



Season's Greetings!

As this term draws to a close and we look forward to a restful Christmas break, it is a delight to reflect on another successful year for Alec Hunter. This issue of the *Herald* is packed with stories of achievement, of endeavour and of our youngsters enjoying wonderful experiences that will live long in their memories.

The term began with **217 new students joining Year 7** and if, as a parent or carer, you are new to the Alec Hunter community, may I extend a warm welcome and hope that your child has had a fabulous start to their AHA journey. All the evidence suggests that they are a lovely year group who are already demonstrating just the qualities that we seek to promote in our school.

Of course, we were also celebrating a record-breaking performance from our Year 11 leavers. Their **-0.1 Progress 8** score was a new high for the school and with **70% gaining a Grade 4 or better in both English and Maths (45% Grade 5 or better)**, they exceeded previous bests in these measures too, if we exclude the post-Covid years when grade boundaries were relaxed. It really was an outstanding effort and placed Alec Hunter firmly in the top 2 places of all local schools across every performance category. Our Presentation Evening in November (details below) was a joyous event as always and it gave us the chance to recognise their individual and collective achievements.

With so many cultural, sporting and academic events taking place in recent months, it seems almost unfair to highlight one in particular, but the Year 9 Music Project with Afrik Bawantu, made possible through the generous support of Saffron Hall, was such a unique opportunity that it deserves a special mention. Seeing our young people grow in confidence as they worked together across the 3 days of the residency was a true pleasure and I am sure that this will be something that all those involved talk about for many years to come.

I should like to thank all our families for your support, kindness and understanding throughout 2024. We are so grateful for your commitment to working in partnership with us and I should like to wish our students, staff, parents and governors a very Merry Christmas and a happy, prosperous New Year.

Mr Lawn (Headteacher)

Diary Dates Jan-March 2025

January 2025

- 6th January – Return to school
- 13th-14th January – Year 11 GCSE Music Recording Days
- 17th January – Year 11 School Photographs
- 20th January – 3-4pm: SENCo Surgery
- 22nd January – 7pm: Jack Petchey Celebration Evening
- 23rd January – 4.30-7.30pm: Year 8 Parents' Evening

February 2025

- 5th February – Year 10 'Made in Braintree' competition (Braintree Village)
- 6th February – Year 10 Apprenticeship Information Event (Colchester Institute Braintree Campus)
- 6th February – 4.30-7.30pm: Year 9 Parents' Evening
- 12th February – 2-3pm, SENCo Surgery
- 17th – 21st February – HALF TERM**
- 27th February – 4.30-6.30pm: Year 7 Parents' Evening (HUNT)
- 28th February – Year 8 IET Faraday Challenge (SWCHS)

March 2025

- 3rd March – P1-P5 Rehearsal for School Musical
- 3rd March – 7pm: School Musical - 'Oliver! Jnr'
- 4th March – 7pm: School Musical - 'Oliver! Jnr'
- 4th March – Year 10 T&T trip to Warner Bros Studio Tour/The Making of Harry Potter
- 5th March – 7pm: School Musical - 'Oliver! Jnr'
- 3rd-7th March – Year 11 Formal Speaking Exam Week
- 6th March – 4.30-7.30pm: Year 7 Parents' Evening (ERAL)
- 10th March – 3-4pm: SENCo Surgery
- 12th March – Year 10 Made in Braintree Competition Final (Braintree Village)
- 13th March – 6pm: Iceland Trip Parent Info Evening
- 19th March – Year 8/9/10 School Photographs
- 20th March – 4.30-7.30pm: Year 10 Parents' Evening
- 21st March – 2-3pm: Y8/9 SEND Family Forum
- 26th March – Year 9 Diphtheria, Tetanus & Polio and Meningitis vaccinations
- 28th March – Year 9 Diphtheria, Tetanus & Polio and Meningitis vaccinations

Arsenal FC Academy

On 14th October, our Year 10 Sports & Coaching Principles students visited Hale End Training Facility, the home of Arsenal FC Academy. The trip gave the students the opportunity to observe coaching principles in an elite environment, take part in a Q&A with the club's coaches and tour the amazing facilities at the academy training ground. The students were thrilled to also meet Josh Nichols, who has recently made his first team debut at Arsenal FC and ran into Arsenal and England's Raheem Sterling who kindly posed for a photo with the group!



Tesco Stronger Starts

A big thank you to all our parents and members of the school community who voted for Alec Hunter with their 'blue chips' in the Tesco Stronger Starts scheme this year. The grant we have received has been used to purchase new equipment for students to use in their Food Preparation & Nutrition lessons. The new equipment includes mincers, pasta makers and thermostatically controlled deep fat fryers, as well as a selection of new knives including specialist filleting and boning knives to help KS4 students master this skill.



