SOUTH DOWNS
LEARNING TRUST
Achieving Success Together

Executive Headteacher Bulletin
Term 1, Academic Year 2026-27

September 2026

Dear Parents/Carers of SDLT,

As we begin a new academic year across South Downs Learning Trust (SDLT), I wanted to take the opportunity to reflect on our collective successes and share some of our key priorities for the year ahead.

Our Commitment

At the heart of SDLT is a commitment to collaboration. Over the past year, our schools have continued to work together to ensure that every child and young person experiences a high-quality education within a caring and inclusive community. This partnership has been particularly evident through our transition work, where colleagues across the Trust have worked closely to support learners and families as they move between phases of education.

Our revised admission policy and transition arrangements have strengthened these partnerships further, helping to secure positive outcomes for families and ensuring that learners are placed in settings where they can thrive. As we look ahead to our forthcoming Open Events across the Trust, we are pleased to be able to showcase the benefits of our collaborative approach and the opportunities available to children and young people at every stage of their educational journey.

Welcome to Our New Families & This Year's Admission Deadlines

Across both Ratton and Ocklynge, we have been delighted to welcome our new learners and families - particularly our Year 7s at Ratton and Year 3s at Ocklynge. Transition is such an important part of school life, and it's been wonderful to see how confidently our young people have settled into their new environments.

A quick reminder that **secondary school applications close on 31 October** - if Ratton is your preferred choice, please review the admission criteria carefully. For our SDLT families at Ocklynge, the changes made to our admissions policy last year support a more seamless through-school approach, helping to strengthen continuity and progression for our learners and families.

For those applying for **Year 3 places at Ocklynge**, applications are now open, with a closing date of **15 January 2027**. Early applications are encouraged to secure first preferences.

Reflections

The past year has also been one of significant achievement. Across our SDLT family of schools, staff have continued to deliver excellent outcomes for our learners, while expanding opportunities beyond the classroom. From academic success and strong personal development programmes to wider enrichment, wellbeing initiatives and community partnerships, there is much to feel proud of.

These achievements are a testament to the dedication, expertise and commitment of our staff teams, trustees, governors and partners, and I extend my sincere thanks to each of them.

Trust Focus for the Year Ahead

Looking forward, we are excited to further develop Performing Arts opportunities across the Trust.

Through our growing local partnerships and the expansion of our scholarship programme at Ratton, we aim to provide even greater opportunities for all our Trust learners to develop their talents, build confidence, and experience the transformative power of creativity and performance. By strengthening this strand of our Trust offer, we will create more opportunities for our young people to flourish both within and beyond the classroom.

As we set our direction for the year ahead, our commitment to **inclusion** remains unwavering. We will continue to focus on ensuring that every child, regardless of background or need, can access the support, opportunities and experiences required to succeed. Alongside this, sustainability will remain a key priority as we seek to make responsible decisions that benefit both our communities and future generations.

Working with SDLT

To learn more about our South Downs Learning Trust (SDLT), our family of schools, valued partners and the work we do to support children and young people across our communities, please visit our Trust website (**www.sdlt.org.uk**). You can also find out more about opportunities to get involved through governance, collaboration, volunteering and community projects as we continue to strengthen our collective impact through partnership.

And finally…

Thank you for your continued support of SDLT. Together, through partnership, ambition and a shared commitment to our children and young people, we look forward to another successful year ahead.

With my very best wishes,

Paul Murphy
Executive Headteacher