WILLIAM HOWARD SCHOOL

HEADTEACHER'S BULLETIN

November 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you enjoyed a restful and memorable half-term break with your families.

It has been a very positive start to the academic year, with our new Year 7 students settling into school life as though they have always been part of our community. There has already been much to celebrate across the school. From individual achievements beyond the classroom to the successes of our sports teams, chess team, Open Spaces participants and, of course, the deserving recipients of our weekly Headteacher's Awards, our students continue to make us incredibly proud.

One of the most encouraging developments has been the significant increase in participation in our wider extra-curricular programme. More students than ever are attending clubs and activities, supported by a growing number of dedicated staff who willingly give their own time to provide these opportunities.



Our students have already enjoyed a range of exciting experiences, including educational visits to Spain and Italy. It has also been great to see such enthusiasm for our Outward Bound courses, which has been over-subscribed this year, leading us to add an additional week to ensure as many students as possible could benefit from this life-changing experience.



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As a school, we remain committed to engaging with our wider community. Students have taken part in visits to Vindolanda, represented the school at the Capon Tree Memorial Service and continued to impress us through the quality and creativity of their "Get Ahead Tasks". It has been a highlight seeing the range of completed tasks as students walk through the door in the morning.

We were also proud to participate in the national Show Racism the Red Card campaign, turning our common room areas red with powerful messages of acceptance, equality and how we value difference. These values lie at the heart of our school community.



Looking ahead, we will once again come together for our annual Remembrance Service, providing an opportunity for reflection and respect. We will also continue to support Children in Need and our house charities as we encourage students to contribute positively to causes that matter.

Our commitment to providing a broad and enriching education remains strong. Recently, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service delivered an important road safety session to our Sixth Form students, while our Year 11 students benefited from a successful Careers Fair which helped them consider their future pathways and aspirations.

Through our work within Cumbria Education Trust, we continue to support the ongoing improvement journey at Haydon Bridge High School. We are proud of the positive impact being made through collaboration and the strength that comes from working together as one team. It was also great to see so many colleagues from across the Trust recognised at the recent Golden Apples Awards, highlighting the strength that exists within our Trust family.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank our Friends of William Howard School for organising another fantastic Colour Run. The successful event brought our community together while raising money to support opportunities for our students.

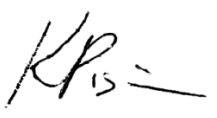


This half term, we look forward to our annual Presentation Evening at Carlisle Cathedral, where we will celebrate the achievements of our former Year 11 and Year 13 students. We hope to welcome many of them back to receive their scrolls and their Scallopian Badge, recognising their valued place within our William Howard School community.

Finally, I would like to wish all our Year 11 students the very best of luck as they sit their mock exams, along with those students taking external English and Maths examinations.

Please take the time to read the important information contained within this bulletin. I hope it provides useful guidance and clarity as we look forward to another busy and successful half term.

Yours faithfully



Ms K Pigdon, Headteacher

Behaviour and Culture

We have enjoyed a very positive first half term at William Howard School, with the vast majority of students demonstrating excellent attitudes towards their learning. Students have been focused, engaged and making valuable contributions to lessons, helping to create a calm, purposeful and positive atmosphere across the school. This reflects our school values of Respect, Responsibility and Resilience, and our shared commitment to ***The William Howard Way***.

It has been great to see students recognised across the school for their approach to school life through the weekly Headteachers Award. So far this term: *Alfie Y10, Katie Y8, Francesca Y8, Max, Henry and Caidyn Y7, Jessica Y11, Skye Y11 and Sasha Y12.*



Sixth Form student Sasha received the first Headteacher's Award of this half term

It has also been pleasing to see students arriving at school smartly presented and wearing their uniform with pride. High standards of uniform are an important part of our school culture, reflecting a readiness to learn, a sense of belonging and pride in being part of the William Howard School community. As we move into the colder months, we would like to remind parents and carers of a few key uniform expectations. Blazers are compulsory, while school jumpers are optional. We recognise that students will need coats and jackets for their journeys to and from school as the weather becomes colder; however, outdoor coats and jackets must not be worn inside the school building. We also remind families that footwear must be black, polishable school shoes.