Piano Perfection

On 12th December, **Hayley Maginn** and **Sharon Varughese**, both in Year 8, completed the Beginners Book 1 of their piano journey. Sharon and Hayley have been playing since June 2024 and have one lesson a week. The course introduces students to many skills, including reading and playing melodies with both hands, playing with expression such as 'louds' and 'softs', learning how to read chords and then playing hands together. There are three beginner books altogether before the students start learning for their graded exam pieces. Well done to both of them!



'Talk The Talk' Workshop

On 1st October, Talk The Talk, in partnership with The Jack Petchey Foundation, were in school to deliver their 'Talk About Transition' workshop to a group of year 7 students. Talk The Talk's mission is to develop students' self-confidence and resilience through activities that encourage them to speak with confidence, engage their audience and step out of their comfort zones. Working within small groups, students were given a platform to share their thoughts about starting secondary school and to set themselves goals for the year ahead. They were asked to identify what they saw as the opportunities and challenges facing them, before suggesting the means to embrace and overcome them.



Netball Fixtures

On 4th December, our Year 7 team played Honeywood School. Final score 7-7.



On 11th November, our Year 8/9 team played Maltings Academy. Final score 16-5 to Alec Hunter.



On 27th November, our Year 10 team played Honeywood School. Final score 17-12 to Alec Hunter.



European Languages Poster - House Competition

Students were invited to choose a European country and design a poster to give information to visitors about what they might want to see and do there. The winners of the competition were as follows: **1st Place: David Ciobanu 8E (Attenborough House)**, **2nd Place: Oscar Watson 7L (Hawking House)**, **3rd Place: Poppy Twin 9L (Hawking House)**. Each entrant and all winners will be awarded points for their House.



Student Absence: Please remember to report any student absence via:
Tel: 01376 559356 / Text: 07598 393348 / Email: jjackson@alechunter.com.

Headteacher's Surgery: Mr Lawn will be available from 3:30-4:30pm every Thursday to meet with parents and discuss any issues they may wish to raise. No appointment is required, as parents will be seen in the order they arrive, but if you wish to book a specific time, please contact the school office.

Contact Details: Please remember to contact us via Admin@alechunter.com if you change your telephone number or email address to ensure your contact details are kept up to date.

Afrik Bawantu Music Project

In November, a group of Year 9 students took part in a music workshop with the Afrik Bawantu band. Students worked off timetable for 3 days to create new music with the band and then performed this music to parents and carers on stage at an evening performance. The Afrik Bawantu band, which is led by Afla Sackey, consists of five musicians. Afla is a percussionist, singer and composer; he is originally from Ghana and has lived in London for many years. The music he makes combines the traditional rhythms of Africa with influences from jazz, funk and other styles. The band have performed at concerts and festivals all over the world, including sets at Glastonbury.



Pumpkin Carving Contest

October saw the launch of the House Pumpkin Carving Competition. We received entries across all year groups and each Head of House picked their favourite to go head-to-head in the final. We asked our Facebook community to vote for the pumpkin they preferred, and the winner was **Maisie Cooper** who won 100 House points for **Attenborough House**. Congratulations to all the finalists who also win points for their respective Houses: 2nd Place **Indiana Vota (Gandhi House)**; 3rd Place **Elliott Whittaker (Curie House)** and 4th Place **Finley Quarrie-Daly (Hawking House)**.

