

Thu 5th March 2026

Dear Colleagues,

Castle Head's Dining Room Makeover

Castle Head's dining room furniture has been in dire need of replacement, with tables and chairs having been donated by Kindrogan and dating back to 2005. Despite annual washing, the stains on the chairs were permanent and the tables were bowed like a banana. Quotes to replace the lot were coming in at £9,000 for a dining room which sits 90 people.

So Castle Head's creative and talented Hospitality and Catering team took it upon themselves to re-upholster every single chair with a waterproof, wipeable fabric for the much smaller price of £500 and some sewing-machine craftsmanship. Chair legs were re-painted, and new tables have been donated by a local organisation. Their dining room now looks smart, polished and modern. They are rightly proud of their cost saving and creative skills. Well done!



Child Poverty Strategy

Earlier this week we responded to a call for evidence for a Select Committee Inquiry into the recently published government strategy. The inquiry wants to explore whether the strategy is ambitious enough and what other policies and initiatives could strengthen the outcomes.

As you might expect, our response focused on how nature connected outdoor learning has a positive impact on so many of the entrenched issues outlined in the strategy. Ensuring that it's available to all, not just those that can afford it, or via the piecemeal government funded schemes would make a real difference to poverty of opportunity, experience and aspiration. Some heartfelt quotes from some of our disadvantaged learners thanks to a recent case study by Amersham's ETL Jenny Lewis were included to bring our submission to life.

Staff Benefits Reminder

In my recent visits to centres, the issue of staff benefits came up so this is a timely opportunity to remind staff of the schemes that were put in to replace Westfield. I fully acknowledge that it's not as comprehensive, but staff have access to the following:

- Help@hand via Unum it is available to us as part of our current Group Life Insurance Policy at no additional cost. You will have received an email from [help-at-](#)

hand@squarehealth.com back in early December containing a link via which you will be able to register and log-in. Please see the attached helpful Unum log-in guidance produced by the HR team. If you have deleted it, please do get in touch with hr@field-studies-council.org.

- The 24-hour Counselling Helpline Service remains available to you via DAS. To access it call 0117 934 0105 and quote 'Field Studies Council'. For further information please see the poster attached.
- Your employment with Field Studies Council will also allow you access to a range of discounts, money-saving deals and vouchers via www.charityworkerdiscounts.com. As a charity worker you can sign up through their website and become a member for free.
- We continue to pay for eye tests for those who will meet the eligibility criteria.

Special Mention

Congratulations to Castle Head staff who have been demonstrating their commitment to the new [Transport and Carbon Reduction Policy](#). The cycle-miles totals are in: Castle Head staff travelled a truly impressive 2,726 miles to work by bike in 2025! Their nomination for special mention stated that *"this often involves arriving at work in a sweaty mess or a rain-soaked funk or being a mud-splattered gibbering wreck after dodging the traffic around Grange-over-Sands. We love doing something tangible towards addressing the climate crisis and encourage all staff to consider how to improve their personal travelling habits. (Mudguards are a great investment!)"*

Welcome to Field Studies Council

New starters this week:

Mary Willis has joined the team at Blencathra as Lead Housekeeper

Marcus Smedley has joined the team at Flatford Mill as Seasonal Tutor

Andrii Srebniuk has joined the team at Millport as Casual Hospitality & Catering Assistant and Casual Maintenance & Estate Assistant.

Also this week:

Alyssa Osben has been promoted to the role of Tutor at Juniper Hall

Best regards

Mark