

## Dear Parents, Carers and Students

As we reach the end of our first half-term, it's been an exciting and productive eight weeks at William Howard School. The energy and enthusiasm shown by our students and staff have made this a very rewarding start to the academic year.

Our **Year 7** students have settled in extremely well, embracing life at William Howard with positivity and confidence. Their enthusiasm and energy shone through during their House Day – particularly in their spirited rendition of *Sweet Caroline* in the Performance Hall!

**Year 8** have also made an excellent start, continuing to demonstrate their usual high levels of energy and commitment as they embrace our Character Curriculum.

**Year 9** students are showing great focus in lessons and making both Ms Mulholland and Mrs Braithwaite very proud with their engagement in extra-curricular opportunities. There have been so many examples of Year 9 students truly 'making it happen' this half-term.

The **Year 10** team continue to be delighted with how well students have settled into their GCSE courses. As one of our brightest year groups, we continue to raise expectations of what they can achieve – and they are certainly rising to the challenge. Our work-based learners in Years 10 and 11 have also impressed during visits from Ms Sawdon, with employers providing glowing feedback about their attitude and performance.

**Year 11** have been exceptional this half-term, showing great focus, maturity, and a real hunger to improve. They made a fantastic impression on our visitors during the IAG morning and were an absolute credit to themselves and to the school. We wish them every success as they prepare for their first set of mock exams after the break. A special thank you goes to Ms Ledger and Mr Priddle for hosting the parental webinar, which has helped both students and parents approach the upcoming exams with confidence.

Turning to our Sixth Form, **Year 12** have made an excellent transition from GCSE, settling into post-

<b>Holiday Safety</b> .....	2
<b>Tutor Evening</b> .....	2
<b>Uniform</b> .....	2
<b>Prepared to Learn</b> .....	3
<b>Get Ahead Tasks</b> .....	3
<b>Attendance</b> .....	3
<b>Friends of WHS (FoWHS)</b> .....	4
<b>Mental Health Strategy</b> .....	4
<b>Reading Strategies</b> .....	5
<b>Beyond the Classroom</b> .....	5
<b>Outward Bound Partnership</b> .....	6
<b>Year 11 Mocks, IAG and Work Experience</b> .....	6
<b>Sixth Form Update</b> .....	7
<b>A Tribute to Matty James</b> .....	7
<b>Staffing Update</b> .....	8
<b>School Calendar</b> .....	8

16 study with enthusiasm and drive. Following phenomenal results last summer, we know this is a very special year group, and it is wonderful to see them embracing the challenges of Sixth Form life.

Our **Year 13** students continue to work diligently towards their next steps, balancing academic excellence with wider experiences that will help them stand out in an increasingly competitive world.

A highlight of the term has undoubtedly been winning the **Golden Apple Award for Best Secondary School** in Cumbria. It was a proud moment for our whole community, and it has been lovely to celebrate this achievement together – a reflection of the dedication and teamwork of our students, staff, and families.



We would also like to express our thanks to the **Friends of William Howard Group**, whose ongoing support and generosity continue to make a real difference. This dedicated group of parents, carers, and community members have gone above and beyond for the school once again this term, helping us enhance opportunities and experiences for our students.

This half-term has also brought moments of reflection and remembrance. We encourage all parents and carers to take a moment to read the tribute to former student **Matty James**, who is deeply missed by all who knew him. His memory continues to be a cherished part of our school community.

Please take some time to read through the rest of this bulletin for further updates and celebrations. You can also keep up to date with all that's happening across the school on our social media channels and website.

As we head into the next half-term and the run-up to Christmas, I have no doubt it will be equally busy and rewarding. We remain committed to providing only the very best for our students.

I wish you and your families a restful, enjoyable, and memorable half-term break.

Best Wishes



**Kath Pigdon, Headteacher**

## Holiday Safety

We appreciate that half-term comes as a welcome break for students and staff, as well as being a valuable time for us all to spend with our families and friends. As we move deeper into October, we have well and truly said goodbye to the early sunrises and late sunsets! Over the half term holiday, we want to ensure that all of our students stay healthy and well which means taking extra care in the evenings, especially for those who take part in the Halloween festivities. To highlight a few key areas that have been raised by the local community, we would like everyone to think about politeness, kindness and respect for others and ourselves. Please make sure that if your child is out during the Halloween weekend that they are polite and respectful, not only to the people whose front

doors they knock on, but also their property and gardens along the way!

