

Welcome to the

Pebbles

Newsletter



Pebbles
Care | Education | Therapy



Director's Welcome

Welcome to our summer edition of the newsletter.

As we reach the midpoint of the year, it's a great opportunity to celebrate everything we've achieved together and recognise the positive impact being made across our homes, schools and wider teams. Every day, I continue to be impressed by the dedication, compassion and professionalism shown by our colleagues, whose commitment helps create safe, nurturing environments where our young people can thrive.

Inside this edition, you'll find stories that reflect the energy and creativity our young people and teams. Whether it's taking part in new activities, reaching personal milestones, enjoying community events or simply embracing new opportunities, each achievement is a reminder of what can be accomplished with the right support and encouragement.

Summer is always a special time, bringing fresh experiences and the chance to make lasting memories. From outdoor adventures and celebrations to learning new skills and spending quality time together, I know our teams are working hard to ensure every young person enjoys a rewarding and memorable season.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank every member of staff for the care, commitment and enthusiasm you bring to your role. Your passion and dedication make a real difference, not only to the young people we support but also to one another as colleagues. It is something we should all be incredibly proud of.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition and celebrating the many successes featured throughout. Thank you for everything you do, and I look forward to seeing all that we will continue to achieve together over the months ahead.

Chris Strong
CEO



A round of applause for our recent easter competition winners!

We had 4 amazing winners for our easter crafts competition. Our winners are as follows.



We had so many incredible entries which make it difficult to choose only a few winners. A massive thank you to all who entered and we hope you enjoyed your prizes!





Where have we been?

Recently, we attended the Children in Scotland Conference in Glasgow.

The conference was an amazing opportunity to collaborate with so many incredible organisations and charities from the Children's sector around the theme of 20 years of **GIRFEC** – Getting It Right For Every Child.

This was an amazing opportunity to meet with and learn from other organisations and charities with the same goal in mind: Putting children and young people first and making the future brighter for every child.

Among the exhibitions and keynote speakers, there were also workshops, many of which were led and presented by children and young people!

A few that really stood out to us that we attended were the **STAF** Youth Justice Voices and **SCCR** – The Scottish Centre for Conflict Resolution.

STAF focused on the stigmas that young people going through the justice system face as well as having their young people talk about the experiences many face. They also showed some really informative and interesting projects that they have been a part of within the organisation.

SCCR brought a group of school-age children to discuss things that might trigger us, and ways to de-escalate those feelings of feeling overwhelmed and got us to really think about what that looks like for all of us.

It was great getting the opportunity to collaborate with so many different people and have an opportunity to open conversations with many people from different disciplines!

London's Calling: A Day at Westminster

Hazel Ross, our Talent Acquisition Manager, was recently down in London representing us at the launch of the new Better Hirer Scheme and bringing back some really useful insights that will shape how we recruit going forward.

Hazel attended as part of her involvement with the Better Hiring Institute (BHI), a group focused on improving recruitment standards across the UK. Hazel explained, "their aim is to make hiring in the UK the fastest and the safest globally," with a strong focus on sharing best practice and helping organisations get recruitment right.

The event brought together people from across the recruitment world. "I met peers from recruitment across every sector, from care to tech," Hazel said, giving her the chance to compare challenges and share ideas with others facing similar issues. One of the main talking points across the day was the rise of AI in applications – and the complications that come with it.

Hazel spoke about how many recruiters are now seeing large volumes of very polished CVs and cover letters. On the surface, candidates look ideal, but there's often more to uncover. This is something many organisations are struggling with right now, but reassuringly, our existing approach is already protecting us. Thanks to the checks and compliance processes we have in place, we're less exposed to this risk than others.

Alongside the challenges, the day also focused heavily on improving hiring for the future, particularly making recruitment more inclusive and accessible.

Sessions from speakers like Lord Holmes and Lord Ranger highlighted how important it is to look beyond a CV and consider people's wider potential and experiences. It's something Hazel reflected on as a key takeaway, especially as expectations around fair and inclusive hiring continue to grow.

The launch itself also marked the start of the Better Hirer Scheme, which we're now getting involved in directly. Through the BHI membership, we've pledged to become a signatory member, meaning we'll soon be able to display official accreditation during our recruitment process. It's a clear signal to candidates that we're committed to safe, fair and high-quality hiring.