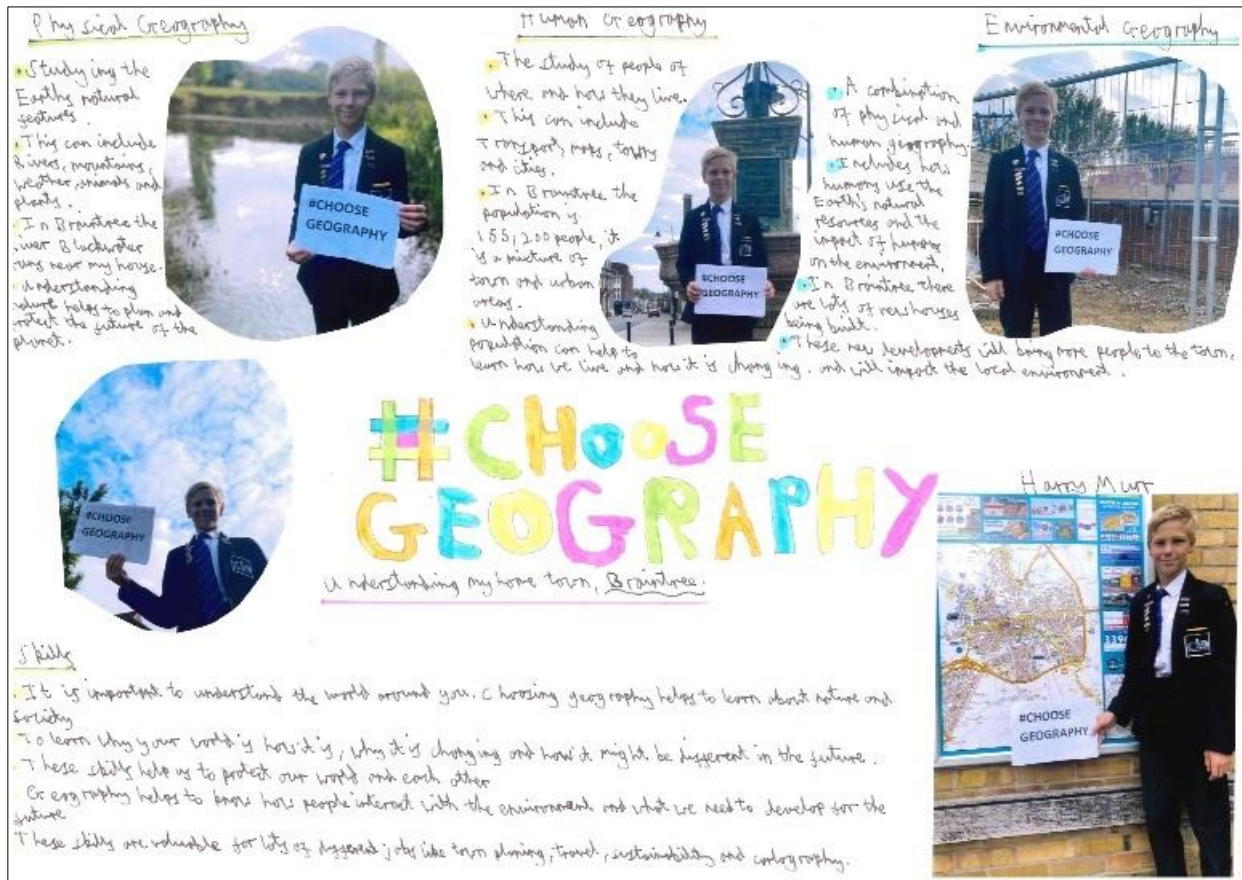


(Above, 1st Place. Below 2nd Place. Bottom left, 3rd Place. Bottom right, 4th Place)



Young Geographer of the Year Poster Competition

Students were invited to design a poster for the Young Geographer of the Year Competition 2024 and win House Points for their efforts. Our winners were: Year 7 - **Darcie Webster (Attenborough House)**; Year 8 - **Havilah Abraham (Ghandi House)**; Year 9 - **Chloe Phillips (Curie House)**; Overall winner (below) - **Harry Murr (Hawking House)**



Year 7 Textiles work

Students in the 7ER3 Technology class have been working on some beautiful wall hangings in their Textiles class this term. The students designed the wall hangings to reflect their chosen country.



Remembrance Day

Four Year 10 students were chosen to represent the school at the Western Front Association (WFA) Commemoration Event at the Cenotaph in London on Monday 11th November. Here they describe their experience:

'I was extremely grateful to represent my school on Remembrance Day at the Cenotaph and thought the service was a heartfelt remembrance of those who served in the Great War. It's hard to comprehend the atmosphere of that day but it was breathtaking with the bagpipes playing and the speeches given to remember the soldiers who fought for the life we have today.'

Emma Collier, 10U

'My favourite part of the day was the walk to the Cenotaph and seeing all the people wearing their medals with pride, I couldn't believe it when the public were all crowded round the barriers and watching the service that I was a part of!'

Olivia Green, 10T

'Visiting the Cenotaph was amazing and exciting especially as it was my first time being there. When we walked to the parade, I felt a sense of importance and I felt honoured to be able to be a part of it.'

Mercy Adesina, 10T

'I enjoyed the trip, and I was happy I could pay my respects at the Cenotaph. I enjoyed seeing all the tradition that goes into the Remembrance event.'

Stanley Croft, 10A

On Sunday 10th November our two Year 11 Senior Student Leaders, Adanna Ewunonu and Tim Garnett, joined Mr Pennington to attend the Royal British Legion Remembrance Service at Braintree & Bocking Public Gardens. The school was honoured to lay a wreath at the war memorial as part of the ceremony, in honour of all those who have given their lives in conflict.