Thank you for your continued support in maintaining our high expectations. Working together, we can ensure that students continue to take pride in their appearance, demonstrate positive attitudes and contribute to a school environment where everyone can *Be The Best They Can Be*.

Attendance: Making Every Day Count

There is plenty to celebrate in our attendance figures from the first half term. Year 7 have made a really positive start to life at William Howard School, with attendance above the national average which is excellent to see! Year 9 are also above national, and we are pleased to see strong attendance from boys particularly in Years 8 and 10. Thank you to families for helping students get into good routines and arrive ready to learn.

There is still room for improvement and attendance will continue to be a key area of focus for us and the pastoral teams, as we know just how important good attendance is to overall outcomes in our students. We are particularly keen to improve attendance among Year 10 girls and Year 11 boys. These GCSE years are an vital times, and regular attendance helps students keep up with their courses and feel more confident as exams approach. Mr O'Connor has spoken to all students about the importance of attendance and the significant impact that we know good attendance has on how well students do at school.

Our school attendance target is 96%. While 90% might sound quite high, over a full academic year it means missing around 19 school days, almost four weeks of learning. That is roughly the same amount of school time as the Easter holiday and the October and February half-term breaks combined but missed through absence on top of the school holidays. Those individual days soon add up, as can be seen in the information graphic below.

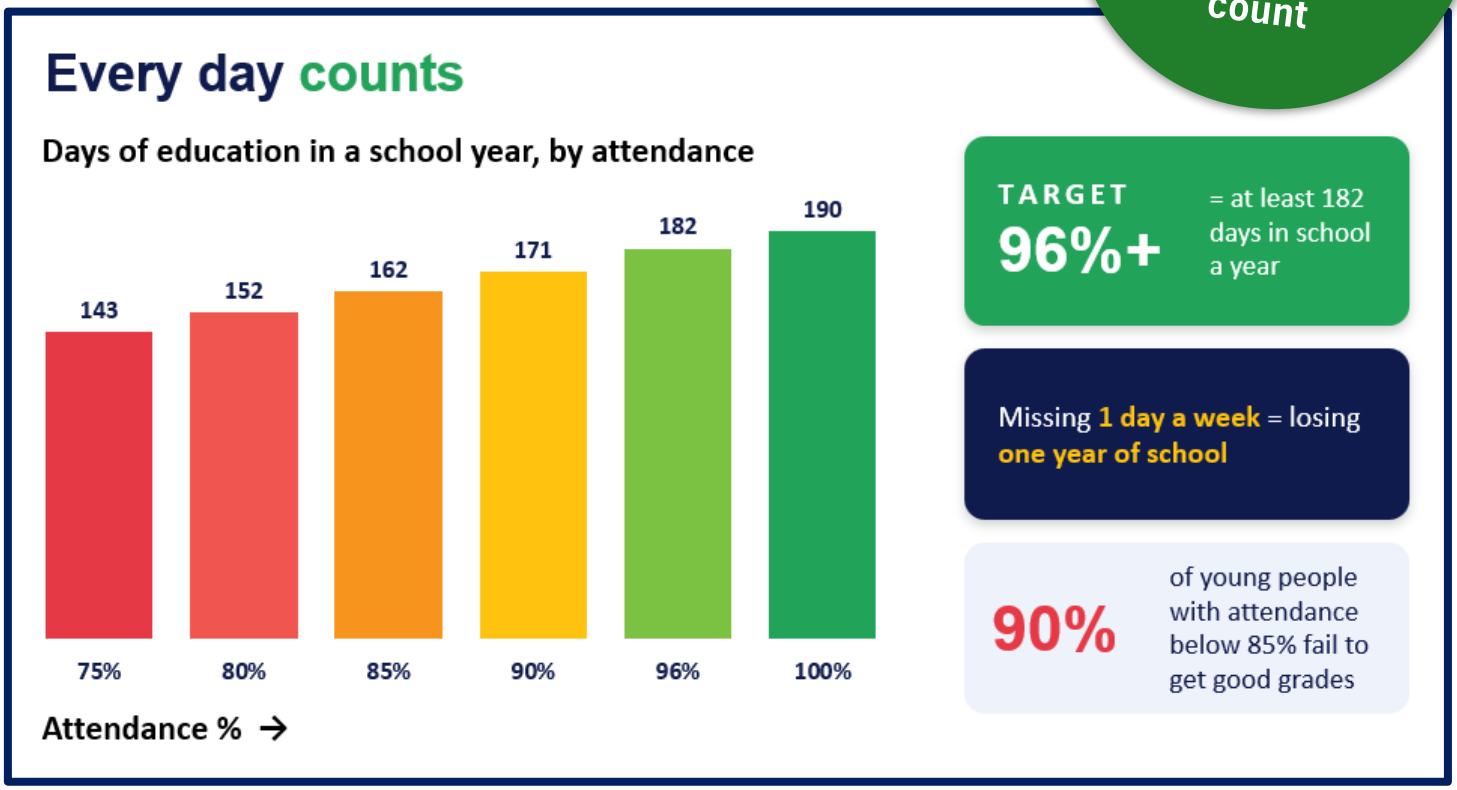
Being in school makes a difference in so many ways. Each lesson builds on previous learning, and being there means students can hear explanations, ask questions, practise new skills and get help when they need it. Even occasional days off can create gaps that make learning feel harder.