More importantly, it's not just a badge – there are some practical changes coming off the back of it too. Based on the new BHI guidance, the team will be introducing updates to how we manage recruitment files, including a new file sign-off process and improved reference request formats. These updates will help strengthen consistency across the team and make sure we're continuing to follow best practice as recruitment evolves.

Hazel is also already looking at how we can further improve our processes, with a follow-up meeting planned to explore digital right-to-work checks and other tools that could make things more efficient while maintaining compliance.

Overall, the day was a great opportunity to step outside our usual processes, see what's happening across the wider industry, and bring back ideas that will benefit us as a business.



Recent Celebrations

At Pebbles we always have lots to celebrate, and this edition is no different. Lots of hard work is paying off!

Cara house recently redecorated their sleepover room to make it a more relaxing space. We love the calming colour scheme!

Cara house

Blackbrook and **Cambridge House** recently welcomed two new members of staff, **Donna and Bella**. We know you'll fit right in!

While we welcomed new faces, we were also very sad to say goodbye to **Beth** from **Blackbrook house**. You will be so missed by your team but we wish you the best of luck in your new career.

Tanglewood again achieved an excellent (6) care inspection grade. We are so very proud of the team and the young people. Our inspection was on the 16th March and they are all over the moon with the results.

We had some great feedback following the results.

"Well done! Glad the Inspectors saw what we saw, a lovely nurturing home it is truly appreciated!" – BL Aberdeenshire Independent Reviewing Officer.

"I expected no less!" – Social worker – Aberdeenshire Social Worker

"Congratulations Jane to you and the team" – South Tyneside Independent Reviewing Officer

Tawheed and **Iqra** from **Kirran Cottage** recently successfully passed their level 4 NVQ qualifications!

A big congratulations to **Maggie Oliver** at **No57** and **Lauren Macdonald** at **Cambridge house** for completing her Level 4 NVQ qualification with distinction. And **Joanne Evans** from **Cambridge** who completed her Level 5 with a Distinction.

A huge congratulations to **Owen Haughton**, one of our Residential Child Care Workers at **Gartons House**, who has successfully completed the Level 4 Children, Young People and Families Practitioner Apprenticeship.

This is a fantastic achievement in itself, but Owen has gone above and beyond, earning an absolutely incredible Triple Distinction!

Leigh at **Kippsbyre**, **Libby** and **Alan** from **Forth Craig** have also passed their SVQ3. Amazing job everyone! Lots of amazing achievements.

"Recently, we had the privilege of celebrating a young person's 15th birthday at **Gartons House**, and hearing them say it was "the best day of my life" and "the best birthday ever" meant more than words can capture.

Days like this remind us why our work matters. The focus was entirely on them: no distractions, no paperwork, just time, attention and genuine presence. For children in care, birthdays can carry huge significance. Being able to create a day full of laughter, connection and celebration was incredibly special for everyone involved.

We were joined by young people and colleagues from our other Pebbles homes, as well as the young person's social worker. Seeing so many people come together with one shared purpose to help a young person feel valued and celebrated was a lovely reminder of the love and support they have around them.

These are the days that stay with you. The kind that don't show up in reports or paperwork, but speak volumes about belonging, relationships and what good care looks like in practice.



My 15th Birthday

Huge appreciation to the team for making the day what it was, and most importantly, for the smile that said it all"

Ashley Taylor, our manager at **Gartons** sent these fantastic words about their Young Person, it was lovely to see the difference a small celebration can make in our young people's lives.

Some of the **Blane** team recently completed the kilt walk, completing the full 23 miles to raise money for Muscular Dystrophy. This is a charity so close to one of the team members' hearts. Combined they have raised over £660. What an incredible achievement.

Pebbles has Talent!

We are absolutely delighted to celebrate our young person K after his incredible charity concert at our Dunfermline school in support of Young Minds.

After a lot of hard work and preparation (along with a lot of talent!), K raised an amazing £276 on the day, bringing his total fundraising to a £683 when combined with his JustGiving page. What a fantastic achievement!

K organised the entire event, and it was clear how much thought and effort went into making it such a success. The concert itself was brilliant, with K performing a mix of original songs inspired by his own experiences, alongside popular covers from artists like Zach Bryan and Sam Fender.

It wasn't just the music that made the day so memorable, though. K created a real sense of community and put on a great concert by organising a range of activities including a bake sale, hot rolls, a raffle, and even selling t-shirts from the gig that he designed. There was a brilliant atmosphere, with everyone coming together to support both K and such an important cause.