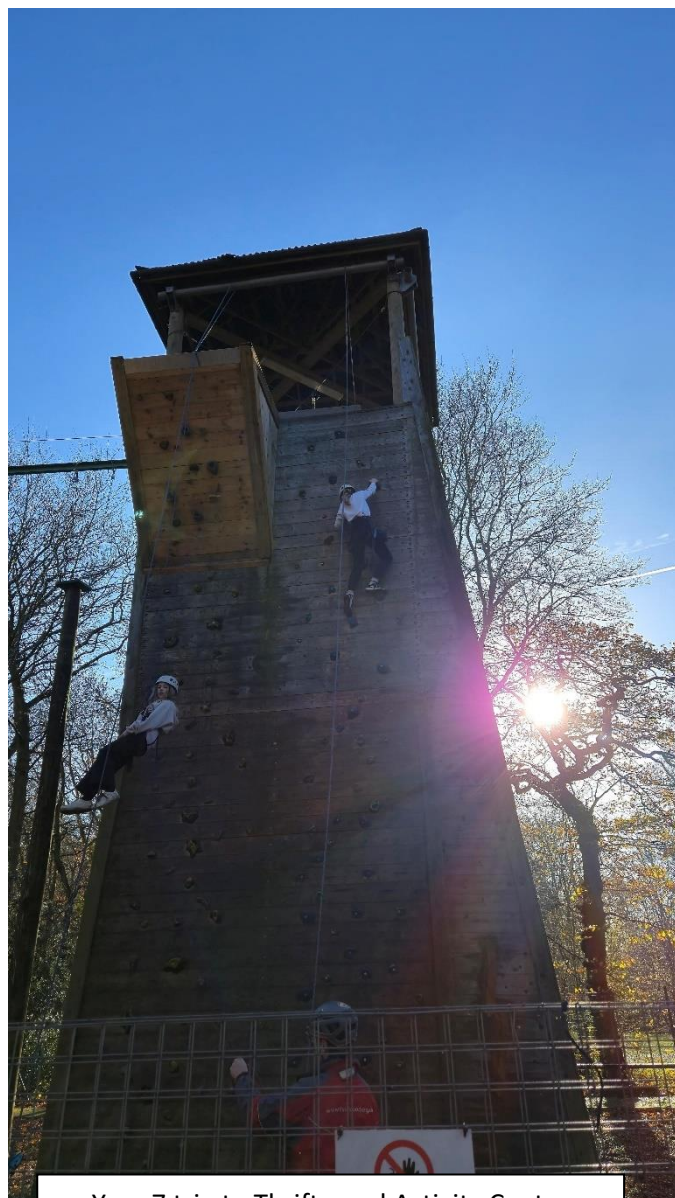
Ski Trip 2024

Back in February, forty students and staff travelled to Trevisio, Italy to spend 5 days skiing. Trevisio, is an ideal setting for beginner and intermediate level skiers and since the resort has several nursery slopes, students were able to make rapid progress regardless of their starting point. Students met with local ski instructors and participated in a brilliant après-ski programme in the evenings, including a trip to a local pizzeria and an alpine rollercoaster.



Skills Day – November

On 29th November, it was Skills Day, and each year group was involved in exciting activities that took place outside our normal curriculum. **Year 7** students travelled to **Thriftwood Activity Centre** in Brentwood for a day of team building and fun outdoor activities including axe throwing, zip lining and archery. A group of **Year 8** students visited **the Lille Christmas Markets in France**. The rest of the year group took part in workshops within school, including **Basic Lifesaving Training**, a **Gangs Awareness workshop** and a **Home Safety presentation by Essex Fire & Rescue**. **Year 9** students took part in various **Technology, Textiles and Science classes**, whilst another group of **Year 9** students travelled to the **University of Essex** to see for themselves what university life is like. They were taken on a tour of the university by student ambassadors and took part in a mini lecture about occupational therapy – as well as meeting the resident university cat! **Year 10** Business students visited **Colchester Zoo** to experience real world business and the rest of **Year 10** travelled to **Silverstone race track** to take part in a **STEM workshop** and visit the museum. **Year 11** Art students travelled to London to visit **Tate Britain**, with the rest of the year group taking part in either an **Apprenticeship Event** or the **Jack Petchey Speak Out** competition.



Year 7 trip to Thriftwood Activity Centre





Year 8 training in Basic Lifesaving, a Gangs Awareness workshop and Home Safety presentation by Essex Fire & Safety