School is also about friendships, joining in and feeling that you belong. Seeing friends, taking part in activities and having trusted adults to talk to all help students feel connected and supported.



We know that illness and other challenges can sometimes make attendance difficult. If your child is struggling to come into school, please get in touch with their Year Group Team early. We want to listen, understand what is getting in the way and work with you to help.

Thank you for your continued support in making every school day count



Get Ahead Tasks

It has been a pleasure to see such fantastic examples of Get Ahead Tasks being completed by our KS3 students. There is such a range of work, which the students and staff (as well as parents and carers, I am sure) are very proud of, and the effort that has gone into completing these has been excellent.

Completing these tasks will ensure that pupils extend their learning beyond the classroom and enhance their knowledge and skills within their various subjects.



Most importantly though, completing the GATs builds up the discipline, work-ethic, research skills and independent learning habits which are essential to being successful in future years, including within life beyond school and when students move into the working-world. Whilst the individual tasks themselves do enhance learning, it is the process, effort and dedication required to complete these which leads to long-term benefits and impact.

Thank you to all our parents and carers who have supported and helped facilitate the completion of these tasks.

Reading

We continue to be proud of our strong reading culture across the school and this year we are strengthening our wider focus on Literacy.

We began the year with the NGRT assessments for our Key Stage 3 students, which delivered some excellent results. All three Year Groups are reading above the national average, with some particularly strong outcomes. We will be sharing these results with parents, carers and families at home, as we firmly believe that developing a love of reading and supporting literacy should be a collaborative effort. By working together with those who support our students, both in and outside school, we hope to further strengthen the importance of reading as a shared priority across our whole school community.

Following the analysis of our NGRT data, we have introduced our new and improved KS3 reading lessons. Every student now has a bespoke set of activities and tasks, carefully selected to target an area for development identified through their assessment results. Students will complete these activities in the library, where teachers will provide guidance and support in helping them to select books that not only capture their interests but also help to develop their reading skills and confidence. This approach allows us to provide more personalised support, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to make progress and experience success.

Alongside this, building on the success of the Year 7 Literacy Curriculum introduced last year, we have continued to develop our provision by introducing a specific focus on handwriting. This initiative has now been extended into Year 8 for a targeted group of students who we feel would benefit from further development in this area. It is already proving to be a positive experience, with both staff and students embracing the initiative with high expectations.