This achievement is about so much more than the money raised (although that in itself is outstanding!). K has shown a huge amount of courage and compassion as well as creativity in supporting young people's mental health, and he should feel incredibly proud of what he has accomplished.

K, we couldn't be prouder of you – your dedication and talent shone through and you've made a real difference. A huge thank you as well to everyone who came along, donated, and supported K – you helped make this such a special and successful day.

Well done, K – you smashed it!



Exam season has recently come and gone, and although it can be an extremely stressful time for our young people, it is a huge milestone. It is so rewarding to see so many of our young people taking it in their stride and pushing themselves to be the best they can be.

We wish everyone the best of luck with their results.

After the tense exam season, some of our young people have been preparing for their prom and helping their adults prepare for summer fun as a way to de-stress. Our young person at **Cambridge House** has also done a great job of helping to build a BBQ, to enjoy Summer outdoor dining.

Some of our young people are earning their qualifications in different ways, including our young person at **Stormont**. He has earned his SQA qualifications through an Employability course, run by Street League from the Perth Employability Team.

Pebbles Sporty Champions

Some of the **Blane** team recently completed the kilt walk, completing the full 23 miles to raise money for Muscular Dystrophy. This is a charity so close to one of the team members' hearts. Combined they have raised over £660. What an incredible achievement.

We are also absolutely delighted to share some fantastic news, that our very own Chief People Officer, **Val**, has done us proud!

Recently, Val and her team were crowned Ayrshire Cup tennis champions, a brilliant achievement! Val's commitment and team spirit are clearly as strong on the court as they are at Pebbles.

A few of our staff members have recently run the Edinburgh Marathon Festival Half Marathon! **Elaine Little** our Teacher at **Dunfermline Academy**, **Tamzin McEwan**, RCCW at **Murraythwaite**, **Charles Allen** our National Trainer and **Caitlin Noble** our Marketing Assistant all ran the Half Marathon. It was an incredibly hot day, reaching temperatures of 24 degrees and solid sunshine. But they all made it to the end in one piece and ended with smiles!

A huge congratulations to **Charlotte**, one of our Learning and Development Facilitators, who recently completed the London Marathon – an incredible achievement alongside a busy work and home life.

Charlotte trained hard in the lead-up to the race – but it wasn't without its challenges. "It was really difficult," Charlotte shared. "The closer we got, the harder it got... I seemed to catch every cold bug." Balancing training with full-time work, commuting and family life meant staying flexible. "Working full-time... I've got three children, it was difficult," she said, adding that poor weather also disrupted plans. To keep going, she adapted: "I did invest in a treadmill so that I could at least get some miles in at home."

Even though her preparation was tough at times, Charlotte credits the training she did complete with helping her on the day: "My recovery after the marathon was definitely better than I expected... so it definitely helped."

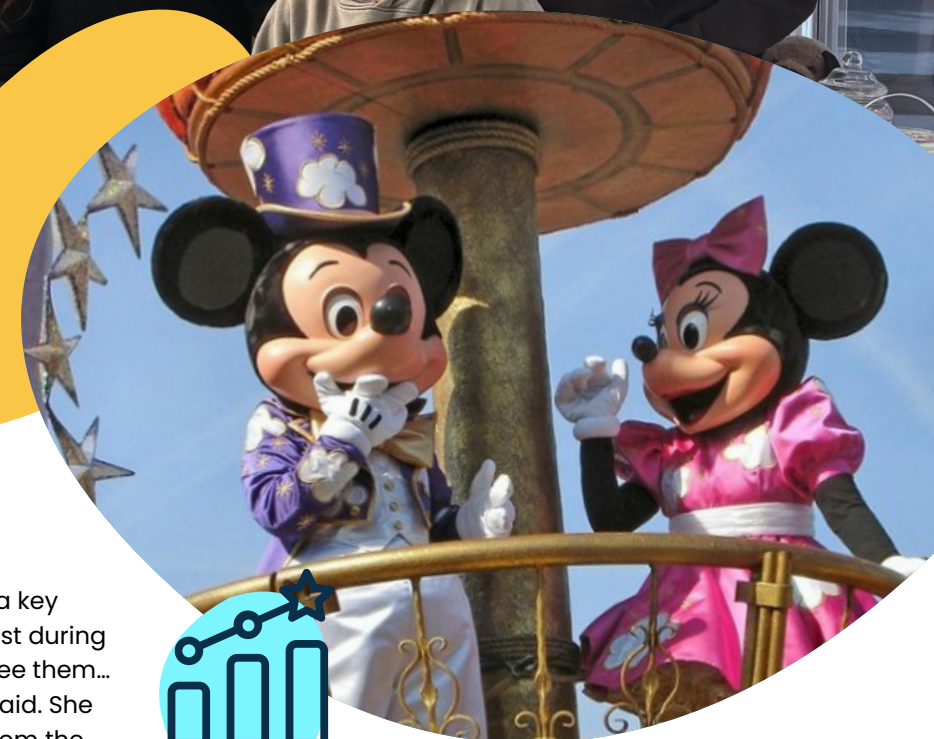
On race day, Charlotte travelled to the start line on her own, admitting she felt a little bit nervous beforehand. Once there, however, the atmosphere stood out: "It just all felt very surreal... a feeling like I've never had before." Surrounded by other runners and the energy of the event, she described it as "very much a party atmosphere."