Year 9 Technology, Food, Textile and Science classes

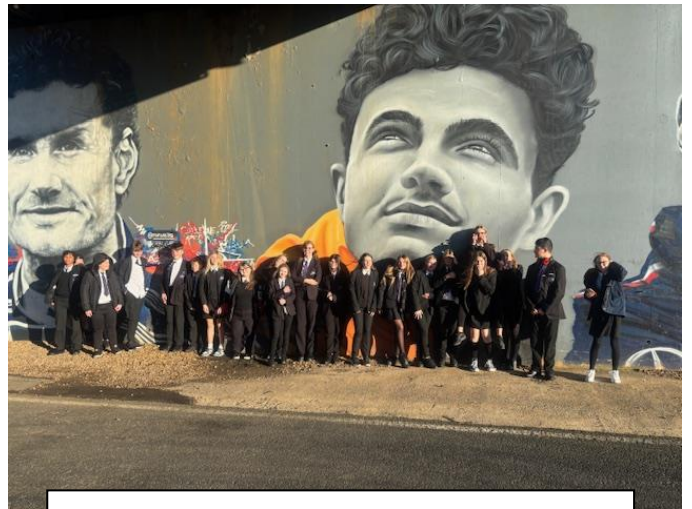




Year 9 Technology, Food, Textile and Science classes



Year 9 trip to University of Essex



Year 10 trip to Silverstone



Year 11 Apprenticeship workshop





Year 11 Art trip to Tate Britain



Presentation Evening 2024

On Thursday 21st November, we celebrated the academic and personal achievements of last year's Year 11 students at our annual Presentation Evening. Our ex-students were able to meet up with staff and former classmates, catch up on progress since leaving the school and receive their GCSE certificates. A number of special awards were also presented, and these are sponsored by various individuals and local organisations. The awards recognise commitment to sport, academic success and outstanding contributions made by students in each subject area. We are delighted to announce our winners for 2024, as follows:

Subject Awards

English Language	Aimee Malas
English Literature	Benjamin Collier
Maths	Isabel He
Geography	Finley Brown
History	Charis Waller
RPE	Annie Gill
French	Ramsahana Ramadassou
German	Phoebe Evans
Spanish	Liam Menezes
Computer Science	Sofia Minervini
Creative IT	Barash Basharan
GCSE PE	Zoe Eldridge
PE Vocational	Jake Bunting

Combined Science	Madeleine Mackrill
Biology	Benjamin Davey
Chemistry	Hollie Heighes
Physics	Charley Marriott
Drama	Jessica Pigeon
Music	Joshua Roberts
Art	Sanija Aththanayake
Applied Engineering	Alexander Riches
Graphics	Francesca Hall
Textiles	Ace Clark
Child Development	Harmony West
Hospitality & Catering	Jessie Skelt
Food Prep & Nutrition	Ava Bell
Business & Enterprise	Emma Kohn
Travel & Tourism	Kiera Mitson

100% Attendance in Year 11

Miracle Adesina
Barash Basharan
Isobel Cochrane
Benjamin Collier
Jack Down
Francesca Hall
Ellis Hearnah
Hollie Heighes
Layla Humm
Charley Marriott
Isla Mitchell
Dylan Morgan
Vural Mustafa
Jayden Nichols
Jessica Pigeon
Daniel Pirie
Joshua Roberts
Luke Roberts
Liam Stares

100% Attendance over 5 Years

Harley Brand
Alfie Pinder

Thank you to our sponsors:

Great Bradfords FC
Laura Hardison Taylor
Mrs Lynn Jefferis, Mini First Aid
Mr Richard Hunter
McDonald's Restaurants Ltd, Braintree
Mr Simon McElrea & Family
MAG London Stansted Airport
Mr Stephen Wyatt

MINI FIRST AID



PART OF M.A.G

Presentation Evening 2024



The Alec Hunter Award
Vural Mustafa

The Andrew Hutchinson Award
Dylan Pritchard

The Lady Stark Award for
Languages
Aimee Malas

The Stephen Wyatt Humanities
College Award
Alfie Tayler

The Baldock Cup
For All-round Boys'
Achievement
Kyro Kerry-Andrews

The Lindsey Cup
For All-round Girls'
Achievement
Ava Bell

The Drummond Cup for
Outstanding Achievement in
Athletics
James Becker

The Football Cup
For Outstanding Achievement
Ciaran Grannon

The Performing Arts Award
Lucy Jenkins

The Wendy Morgan Award for
Citizenship
Freia Holmes

The Margery Cup
For Outstanding Girls' Effort
Annabelle Summers

The McElrea Cup
For Outstanding Boys' Effort
Callum Tritton

The Mollie Birmingham Award
For Services to the Community
Elizabeth Griffiths

The Lord Newton Award for
Progress from KS2
Benjamin Davey

The Gavin Leech Award
For students who show the
Greatest Acts of Kindness
Madison Farrow