We have had a number of local residents commenting to us about the lack of bike lights and high visibility clothing used by young people whilst on their bikes in the darker evenings. If your child uses a bike (which is a great way to stay fit and healthy), please ensure that they have lights that work.

## Tutor Evening



We are very much looking forward to our forthcoming Tutor Evening on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> November (3.30-6.30pm) - an important opportunity for tutors, students, and parents to come together. Tutors will be reflecting on the progress and achievements of students during the first half-term, as well as planning how to make the most of the next half-term to support learning, engagement and personal development.

Parental engagement plays a crucial role in student success, and we value the opportunity to work closely with families to ensure every student reaches their potential. We encourage all parents to attend, share their insights, and continue to partner with us in supporting their child's education.

## Uniform

The vast majority of students continue to wear the William Howard School uniform with pride, meeting our expectations every day. Half term provides a good opportunity to purchase new uniform where students have grown. Please ensure that trousers meet our uniform policy (leggings and jeans are not to be worn), and that footwear is black and polishable. Arriving to school in the right uniform demonstrates that students are fully part of the school and ready to learn each day.

As the colder weather arrives and students need to wear jackets to school, a reminder that once in school they will not be permitted to wear these inside. They can, however, wear a jumper and a blazer if they would like.

Thank you for your ongoing support.



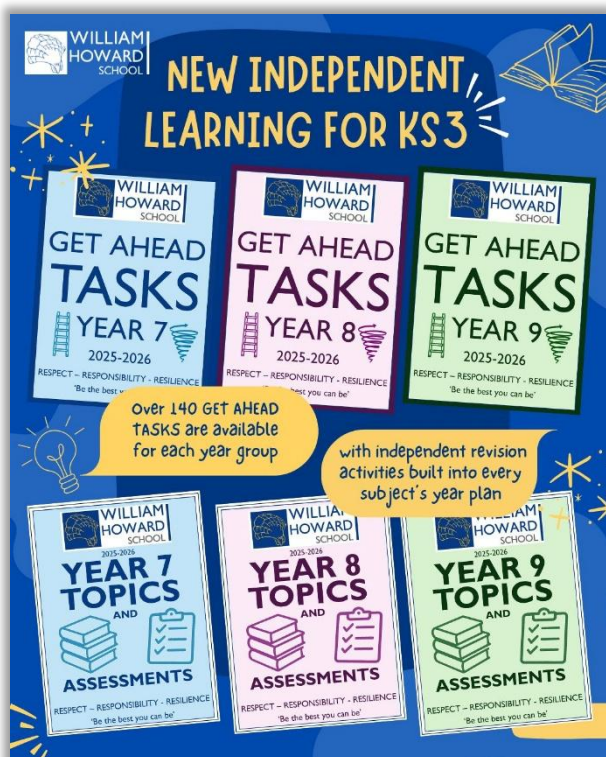
## Prepared to Learn

Every student must take responsibility for attending every lesson with the required equipment. Doing this ensures they are prepared to learn and allows them to complete all work to the best of their ability. It also means that teachers can focus on supporting students to make progress from the very start of the lesson, rather than organising students' equipment. Again, the half term break provides a good opportunity to re-stock and be ready for the coming weeks of school. A reminder of the key equipment that all students should have:

- Black pen
- Green pen
- Pencil
- Ruler
- Calculator
- Highlighter

## Get Ahead Tasks

Our students have made an exceptional start to this year's Get Ahead Tasks (GAT) programme, with hundreds already completed across subjects. These independent learning activities encourage students to extend their knowledge, develop strong study habits, and take responsibility for their progress beyond the classroom. It's fantastic to see so many students embracing the challenge and showing real enthusiasm for learning. As always, we would ask for your support in encouraging students to complete Get Ahead Tasks.