No57
Team
meeting



Charlotte



Seeing her family along the route was a key highlight and provided a welcome boost during tougher moments. "It was so good to see them... it did give me a real good boost," she said. She also highlighted the encouragement from the crowd as a major factor in getting through the race, including one memorable moment when a gentleman in a wheelchair was cheering her on during a particularly tough stint: "He was like, 'come on lass... I can't do this but you can.'"

Like many marathon runners, Charlotte faced some unexpected challenges during the race. "I wasn't prepared for how painful it would be," she admitted – it was very physically and mentally challenging, and running in the heat caused some unpleasant injuries and sores. At one stage, she even joked in a message to her husband, "Please don't let me sign up to anything like this ever again."

Despite this, crossing the finish line was an emotional moment. "I was crying... just like, oh my god I've done it," she said. Charlotte completed the marathon in an amazing 6:46, a result she is proud of given the conditions and challenges on the day – and so she should be.

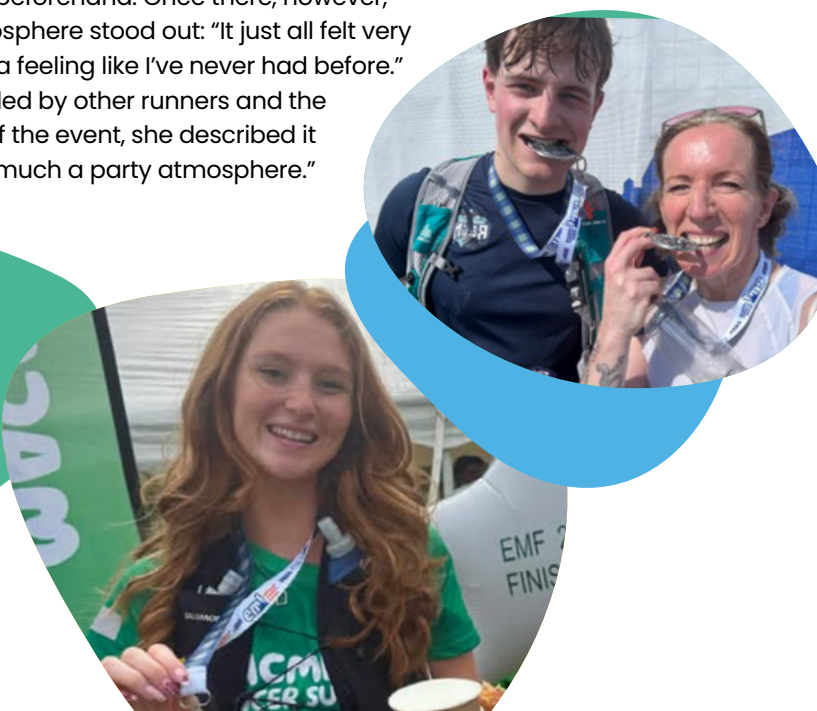
While the preparation and the race itself was tough, it hasn't put her off – in fact, it's had the opposite effect. "I'm desperate to do it again," she said, already considering future marathons.

Well done again to Charlotte on an outstanding achievement!

Recently one of our young people from **Tanglewood** had a trip to Paris to play Netball with the Clydesdale Netball Team. They met up with others from other countries and then on Saturday went to Disneyland, something that she has always wanted to do. This was her first time on an aeroplane and going abroad. Not only that but she also attended an awards ceremony at the Gaumont Cinema in the Disney Village. What an amazing and fun filled opportunity during the easter holidays.