The Overall Achievement
Award
Benjamin Collier

The Hardison Taylor Award
Sage Mayes

The Netball Cup
For Outstanding Achievement
Alesha Hamblion



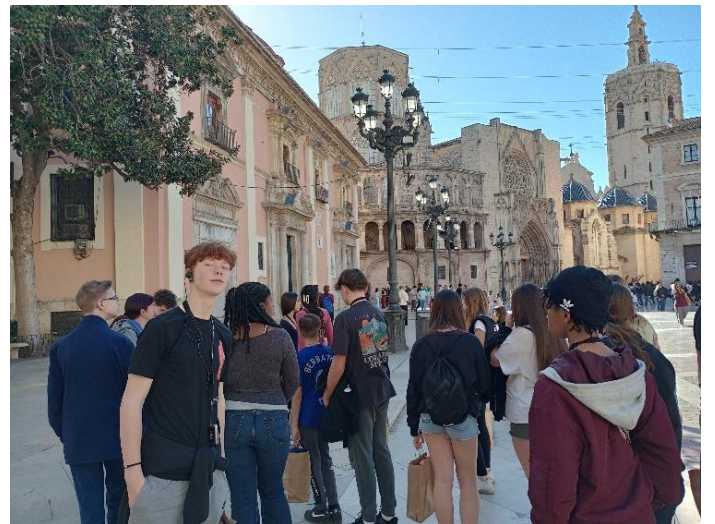
World Challenge 2024 - Malaysia

In August, a small group of Year 9 and 10 students visited Malaysia with World Challenge. The 13-night trip included a visit to Kuala Lumpur and Malacca, as well as giving the students the opportunity to contribute to a marine conservation project, learning about hawksbill turtles. The students went on night patrols, helped collect data, joined beach cleanups and built turtle hatcheries. The group were delighted to actually witness a turtle come ashore and lay her eggs one night. They then undertook a 2-day trek in the Tasik Chini wetlands – a network of freshwater lakes, plantations and jungles. Students stayed in a mixture of hostels, guesthouses and tented accommodation and experienced Malaysian markets, culture, cuisine and cheeky monkeys!



Valencia Trip

Earlier this year, a group of Year 10 and 11 students travelled to Valencia. They visited various historical sites including La Lonja de la Seda (The Silk Exchange), the Oceanographic Aquarium and the Science Museum; as well as taking part in a workshop learning to cook paella. The trip gave students a chance to experience a different culture and the opportunity to use their language skills whilst eating, shopping and sightseeing around town.



For more photographs of school events and trip , please visit our [Gallery](#) page on the [website](#).

LINE MANAGEMENT FROM SEPTEMBER 2024

Please find below our line management arrangements for students. The first point of contact for enquiries should be your child's tutor and then their Student Support Leader or Head of Year depending on the nature of your query.

YEAR 7	YEAR 8	YEAR 9	YEAR 10	YEAR 11
Attendance / Wellbeing / Behaviour / Safeguarding				
Form Tutor				
Mr Cleevely Student Support Leader	Mrs Willing Student Support Leader	Mrs Weaver Student Support Leader	Ms Swindale Student Support Leaders	Mrs Johnson/ Mrs Porter (Wed) Student Support Leader
Mr Booth (Assistant Headteacher) - Designated Safeguarding & Mental Health Lead Mrs Harold (Deputy Headteacher) - Deputy Safeguarding Lead				
Learning / Behaviour / Academic Progress / Standards				
Class Teacher				
Head of Curriculum Area *(see below)				
Mr Moreno Head of Year 7	Mr Lee Head of Year 8	Mr Spooner Head of Year 9	Miss Jones / Miss McKinnon (Fri) Head of Year 10	Mr Holland Head of Year 11
Mrs Steward (Associate Assistant Headteacher) Behaviour & Progress	Mr M Doolan (Assistant Headteacher) Behaviour & Progress			Mr Birley (Deputy Headteacher) Behaviour & Progress
Mrs Gillett			SENCO	
Mrs Jackson / Miss Greenway			Attendance Officers	

*** Should you have a subject-related query, for example, regarding homework etc., the first point of contact should be the class teacher. Listed below are the Heads of each Curriculum Area, along with the member of the Leadership Group responsible for each Curriculum Area, to help parents in knowing who to approach for assistance.**

	Head of Subject/Curriculum Area	Senior Leader
English	Mrs Schunmann	Mrs Harold
Mathematics	Mrs Baird	Mrs Harold
Science	Mr Fernandez	Mr Birley
Geography	Mrs Hughes	Ms Woolnough
History	Miss Depper	Mrs Harold
Religion, Philosophy & Ethics	Mr David	Ms Woolnough
Technology/Child Development	Mr Todd	Ms Woolnough
French/German/Spanish	Mrs Peralta Jimenez	Mrs Steward
Vocational Education/Computer Science/ICT	Miss Judson	Mr Jones
Physical Education	Mr Edwards	Ms Woolnough
Performing Arts	Mrs Green	Mr Birley
Art	Mrs De Kadar	Mrs Harold
Special Educational Needs	Mrs Gillett	Mr Birley
Learning for Life	Mrs Hewes	Mr Booth

Academic Year 2024-2025

September 2024							October 2024							November 2024							December 2024											
M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S					
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30																										30	31					

January 2025							February 2025							March 2025							April 2025											
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May 2025							June 2025							July 2025							August 2025											
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26	27	28	29	30	31		23	24	25	26	27	28	29	28	29	30	31				25	26	27	28	29	30	31					
							30																									