Ensuring that every student feels supported and has the opportunity to access the full curriculum is central to our approach. Our Reading Coaches Programme is a fantastic example of this in action, with over 40 students from KS4 and 5 signing up to take on this important leadership role. These students will play a valuable part in supporting their peers who may need additional help, guidance or encouragement with aspects of their reading. It is wonderful to see so many students taking the opportunity to make a significant difference within our school community and to improve others' outcomes.

For identified students in KS4, targeted reading support is driven by designated staff and Year Teams

who provide additional opportunities to read well and explore texts in a warm and friendly environment.

We are also continuing to expand opportunities for student leadership through the development of our Reading Council for students in Key Stages 3, 4 and 5. Students have shared their views and influenced decisions about the books they would like to see available in our library. Giving students a voice in shaping our reading provision is incredibly important to ensure that texts are relevant and engaging for all learners. We are excited to see how the Reading Council will continue to contribute to our developing reading culture.



Our library developments are also continuing to gather momentum, with student voice firmly at the heart of our plans. We are currently in the process of appointing our new Head Librarian and are looking forward to announcing our grand reopening soon, alongside a range of exciting new developments. In particular we have focussed on improving resources within the library for KS4 and 5 students. We also have our school Book Fair arriving in the next couple of weeks, giving students the opportunity to visit during every break time, browse the selection and discover some new books to enjoy.

We are also really looking forward to our upcoming 'Get Cosy and Read' Day, which will provide another exciting celebration of reading across the school. This event will build on the reading assemblies delivered to students before half term, which explored not only the many benefits of reading but also the importance of kindness, doing good and supporting others. We hope the day will encourage students to take time to enjoy a good book, share their enthusiasm for reading and reflect on how the messages and values we encounter through literature can inspire us to make a positive difference to those around us.

Teaching staff continue to ensure that quality first teaching embeds EVA to build reading and literacy for students across all key stages. EVA represents our commitment to echo reading, vocabulary teaching and active reading in the classroom.

We are incredibly proud of the enthusiasm shown by our students and staff in shaping our forward-thinking culture; we look forward to building on this momentum to drive reading and literacy forward. Through our continued focus on reading, student leadership, personalised support and collaboration with parents, carers and families at home, we aim to ensure that reading remains at the heart of our school community and that every student becomes a confident, empathetic and enthusiastic reader, ready to embrace the world.

Learning Provision Update

It has been a busy and exciting start to the year in Learning Provision! We have welcomed many Year 7 students who have made a positive transition to William Howard School and settled well into school life. We hope they feel supported, included and increasingly confident as part of our WHS community.

We are looking forward to our Nutty November Outdoor Residential, with 18 students heading to the Calvert Trust in Keswick from 25–27 November. They will take part in a range of challenging outdoor activities, with opportunities to step outside their comfort zones, build confidence and develop teamwork. We cannot wait to hear about their achievements and see plenty of pictures of their adventures.

It has also been wonderful to see so many students joining clubs, including choir, drama, sports, diamond art, mountain runners and inclusive sports - Boccia and Table Cricket. Hub Club has welcomed record numbers, with lively games of Uno proving particularly popular. At this rate, we may need a bigger space!

Following the NGRT reading assessments, our reading interventions are underway. We are committed to helping students develop the skills and confidence they need to access the curriculum, while also discovering the enjoyment that reading can bring. We are keen to make sure students have the support they need to make progress.

We are currently working through our annual reviews for all 70 EHCP students. I would like to thank parents and carers for their continued support. Working collaboratively helps us understand each child's needs, celebrate their progress and plan the support that will help them move forward.