## Attendance

Thank you for your continued support in helping us improve school attendance year on year, as we work towards our target of 96% attendance. We are pleased to report that attendance is currently higher than at this point last academic year; however, we are still working hard to reach our target.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, attendance nationally has remained well below pre-pandemic levels. It is therefore important that we continue to reset the social norm within our school community and strive for a return to those higher levels of attendance. Our target of 96% equates to no more than 8 days (16 sessions) of absence across the school year - just under three sessions per half-term.

There have been encouraging signs that we can achieve this target. During our recent 'Final 10' attendance drive, we saw an increase of almost 2% compared to the same period last year. This success highlights the vital role parents and carers play in encouraging and motivating students to attend school every day, so we extend our appreciation of your continued support.

As we move into the next half-term - with darker mornings, colder weather, and the exciting run-up to Christmas - we thank you in advance for continuing to encourage your children into school. There is much to look forward to during the next term, and of course high-quality teaching and significant support will continue to take place.

Finally, we would like to thank families who avoid taking term-time holidays. Please remember that 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence may result in the school referring the matter to the local authority.

We must also address a small number of cases where families have reported illness while in fact taking a term-time holiday. Following our first day calling procedures - including daily calls and home visits - only to discover the child is away, places significant pressure on staff time and resources. We appreciate the honesty of families who maintain openness and transparency in these rare circumstances.

Thank you again for your ongoing support in helping us build a culture of strong attendance and shared responsibility.

## Friends of WHS (FoWHS)

Over 130 participants of all ages took part in the Friends of William Howard School's inaugural Colour Run, running, jogging, or walking through a vibrant, colour-filled course. With three races and multiple laps, everyone had a chance to get messy and have fun, finishing the morning with smiles and refreshments. The event has already raised over £1,000 to support school projects. Thanks to our sponsors, volunteers, and families for making this first community event such a success.



Their first fundraising goals are to:

- ♥ Update the outdoor seating area, creating a welcoming space for students to relax and socialise.
- ♥ Help create a sensory space for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), providing a calm and supportive environment for learning and wellbeing.

We're delighted that this cause has been chosen for this year's Co-op Local Community Fund. If you're a Co-op Member, you can choose FoWHS as your cause — the more members who do, the more funds we'll receive to make these projects happen! <https://membership.coop.co.uk/causes/99705> Please log in to your Co-op account and select Friends of William Howard School as your chosen cause today!

The Friends are looking for parents to join and support their fundraising efforts for the school. If you would like to get involved, please email: [friendsofwilliamhoward@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofwilliamhoward@gmail.com).

## Mental Health Strategy

With World Mental Health Day in early October, a series of assemblies delivered by the *Barnardo's Mental Health Support Team* gave students in Key Stages 3 and 4 some clarity around recognising and supporting mental health. We have been working closely with the team to strengthen our Mental Health strategy in school, moving towards a tiered system to ensure that those who need additional support will be able to access it more effectively. We look forward to the training opportunities they will be bringing to our staff in the coming half term.

In school, as ever, we focus on Resilience as a key element of our 3Rs, equipping pupils every day with the confidence and self-help strategies to be the best they can be socially, emotionally and academically. Our focus on Character, both through the Character Curriculum and the many extra-curricular and leadership opportunities in school, continues to support students to enhance their well-being and build their own resilience as they grow.

Our students are fortunate in that each year group has their own common room to give an opportunity to rebalance at break times with friends, or study areas, and there are opportunities to play games or read in the quiet corners. The school library offers an additional quiet space for those wanting to de-stress and lose themselves in a book.

Pastoral Teams continue to be an excellent source of first response where students may need additional guidance; we remind pupils and parents to use their Year Group Pastoral Team for any mental health concern in the first instance. We have a wide network of support we can access, and our pastoral teams are well placed to make referrals where this is needed. As winter draws closer there are always things that can be done to protect wellbeing: maintaining access to sunlight with walks and activities outdoors; drinking enough water in the day; getting at least 8 hours sleep at night; eating fruit and vegetables; minimising screen time; and enjoying a hobby or socialising with others. These measures remain our core foci to support young learners to have a healthy, balanced mind and body. William Howard School is a happy school, where we value mental health and support our young people to learn how to manage it well as the year presents its challenges and adventures.