= Schooldays / Weekends

= Bank Holidays

= School Holidays

= Non Pupil (INSET) Days
(There is one further date to be confirmed)

Autumn Term:	Monday 2 September 2024 – Friday 20 December 2024 <i>Half Term 21 October – 1 November</i>	70 days
Spring Term:	Monday 6 January 2025 – Friday 4 April 2025 <i>Half Term 17 February - 21 February</i>	60 days
Summer Term:	Tuesday 22 April 2025 – Tuesday 22 July 2025 <i>Half Term 26 May – 30 May, and May Bank Holiday - 5 May</i>	60 days
		<u>190 days</u>

Please note: The above dates may vary for individual schools, especially Foundation, Voluntary Aided schools and Academies. You are strongly advised to check with your child's school before making any holiday or other commitments.

10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

SAFETY OVER THE FESTIVE SEASON

The holiday season, marked by Christmas and New Year, brings joy and togetherness but also presents unique safety challenges for children, families and educators. From busy holiday shopping, traveling and family gatherings to managing digital activity during school breaks, staying safe during this period requires heightened awareness. This guide offers practical tips to help families and educators maintain a more secure and fulfilling festive period.

1 MONITOR DIGITAL ACTIVITY

Children spend more time online during school holidays, increasing exposure to potential dangers such as cyberbullying, inappropriate content and online predators. Balancing screen time, avoiding harmful websites and ensuring children engage positively online can be difficult without proper monitoring tools. Set clear boundaries, encourage open discussions about online safety and use parental controls to manage content exposure and screen time effectively. Regular check-ins and positive reinforcement around digital habits encourage safe online behaviour.

2 PRACTICE FIRE SAFETY PROTOCOLS

The incidence of house fires increases during Christmas due to greater use of candles, cookers and electrical decorations. Open flames, electrical overloads and the need for quick response plans can make fire safety challenging. Ensure smoke detectors are operational, keep fire extinguishers on hand and teach children how to respond in case of a fire emergency. Avoid leaving cooking unattended and use fire-safe candles to prevent mishaps.

3 CREATE TRAVEL SAFETY PLANS

More families tend to travel during the holidays, resulting in busier roads, increased traffic accidents and weather-related hazards. Weather conditions, road rage, fatigue and busy airports can all compromise travel safety. Pack emergency kits and adhere to seatbelt laws. Plan routes in advance and allow extra travel time to avoid rushing and mitigate risks on busy roads.

4 BEWARE OF ALLERGIES

Holiday meals often involve many foods that may contain allergens. Cross contamination, unclear labelling and lack of allergy-friendly options can lead to severe reactions. Communicate any allergy needs to hosts, provide safe food alternatives and carry necessary medications like antihistamines or EpiPens. Teaching children how to advocate for themselves and recognise dangerous foods also contributes to safer celebrations.

5 PREVENT THE SPREAD OF ILLNESS

Cold weather and seasonal socialising can increase the spread of viruses like flu and COVID-19. Crowded gatherings, schools out of session and frequent travel can lead to higher infection risks. Emphasise hygiene, encourage vaccination, disinfect surfaces and isolate symptomatic individuals. Communication with children about proper hygiene practices is essential to reduce the spread of illness.

6 STAY VIGILANT ON THE ROAD

Increased holiday traffic heightens the risk of accidents for both drivers and pedestrians. Distracted driving, pedestrian safety and inclement weather can complicate road safety. Encourage pedestrian safety practices, avoid distracted driving and never drive under the influence.

7 MAINTAIN SAFE DECORATIONS

Festive decorations such as Christmas lights and candles can pose electrical, fire and choking hazards if mishandled. Frayed wires, toppling Christmas trees, small ornaments and open flames can be difficult to control, especially in busy households with children. Inspect and maintain decorations, secure Christmas trees, place fragile or small items out of reach and ensure candles are never left unattended. Testing smoke alarms and using flame-retardant decorations can significantly reduce risks.

8 SET BOUNDARIES FOR GIFTS

Some toys and gadgets can present choking, sharp-edge or safety risks, particularly for young children. Ensuring that gifts meet safety standards and are age appropriate can be complex with so many options available. Inspect all toys carefully and ensure any tech devices have parental controls. Setting expectations around safe gift use and discarding packaging that poses a risk also helps to prevent accidents.

9 ADDRESS STRESS & FATIGUE

Holiday pressures can lead to burnout, which affects both physical and mental health. Overpacked schedules and a lack of downtime can cause stress and fatigue, leading to accidents or poor decision making. Incorporate rest, maintain regular routines and seek support to reduce stress. Encourage activities that promote relaxation to create a healthier, happier holiday experience for everyone.

