunate to be able to take a small group to visit the Knife Angel sculpture in Welwyn Garden City.

As part of the visit, we watched a theatre performance, which focused on some of the struggles that young people face, from the perspective of one teenage girl. Themes covered included grooming, knife crime and serious violence and the production was very thought-provoking.

Following the theatre performance, we were able to visit the Knife Angel Sculpture itself, which was a sight to behold. An amazing piece of artwork, created purely from knives surrendered as part of knife amnesties. Families who have been impacted by knife crime, were invited to inscribe a message onto the knives that were used in the final sculpture.

Everyone who attended conducted themselves impeccably and were very respectful throughout the theatre performance and the visit to the Knife Angel sculpture.

-Mr Fuller

(Assistant Headteacher)

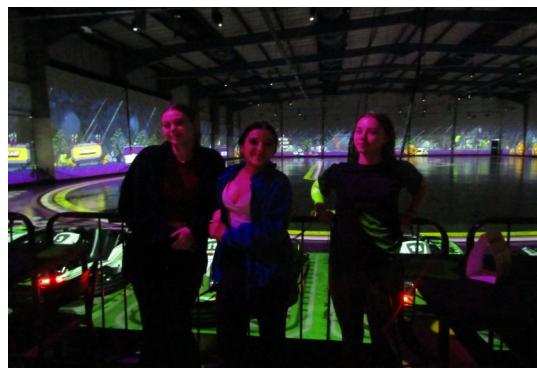


# Reward Trip



Five diligent children worked hard this half term to achieve the highest number of green card tokens and were rewarded with a trip to Battle Kart St Albans. Children are able to gain tokens for recognition for their positive work ethos in lessons and for the character school traits of Respect, Responsibility and Resilience.

BattleKart is an interactive entertainment experience that combines electric go-karting with augmented reality and video game elements. Players in real karts race on a track while interacting with virtual scenery and other game elements, such as power-ups and obstacles, that are projected onto the floor.



During the trip young people and staff competed against each other in three games; Battlerace, Battlecolor and Battlesnake. Battlerace provided an opportunity for all to demonstrate their expertise (or lack of it!) in handling their vehicles at speed while avoiding virtual oil spills, collecting bonuses and firing rockets at their opponents. Battlecolor involved converting as many tiles as possible into your designated colour within an allotted timeframe. Battlesnake, based on the old Nokia game, involved increasing the size of the snake behind your kart and try to avoid crashing into your opponents' tails, something which is easier said than done.

A fantastic time was had by all and we can't wait to go back for another round.

# Reward Trip



Here's what some young people and teachers had to say about last terms trip to H2O Aquapark :

"Once you go in, there is no turning back. I loved it!!!!  
Best place ! "

**EC**

So fun, We wish we can do it again next year ps. LET US GO AGAIN OR ELSE!

**CB**

"Amazing day out, can we do it next year" **MV**

"It was great to see everyone having a great time, especially when they were ganging up on the staff to push them in the water! The staff at the venue were amazing, giving us drinks before the session and then ice creams afterwards. A really good day all round!" **RFu**

"I had an amazing time, an experience never to be forgotten but remembered for the resilience, respect and responsibility shown by these young people. They overcame their fears, faced challenges with courage, bravery and true grit. Leadership skills were also on show, especially when coming together with ideas and different ways of pushing a member of staff into the water. They were respectful and grateful - this was expressed to the organisers and staff" .

**SBi**

"The water sports park trip is one of the most beloved school outings we organize, and the children's excitement was evident from the early morning as they eagerly waited to board the bus. The day lived up to all expectations, and seeing happy smiles throughout beautifully reflected the balance between the high

expectations we place on our children' and the rewarding experiences they gain in return."

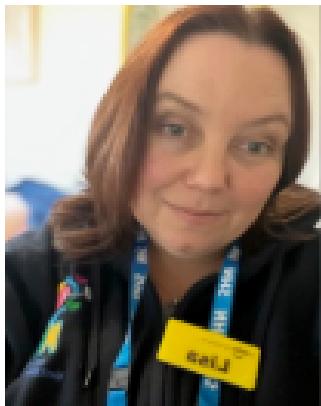
**JKu**

"What an amazing day out with our children. I was really proud of all of our young peoples, who were polite, well behaved and fun to be around. There was a lot of plotting -how to get Miss Magda into water. After many failures they finally succeeded". **MDz**



## About the...

# SEND Mental Health Support Team

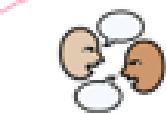


Hello, I am Lisa Dutton I work for the SEN Mental Health Support Team.. I am based in Links on a Monday. We offer early intervention services for mild to moderate mental health difficulties.

### How we can help:



Group support with young people or parents/carers to support their wellbeing and mental health.



Provide guided 1:1 self-help sessions with young people or parents/carers.



Workshops with young people, parents/carers or staff about a mental health topic.

### What we can help with:

- Worry/Anxiety
- Panic
- Low mood
- Sleep issues
- Behaviours of concern
- Coping with change
- Friendships
- Confidence and self-esteem

### Making a referral:

Speak to your school's mental health lead Tom Laud to make a referral.

*Please note that the MHST can only work with a limited number of children at a given time therefore the referral may be added to a waitlist.*

### Contacting the MHST:

#### MHST Admin Team:

Tel: 01727 732031

Email: [hct.mhst@nhs.net](mailto:hct.mhst@nhs.net)

#### Link Staff Member:

Lisa Dutton



The staff at  
Links Multi Academy Trust Hatfield  
would like to wish you all a  
Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Please remember to stay safe