## Reading Strategies

Reading at WHS is a highly prioritised aspect of students' learning and downtime. This half term, students have already made excellent use of our library with students applying enthusiastically for library passes, and our library team leading the *Bookbuzz* initiative in Year 7.



WHS students are encouraged to have a reading book as part of their school equipment. Staff-led visits to the library to support this have taken place for all students in Years 7-10.

Our Reading Lead, Mrs Mallin-Cruddace has successfully embedded library lessons at KS3 with focused reading time and lessons linked to reading. Led by English teachers, this supports both reading for pleasure and increases positive reading strategies. Students in Year 7 have enjoyed our new Reading Curriculum, where students develop their fluency and comprehension as readers, giving them skills to transfer to their wider studies where reading is an integral part of all they learn.

In addition, those students identified as struggling readers in KS3 have been recognised for intervention at Tiers 1 or 2. Our Tier 1 support operates through SEND. Tier 2 benefits from our trained student Reading Coaches in Years 10, 12 and 13 who engage our younger pupils with focused reading and comprehension in Tutor Time.

Students in KS4 identified as struggling readers are identified for support with Mrs Mallin-Cruddace who uses her Reciprocal Reading training to close gaps and strengthen pupils' reading skills. Tier 3 (all readers) continue to be supported with excellence in the classroom, where EVA (Echo reading, Vocabulary development and Active reading) underpins our staff's planning to ensure that reading is always prioritised in lessons.

We avidly look forward to our upcoming Get Cosy and Read day in December when pupils will be invited to wear Christmas pyjamas or a Christmas jumper, bring their favourite book and participate in a range of exciting reading-themed activities. As Christmas draws closer, for those seeking inspiration for gifts for our young learners, what better present could there be than the gift of a good book?

## Beyond the Classroom

One of the things that makes William Howard School very special is the extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities we offer. We are incredibly fortunate to have staff who go above and beyond to provide such a wide variety of activities for our students. From exploring the outdoors and climbing mountains, to joining the Minecraft Club, taking part in music, sport, or drama, or even trying something like crocheting, there really is something for everyone. We encourage every student to find their element – that one activity that sparks their interest and helps them grow in confidence and character. Engaging in the “extra” is where so much personal growth happens, and we would love for every student to get involved this year. Please do encourage your child to take part and make the most of these wonderful opportunities.



Our pledge to support students to learn beyond the walls of school is well underway with our exciting adventures overseas and across the UK. We have already seen our Sixth Form enjoy the cultural fiesta in the Balearics and Geography students enjoy their study in Dorset and Yorkshire for example.



We look forward to more on the horizon with students heading to Berlin in February and July with History; Italy and Holland in April with Music and PE respectively; plus Spain in July with MFL.

Students are also excited to be attending national events, for example the English A Level visit to London and a Performing Arts trip to the capital as well.

Outdoor learning continues to be valued by students of all ages opting to participate in our selection of residential outdoor learning visits; previous experiences in Wales having been such a success. Staff are already busily planning further opportunities for the following academic year, from New York to Naples. Trips and visits are only ever possible thanks to the extra commitment of our dedicated staff and we are fortunate to be able to offer such a wide range of *beyond the walls* experiences. It is important to bear in mind that the behind the scenes organisation of such trips involves financial commitments and bookings with external agencies as well as discretionary effort from staff; as such we ask that once students have applied for and been allocated a place on trips, the commitment to participate and fund the trip is maintained to enable the trip to run and ensure that future trips for WHS are possible. Let's continue to work together to build character through the world beyond the classroom and give our learners memories that will last a lifetime.

## Outward Bound Partnership

We are delighted to share that our partnership with the Outward-Bound Trust continues to go from strength to strength. Last weekend, six of our teachers took part in an Outward-Bound Teacher Taster Weekend, gaining first-hand experience of the challenges and learning that underpin the programme. This invaluable insight has deepened our understanding of how Outward-Bound activities build resilience, teamwork, and confidence in our students. We are now proud to offer four residential opportunities spanning Year 7 through to Year 12, each designed to reflect our school's core values and commitment to personal growth. Having seen how truly transformational these experiences are, we remain dedicated to expanding our partnership and ensuring even more students can benefit from the life-changing impact of Outward Bound.