Team meetings don't always need to be just updates and catchups, at our home **No 57**, **Maggie** and **Indi** both took the lead in planning team meeting activities full of fun and bonding! Just what the team needed at the time. The team managed to come together and lift each other's spirits with games and relevant tasks.

To top it all off, not long after they received GOOD in all areas from their OFSTED inspection. Well done, team.



Education Updates

Our schools are always working hard to provide educational opportunities for our pupils. Here are some of the activities they have been taking part in recently.

What's new?

Throughout February and March 2026, **Pebbles Academy Muirkirk** underwent a period of renovation work following the flooding and damage done to the school following the school holidays. The Education Team and pupils worked very hard throughout this time to ensure learning still went ahead despite half of the school building being out of commission. Well done to everyone for your determination and collaboration! We also now have a brand-new school entrance, Staff Office, Nurture Room and Staff Base (as well as new carpet for the Hub).

HMIE Scotland visited **Pebbles Academy Muirkirk** in March 2026 for our education inspection. The pupils and staff did incredibly well throughout the 3-day visit and should be very proud of their hard work and contributions to the inspectors. We expect the report to be made public very soon. Well done everyone.

World Cup fever at **Dunfermline**! Pupils were allocated a team country at random before the competition kicked off, and pupils also designed several challenges across the curriculum to win school points. They designed new strips, investigated countries and competed in penalty shoot outs, cheering for countries all around the world!

In the classroom

As part of our Exploring Cultures curriculum at **Darwin**, we dedicated the second spring term to studying Christianity, with a particular focus on the Easter story, associated traditions, and the significance behind these celebrations. In our final lesson on Christianity, we examined the symbolism of eggs at Easter. As a project-based learning activity, students designed and decorated eggs before creating parachute systems to protect them during a drop from height. This task integrated scientific principles, encouraging students to consider how the structure of the egg carrier such as incorporating legs to absorb impact would reduce the force of the fall, as well as to explore the various factors that influence effective parachute design.





Employment and CV building with Anne from CJCE

Anne from **CJCE** has been working closely with our young people to develop their CVs and build employability skills. She has supported them in creating professional CVs and uploading them to a range of job search platforms. Learners have also been exploring volunteering opportunities and completing job applications, including for the Army, helping them understand different career pathways. Looking ahead, Anne will be supporting the young people with interview techniques to further prepare them for employment.

Music with Lawrence Lamb

Several pupils continued to engage enthusiastically in their weekly music lessons with Lawrence Lamb on Thursdays. During these sessions, pupils have been developing their guitar-playing skills, learning how to read music, and practising basic chords. They have also enjoyed learning to play some of their favourite songs, helping to build their confidence, musical knowledge, and enjoyment of music. The lessons have encouraged creativity and self-expression, providing pupils with opportunities to explore their musical interests in a supportive environment. For some pupils, learning new musical skills has meant stepping outside of their comfort zones and embracing new challenges as part of the Wider Achievement part of the curriculum. It has been wonderful to see their confidence grow as they develop their abilities, persevere with new techniques, and take pride in their achievements. They are sounding great!

Science and Math

All of our senior pupils are working well towards to their National qualifications in Math and Science. Most studying towards National 4 in Math, with one working towards National 5. All senior pupils are working towards National 4 in General Science, with two choosing an elective specialising in Biology at the same level. Most pupil have successfully achieved their National 4 qualifications in Math and Science and some even gaining a National 5 unit in each subject

too. One of our senior pupils has sat their National 5 exam in Application of Maths after lots of home study and supported study. This term our BGE pupils are looking at the Human Body and how it works, studying each of the organ systems.

Technologies

On Wednesday 27th May 2026 our Vocational Skills Coordinator, Russell, visited Robert Burns Academy, a secondary school in Cumnock to meet with the Principal Teacher of Technical Studies. The visit was a success. It was a very informative meeting and productive regarding further progression with SQA National Qualifications. Russell also got the opportunity to see some work and models from the pupils within the Robert Burns Academy which they were able to discuss in detail how to create these masterpieces! Russell was able to take some of these models with him to show our young people at Pebbles, so they can study the level of detail required to pass their woodworking assessment. Hopefully this could be a good link up that can benefit Pebbles Academy moving forward.

Home Economics

In Home Economics lessons this term pupils have made a variety of tasty dishes and practical recipes. Pupils have been developing their cooking skills while making different foods and learning about preparation, hygiene, and healthy eating.