Our Key School Priorities

A reminder of what we are focused on:

1. **BEHAVIOUR AND ATTENDANCE**
   Improving low-level disruption and PP attendance.
2. **FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING**
   Securing foundational learning and improving outcomes in the core subjects.
3. **FROM TEACHING TO LEARNING**
   Shifting the balance through whiteboard work and hard thinking.
4. **MIDDLE LEADERSHIP**
   Strengthening middle leaders to drive school improvement.
5. **CORE SUBJECT OUTCOMES**
   Improving outcomes in the core subjects through improving teaching and learning.

Parent Engagement and Respectful Relationships

At William Howard, we value the strong relationships we have built with our families and recognise that positive communication is essential in supporting our young people to thrive. While we understand that concerns can arise and emotions may at times run high, it is important that all communication remains respectful and kind. Last half term, we saw a significant increase in incidents involving unkind or disrespectful communication towards staff. Whilst such behaviour may sometimes be understandable in moments of frustration, it can never be excused. Our staff have the right to work in an environment free from abuse, and we operate a Staff Abuse Policy and reporting system to support this expectation.

As a school, we are committed to listening, responding to concerns and working collaboratively with families. We do not always get everything right, and like everyone, we are human. However, we are always willing to listen, learn and work towards a positive resolution. We encourage parents and carers to contact us by phone or email as soon as a concern arises, before it causes unnecessary worry or upset, so that facts can be established and solutions found together. Ultimately, we all share the same goal: ensuring our young people are happy, safe and successful. To achieve this, it is imperative that we continue to work together with mutual respect, understanding and kindness. Thank you for your continued support in helping us maintain the positive and respectful community of which we are all proud to be a part.

It was encouraging to see so many parents and carers attend our recent Year Group Step-Up Evenings. We are committed to working in partnership with families and have set an ambitious target of achieving at least 85% attendance at parents' evenings and key parental engagement events throughout the year. We also look forward to hearing the views of our families when our annual parent survey is launched later this year. We hope many parents will attend the forthcoming Tutor Evening, which will provide an opportunity to discuss how your child has settled into the academic year and reflect on their progress during the first half term. Research consistently highlights the strong link between parental engagement and student success, with students achieving better outcomes when schools and families work closely together. If there is anything we can do to support your attendance at school events or strengthen your engagement with school life, please do not hesitate to contact your child's Director of Learning. By continuing to work together, we can ensure every young person is supported to be happy, successful and thrive both academically and personally.

Support Our Friends of WHS

We are so fortunate to have the support of the Friends of William Howard School, who organise monthly bake sales, cater for weekend sporting events and run our fantastic annual Colour Run.

Could you lend a hand? Whether you enjoy baking cakes, can volunteer at an event or would like to join the committee, the team would love to hear from you. Every contribution makes a difference!



The Friends of WHS Halloween-themed bake sale raised over £200

Please contact friendsofwilliamhoward@gmail.com to get involved. Thank you for supporting our school community.

CET - Listening to Our Students

Before the end of November, all students at William Howard School will complete our 'My Voice Counts' student survey. This is an opportunity for every student to tell us about their experience of school; what is working well and what could be better.

The survey covers a wide range of areas, including their learning environment, their own attitude towards learning, how much they enjoy school, and how safe and supported they feel. We want students to share honest feedback so that we can better understand school life through their eyes.

Their responses will help us celebrate our strengths and identify where we need to make improvements. We want every student to feel that they belong at William Howard School and that their views matter in shaping our school community.



Please encourage your child to take the survey seriously and give thoughtful, honest answers.

Year 11

Over recent weeks, students have demonstrated a mature and focused approach to their studies, attending revision sessions, engaging positively in lessons, and working hard to develop the knowledge and skills needed for success. Equally, staff have invested a significant amount of time preparing resources, delivering intervention sessions, providing detailed feedback, and supporting students both inside and outside the classroom to ensure they are as well prepared as possible.

Revision and Mock Examinations

During the mock examination period, it is essential that all students check **EduLink** regularly. Full details regarding examination locations, seating arrangements, and examination timetables can be found there. Students should ensure they familiarise themselves with this information well in advance of each examination.