## Year 11 Mocks, Careers IAG and Work Experience

Year 11 mock examinations will take place from **Monday 3rd November to Friday 14th November**. These exams provide an important opportunity for students to demonstrate their progress, identify areas for development, and prepare for the summer GCSE examinations. We wish all students the very best and encourage them to approach these assessments with focus and confidence.

	AM	PM
<b>Mon 3 Nov</b>	English Language Paper 1 (1hr 45)	Geography – Physical Environment (1hr)
<b>Tues 4 Nov</b>	GCSE RE (1hr 45) Computer Science Paper 1 (1hr 30)	Chemistry Separate (1hr 45) Chemistry Combined H/F (1hr 15)
<b>Wed 5 Nov</b>	Maths Paper 1 – non-calculator (1hr 30)	English Language Paper 2 (1hr 45)
<b>Thurs 6 Nov</b>	English Literature Paper 2 (2hr 15)	Physics Separate (1hr 45) Physics Combined H/F (1hr 15)
<b>Fri 7 Nov</b>	History – Cold War/Germany (2hr)	Maths Paper 2 – calculator (1hr 30)
<b>Mon 10 Nov</b>	History – Medicine (1hr)	Geography – Human Environment (1hr 30)
<b>Tues 11 Nov</b>	GCSE PE Paper1 (1hr 15) Music Listening & Appraising (1hr 15) Dance Appreciation (1hr 30)	Biology Separate (1hr 45) Biology Combined H/F (1hr 15)
<b>Wed 12 Nov</b>	Geography – Geography Applications (45mins)	Maths Paper 3 – calculator (1hr 30)
<b>Thurs 13 Nov</b>	D&T (2hr) Drama (1hr 45) Food (1hr 45)	Spanish Listening/ reading (Max – 1 hr 35) French Listening/ reading (Max – 1 hr 35)
<b>Fri 14 Nov</b>	GCSE PE P2(1hr 15) BTEC Sport (1hr 15) Dance NEA (3hr) Computer Science P2 (1hr 30)	Spanish Writing (Max 1 hr 15) French Writing (Max 1 hr 15)

Year 11 students recently enjoyed a successful Post-16 Careers Morning, designed to help them plan their next steps. The event featured a 'Meet the Employers' fair with organisations such as Armstrong Watson, Pirelli, Lloyd Motor Group, Cumbria Police, and the University of Cumbria, alongside sessions with colleges, training providers, the Armed Forces and NHS staff. The students showed great enthusiasm and professionalism throughout the morning, with many employers commenting on how engaged Year 11 had been.

Year 11 will undertake work experience in November and there are some fantastic placements both local, national and international.

## Sixth Form Update

As we reach the end of a busy and productive first half term, it has been fantastic to see our Sixth Form students embracing every opportunity available to them. Both Year 12 and Year 13 have made an excellent start to the academic year, showing enthusiasm, maturity, and a real commitment to their studies and wider school life.

Our Year 12 students have settled into Sixth Form exceptionally well. With support from the Sixth Form Team and subject teachers, students have made thoughtful choices to ensure they are on the right courses for success. It has also been brilliant to see such a high level of engagement in extra-curricular activities and student leadership opportunities. Many have volunteered as Sixth Form Reading Coaches; signed up to complete the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and First Aid Training; provided in-class support for younger students; and begun work experience placements - all excellent ways to develop new skills and make a positive contribution to our school community.

Our Year 13 students have also made a strong start, building on the feedback they received at the end of Year 12 to support their learning and progress. Alongside their academic work, they are continuing with their UCAS applications and apprenticeship searches, supported through Personal Development lessons and 1:1 meetings. This guidance will continue throughout the term as students work towards the January deadline. After half term, those interested in exploring apprenticeship pathways will be supported by Mr Carruthers in dedicated PD sessions focused on the search and application process.