PE

Arron from Cumnock Juniors Football Club is working with young people doing some sports inputs. He has started with some football skills workshops - well done everyone!



Outside the classroom

Recently at **Darwin**, all members of the school community participated in keeping the local village clean and tidy (as part of our Active Citizens Programme). Lots of fun was had, and most importantly, the village was clean and tidy.

The Education Team at **Pebbles Academy Muirkirk** had their Emergency First Aid practical training with Josh Campbell, National Training Manager last week. It was a great session and they all had a laugh while they learned how to keep others safe!

One of our pupils have also had the opportunity to take part in a 6-week Hair and Beauty course at Nurture One Academy. They have been learning all about hair condition and styling, as well as skincare and appropriate skin treatments. They have had glowing feedback from the Academy and have gained crucial skills for their future throughout the course.

Our pupils have also enjoyed a few trips this term. Our senior pupils visited Dean Castle, where they took part in some pond dipping and foraging. Additionally, 2 of our pupils braved the summit and hiked up Cairn Table – both pupils were determined and supported one another throughout the difficult climb.

We had a great day out at Heads of Ayr Farm Park, learning all about different farm animals and overcoming fears to feed them.

Pupils visited Culzean Castle trip 20th March as part of their Outdoor Education Curriculum. They took part in a walking trail, identifying multiple plants and wild animals in the surrounding areas. Future visits will take place as part of the schools National Trust for Scotland membership.

Some of our senior pupils visited Game Vault on 29th May to take part in an escape room activity. Everyone worked really well together to escape and had a laugh throughout the task.



Sports day



Ayr Farm



Dean Castle trip



Muirkirk – First aid

Sports Day was a fantastic success with young people participating in a wide range of sporting activities at Cumnock Juniors. The blindfolded obstacle race was a firm favourite with everyone relying on their communication skills to guide their teammates through it. Well done everyone!

This term our Outdoor Education continues at Lochore Meadows and this year we have two sessions – junior and senior. All pupils have been introduced to paddleboarding, kayaking, team building games and a sausage sizzle.

Our school organised a trip to Burntisland to complete a beach clean before being rewarded with a tasty ice cream.

Four of our pupils completed a Beauty Academy course in Hairdressing and Employability Skills!

Pupils continued to forge links with our community, visiting Dunfermline Athletic Football Stadium for a numeracy-based activity which tested their BGE maths skills in real world context. They measured the pitch, experienced the board room and spent time in the changing rooms.

Achievements

Three of our young people at Dunfermline academy have been accepted onto school-college partnership courses beginning in June. We will miss them so much but we're looking forward to seeing them progress and develop.

In May we celebrated the 1-year anniversary of **Russell Ferguson** joining the Pebbles Education Team as the Vocational Skills Coordinator. Russell has brought skills and wisdom to this role and built invaluable relationships with our pupils since joining us in May 2025. Thank you for all of your hard work, Russell.



Throughout the academic year, we have undergone verification and approval for multiple subjects, including but not exclusive to; National 5 PE, National 4 Biology, SCQF Level 4 Personal and Vocational Skills Award, SCQF Level 3 British Sign Language, National 4 Modern Studies, National 3/4 Art and Design and Skills for Work courses. This was the first time some of our team had undergone external verification at **Muirkirk** (paper-based, virtual and visiting) but all members of staff passed with flying colours. Well done team and Darren for all of your hard work and determination toward extending our catalogue of qualifications here at **Pebbles Academy Muirkirk**.



Assessment Week



Commencing 25th May, all pupils participated in their Summer Term assessments as part of our ongoing process to track progress and attainment as we approach the end of the academic year. Assessments were completed across all core subjects, providing valuable information to support future planning and celebrate pupils' achievements. This assessment period also included digital assessments using GL Assessments, which offered greater differentiation and accessibility for pupils. The digital format enabled pupils to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in a way that met their individual needs, ensuring a fair and supportive assessment experience. Pupils enjoyed reviewing their results and recognising the progress they have made throughout the year.

They worked closely with their teachers to reflect on their achievements, identify areas for further development, and set meaningful targets for the new academic year. These discussions helped pupils to take ownership of their learning and feel motivated about their next steps. We are proud of the positive attitude, resilience, and maturity shown by pupils throughout the assessment week and look forward to celebrating their continued progress and success!



Feedback and Suggestions

Your feedback matters.

If you have any suggestions for future newsletter topics or feedback on our training programs, please don't hesitate to contact us at marketing@pebblescare.com

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