

# STORT VALLEY SCHOOLS TRUST

NEW YEAR 2026

## A Bridge of Hope at Christmas

At Christmas, we are reminded that Jesus is the greatest gift of all. Yet for many families, hearing that message can feel painfully distant when daily pressures, financial strain, and uncertainty leave little room for celebration. This is why practical love, offered generously and without judgment, matters so deeply.

This year, Stort Valley Schools Trust had the absolute privilege of acting as a bridge between one of our schools, Birchwood High School, and the Salvation Army's incredible Christmas support project for local families. The Salvation Army's long-standing commitment to serving those who are struggling — particularly at Christmas — is a powerful expression of faith in action, and we were humbled to be invited into this work. Staff from Birchwood High School and the Trust recently visited the local Salvation Army to collect the gifts and food parcels that had been lovingly prepared for families in our community. Every parcel told a story of care. Every family member had been thoughtfully considered. From food essentials to beautifully chosen, brand-new toys, the generosity on display was simply overwhelming.

What struck us most was not just the scale of the giving, but the heart behind it. Local communities and churches had come together to donate with such abundance that we were able to take additional gifts for our families, we loaded 2 cars full, ensuring that what they received was not just sufficient but truly generous. It was a tangible reminder that love multiplies when a community chooses to act together. That's a lot of families blessed.



For the school, this experience was deeply moving. To see families supported with dignity and compassion, and to witness the love of God expressed so practically, was a profound blessing. At a time of year when joy can feel elusive for some, these gifts represent hope, kindness, and the reassurance that they are not forgotten.

At Stort Valley Schools Trust, it was our honour to serve as a conduit for this work — connecting an incredible Salvation Army initiative with the real needs of our school community. We are immensely grateful to everyone involved for their generosity, their faithfulness, and their commitment to loving others well, in Jesus' name.

Looking ahead, we are excited about the possibility of building on this partnership. Next year, we hope not only to be involved again, but to go bigger, to reach further, and to support even more families across our community. Because when we come together — schools, churches, charities, and communities — we become a living picture of hope in Jesus. And that, at Christmas, is a gift beyond measure.

*"We cannot thank Rachael and everyone at The Salvation Army enough for their generosity shown to our families. We were overwhelmed by the amount of gifts and food provided and we know it will be greatly received by all. Thank you also to Kt for organising this for us, we are grateful that you included us in your thoughts".*

G Wilsmore (Safeguarding and Student Welfare Lead)

**Please Pray:**

- That these precious families will sense and know some extra hope this Christmas season
- For the incredible community work of our friends at the Salvation Army, and for more opportunities to serve alongside each other
- For all those secondary schools in our areas, the students, staff, and whole school community, that they would know rest, peace, hope, and joy over the Christmas holidays.