10 DRINK RESPONSIBLY

Alcohol is commonly present at holiday events, raising concerns about safety and supervision. Excessive alcohol consumption can lead to accidents, impaired judgment and lack of supervision for children. Designate responsible adults, limit consumption and provide transportation alternatives for guests. Teaching moderation and modelling responsible behaviour in front of children ensures that celebrations remain positive and secure.

Meet Our Expert

James Whelan is a chartered health and safety consultant with 10 years of experience in promoting family and community safety. Specialising in risk assessment and preventative strategies, he has worked with educational institutions, public health agencies and community groups to deliver safety education and training.



The National College

Source: See full reference list on guide page at: <https://nationalcollege.com/guides/safety-over-the-festive-season>

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10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

CREATING FAMILY RULES FOR USING DEVICES

A set of family rules agreed on with children can promote the safe, responsible use of devices like tablets, smartphones, gaming consoles and computers. By developing rules around technology, it opens the conversation regarding boundaries and expectations, ensuring a healthy balance of screen time. This guide will help you to develop an age-appropriate family agreement to suit your household.

1 WORK TOGETHER

Collaborating with children when setting rules around the use of technology is a valuable task that can encourage them to take more ownership. It's important to make rules which reflect your family and are age appropriate. Think about what you all enjoy doing online and what apps, games or devices children use most frequently.

2 AGREE TIME LIMITS AND SUITABLE TIMES

Be realistic when setting screen time limits. These can vary depending on the child's age, whether it's a weekday or weekend, and what they're actually doing online. If they're conducting research for homework, that might require more time than if they were playing games. Consider when screen time begins: does it come after chores and homework? Agree times when technology and phones must be put away.

3 ENCOURAGE HONESTY

Family rules ensure that everyone can have fun with their devices and be safe while doing so. Nonetheless, children may make mistakes as they learn to navigate the online world. Emphasise that if they ever feel worried, unsafe or upset about something they've done, sent, said or received, they should tell you immediately so you can help them resolve the problem.

4 CHARGING AND OVERNIGHT STORAGE

To ensure children get the downtime they need overnight, it's important that devices – especially smartphones – are kept in a common space, where possible. This reduces the chance of pointless late-night scrolling or sleep being disturbed by calls, messages or notifications. There are charging boxes you can purchase, or all gadgets could be charged in the kitchen overnight to avoid distractions.

5 REVIEW RULES REGULARLY

Anything you agree on isn't set in stone. These rules will likely alter as children get older and the way they use technology changes. Take time to review these as a family, discuss what's working, and what isn't. Communication is key – so by doing this, you involve the child in their own online safety while promoting an open dialogue.

6 PROTECT PERSONAL INFO

Discuss and demonstrate the importance of protecting your personal information. Talk about what details you share online and who with. Use parental controls to block children from connecting with strangers, so that any information they do share is among their real friends. Ask a child's permission before posting any photos of them on social media, as this demonstrates positive online behaviour that they should learn and remember.

7 BE RESPECTFUL

Highlight the importance of showing respect to others when using technology. Encourage children to speak kindly to others online – such as on social media, when playing multiplayer games or in group chats (which can often lend themselves to teasing behaviour). Explain that if they aren't treating others considerately, they might be made to stay away from their devices for a while.

8 "NO TECH" ZONES

Designating spaces in the house where technology isn't allowed (for example: bedrooms, bathrooms and at the dinner table) lets you keep an eye on what children are viewing and who they're communicating with. It gives you some quality, screen-free time with them, too. It also helps reduce any impulses to potentially engage with inappropriate content, as they're unlikely to do so in a common space within the home.

9 AGREE ON CONSEQUENCES

As a family, discuss why the rules are important: to balance their screen time, to ensure everyone enjoys gaming or interacting online, and that they are safe when doing so. Therefore, if these rules are broken, there has to be a consequence. Discuss what would be fair for certain breaches of the rules, as this can prevent a disproportionate response in the future.

10 KNOW ALL PASSWORDS

To protect children from inappropriate content, parents should have access to all passwords. Parents should also make it clear that they will check children's devices, should they have any concerns about their use. Emphasise that this isn't due to a lack of trust but is an extra way of keeping them safe.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant at BCyberAware. She has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety workshops and policies for schools in Australia and the UK. Claire has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government comparing internet use and sexting behaviours of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.



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Better Housing Better Health

The Warmth & Wellbeing Service

HOME ENERGY ADVICE

Better Housing Better Health (BHBH) is a service working locally to improve your domestic warmth & wellbeing. In a preventative approach, our free helpline provides you with a single point of contact for advice and support in order to help improve the energy efficiency of your property and lower your bills.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Our team of experts can work with households to apply for grants and funding to help with your home energy. Schemes like the Warm Home Discount can take £150 off your bills and ECO Funding can replace heating systems as well as install insulation. Call us to see if you're eligible and start the process.



WE ARE HERE.

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