The Student Leadership Team have been outstanding this term, playing a key role in several school events. They supported at our CET@10 Celebration Evening as comperes, performers,

musicians and greeters; helped to organise the Sixth Form Derby; and worked alongside Year 12 students at our recent Sixth Form Information Evening. Their enthusiasm and dedication embody the very best of our Sixth Form.

Looking ahead, we are excited to welcome parents and carers to our Tutor Evening for Years 12 and 13 - a valuable opportunity to discuss early progress and ask any questions. This will be followed by our Year 13 Progress Evening on Wednesday 3rd December. We also have several events to look forward to, including the Sixth Form Christmas Party on Friday 12th December at The Golden Fleece; our Celebration Evening at Carlisle Cathedral for Year 12 students on Tuesday 16th December, and a series of student-led fundraising activities across the half term.

## A Tribute to Matty James

On Monday 20<sup>th</sup> October we came together for a special tree planting ceremony in memory of Matty James a former student, a valued member of our staff team, and a much-loved part of the William Howard School community. We were honoured to be joined by members of Matty's family as we took time to reflect, remember, and celebrate his life.

We were all deeply saddened by Matty's passing. In the time since, it has become incredibly clear just how much William Howard School meant to him and how much he meant to us.

As a student, Matty was bright, hardworking, and determined. His commitment to his studies led to excellent A Level results, particularly in Geography, which helped him earn a scholarship in the United States a reflection of his dedication, intelligence, and drive both in the classroom and on the sports field.



Many will remember Matty for his exceptional talent as a hammer thrower, competing and training at an incredibly high level. His ambition to reach the very top was only curtailed by the injuries that ultimately ended that dream. Yet, even when faced with that challenge, Matty showed great resilience and positivity, channelling his love of sport and fitness into helping others.

As part of our staff team, he became a familiar and friendly presence in our fitness suite, ensuring everything ran smoothly and offering quiet words of encouragement to all who trained there. His calm confidence, kindness, and genuine interest in others made him someone everyone valued and respected.

Matty will be remembered not only for his achievements but for his warmth, generosity, and the way he made people feel seen and supported. He touched many lives in a quiet but deeply meaningful way.

The Rowan tree planted in our memorial garden stands as a lasting tribute — a symbol of growth, strength, and the enduring impact Matty had on all who knew him. He will be missed greatly by everyone at William Howard School.

In Matty's memory, donations can be made to [Every Life Matters](#) a charity dedicated to suicide prevention and mental wellbeing.

[Tribute to Matthew James, 1999 - 2025](#)

## Staffing Update

**Jackie Handley** is a new Admin Assistant, supporting with educational trips and visits administration. Given the sheer number of trips and visits we run as a school, Jackie has certainly been busy since starting WHS!

**Sadie Brunskill** has also joined the Admin Team and has made a great start supporting the school with communication aspects of the school.

**Juli Guest** has been appointed a Behaviour Coach who will work within our Engagement Team, supporting students.

**James Da Silva** joins the Computing Department as our new Computer Science Teacher. We wish him every success in his new role.

## School Calendar

Upcoming events include:

Wednesday 5 November	Tutor Evening (Ys 7-13)
Thursday 6 November	'Smashed' Theatre Production Y7 & 8
9-10 November	Y10 Practice DoE Expedition
3-14 November	Y11 Mock Exams
Friday 14 November	Children in Need
17-21 November	Scholastic Book Fair in Library
17-21 November	Y11 Work Experience
Wednesday 19 November	Y8 Progress Evening
1-5 December	Y9 Assessment Week
Wednesday 3 December	Y13 Progress Evening
4-5 December	Y11 Art & Photography Mock Exams
Friday 5 December	Get Cosy and Read Day
10/11 (TBC) December	Christmas Concert
Friday 12 December	Sixth Form Party (Golden Fleece)
Monday 15 December	Auction Assemblies (Y7, 8 & 11)
Tuesday 16 December	Presentation Evening at Carlisle Cathedral
Wednesday 17 December	Christmas Assemblies (Y7, 8 & 9)
Thursday 18 December	Auction Assemblies (Y9 & 10)
Thursday 18 December	Open Spaces Christmas Fayre
Friday 19 December	Staff Panto (during Break 2)
Friday 19 December	END OF TERM