Following the recent Year 11 Step Up Evening, families were provided with comprehensive guidance on effective revision techniques and strategies. We encourage all students to revisit this information and make use of the revision support materials shared. Careful planning, regular retrieval practice, and consistent revision over time remain the most effective ways to prepare for examinations.

Once students return from their Work Experience placement, they will receive important feedback from their mock examinations. This feedback will provide valuable insight into their strengths, areas for development, and key topics requiring further attention. Students should use this information to help shape and prioritise their revision programmes as they continue preparing for their summer examinations.

We would like to thank all Year 11 students for their efforts and positive attitude, as well as our dedicated staff for their continued support and commitment during this important stage of the academic year. We wish all students the very best in their mock examinations.

If you have any questions or require further support, please do not hesitate to contact **Patrick Tidmarsh, Director of Learning for Year 11.**
ptidmarsh@williamhoward.cumbria.sch.uk

Work Experience

Our students are preparing for an exciting range of work experience placements across Cumbria and further afield, including Northumberland, Lancashire and Scotland.

From engineering, construction and agriculture to healthcare, education, hospitality, finance and the creative industries, the placements reflect our students' varied interests and ambitions. Local Employers include Bendalls Engineering, Farlam Hall, United Utilities, Avanti West Coast and Dodd & Co, alongside schools, veterinary practices and many other valued businesses.

These experiences help students build skills such as confidence, communication and time-management skills, while discovering workplace expectations and exploring possible careers. They also help students make informed decisions about future study, training and employment.

Our programme supports the government's ambition for every young person to benefit from two weeks' worth of work experience, alongside schools' wider careers guidance responsibilities.

A huge thank you to the employers and families making these opportunities possible. We look forward to hearing about our students' experiences and discoveries!

Please contact **Tracey Hill, Assistant Headteacher** thill@williamhoward.cumbria.sch.uk if you have any questions about work experience or our careers programme.

Sixth Form

We are incredibly proud of the positive start all our Sixth Form students have made and look forward to seeing what they achieve over the coming months.

It has been a busy and successful start to the year in Sixth Form. We were delighted to welcome our new Year 12 students, who have already made a fantastic contribution to school life. From stepping into roles as Prefects and supporting the Year 11 Careers Morning, to embracing the demands of their new courses, they have made a positive start. It has been great to see them developing strong study habits while making the most of the enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities on offer.

Our Year 13 students have returned with real focus as they begin planning their next steps. Alongside working on UCAS applications and exploring apprenticeship, employment and gap year opportunities, they have been preparing for important NEA deadlines and mock examinations. They have also continued to make a valuable contribution to the wider school community, helping at the Year 6 Open Evening, representing the school at careers events and celebrating victory in the annual Sixth Form Derby.



Students from both year groups have embraced wider Sixth Form life, supporting the Macmillan Coffee Morning, taking part in the UK Mathematics Trust Senior Maths Challenge and contributing positively to a range of school events and activities. They have also enjoyed educational visits to Spain and Naples, supporting Sixth Form Spanish and Geography studies, while providing a memorable opportunity to experience a different culture and environment firsthand.

This half term, we look forward to welcoming back our Year 11 and Year 13 leavers for Presentation Evening at Carlisle Cathedral on Tuesday 15 December. This is always a special occasion and an opportunity to celebrate not only their academic success, but also their wider contributions to school life and the exciting destinations they have gone on to pursue.

Challenge 26 – Supporting Children in Need

Our Student Leadership Team are organising Challenge 26 from 13–20 November, bringing students and staff together to raise money for BBC Children in Need. Challenges include baking 26 cakes, singing 26 songs, donating 26 foodbank items and completing 26 star jumps. Student leaders will also run a combined 26 miles on a treadmill during the week!

The week finishes with Pedal for Pudsey on Friday 20 November, 12 noon–3pm. Students can tackle 26 miles around the school field individually, in pairs or in teams of four, with each participant pledging to raise at least £26. The event also launches our school's Year of Cycling.



Parents and carers are warmly invited to come along and cheer on participants. Students can support during Break 2, with a suggested 50p donation.

Families have received a letter with full details. Entry forms are due by Tuesday 10 November, and cyclists must wear a helmet. Students wishing to volunteer should speak to Mrs McCombe.

Student Leadership and House News

Congratulations to our newly appointed Year 12 Prefects: Zoe, Niamh, Marium, Bella, Theo, Harry, Grace, Ewan, Isla, Abbie, Max, Alice and Mya!



Following a recent application and interview process, they join our Year 13 Head Students, Deputy Head Students and House Captains in bringing students' ideas to life. Their weekly student leadership podcasts help keep our school community informed.

This half term, we will recruit House Council representatives from all year groups. Please encourage your child to get involved—it is a wonderful opportunity to build confidence, share ideas and help shape school life.

Well done to Eden House, who lead the House leaderboard!

Talkin House led the recent collection for Brampton Foodbank. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this important charity by donating a non-perishable item to the trolley in the foyer. Gelt House's annual Mission Christmas collection will launch soon.

We warmly welcome Eloise Tilbrook, Head of Vindolanda House, Holly Sanderson, Head of Eden House, and new Deputy Head of House Kate Densley. Our thanks go to Glenn Tanner and Kim Beaumont for their hard work as last year's Heads of House.

Following the Year 7 House Morning, please ensure your child in Years 7, 8 or 9 wears their House badge on their blazer as part of our uniform policy. Replacement badges are available from Student Services for £1. *Thank you for your support*.

Outward Bound, Calvert Trust and The Power of the Outdoors

At WHS we firmly believe in the power of the outdoors to develop character. Through our thriving Character Curriculum, two dedicated Outdoor Learning groups follow a bespoke programme centred on our core values of Respect, Responsibility and Resilience, helping students develop a love of the outdoors whilst building important personal qualities.

This year, our annual residential programme continues with Year 7 and 8 students attending Howtown Outward Bound Centre in the Lake District, where they will take part in activities designed to foster respect for themselves, others and the environment, whilst learning the importance of teamwork and being a positive member of a team. Students in Years 8, 9 and 10 will have the opportunity to attend Outward Bound Loch Eil in Scotland, undertaking a resilience-focused programme that challenges them to step beyond their comfort zones and discover what they are capable of achieving. In addition, a selected group of students will take part in a residential experience with the Calvert Trust, where they will be supported to push their limits, overcome challenges and build confidence through experiences they may never have thought possible.

Alongside these opportunities, Ms Harpham continues to lead the highly successful Duke of Edinburgh's Award, with students from Year 9 onwards developing valuable skills through volunteering, physical activity, expeditions and service, and many students achieving the prestigious Gold Award in recent years. We are incredibly proud of the opportunities available to our students and the role outdoor education plays in helping them become confident, resilient and responsible young people. After all we do live in the most inspiring place.



Mobile Phone Policy Reminder

As we continue to promote a calm, focused and disruption-free learning environment, we would like to remind all students and families of our mobile phone expectations.

Our policy is simple: **"Not seen, not heard, not used."** Mobile phones and other personal devices must be **switched off and kept in students' bags from the moment they enter the school site until they leave at the end of the day.** This means no calls, messages, photographs, music, notifications or vibrations during the school day. The only exceptions are authorised medical devices and the agreed use of phones within the Sixth Form Centre.

Students who do not follow these expectations will be issued with sanctions in line with our mobile phone policy, including confiscation and collection by a parent or carer. We appreciate the support of families in reinforcing this message at home, helping us to maintain a positive environment where students can focus fully on their learning.



Three strikes: what happens

1 First offence

Parents/carers will be asked to collect the phone after school (between 3.15pm – 4.30pm each day).

2 Second offence

Parents/carers will be asked to collect the phone after school (3.15pm – 4.30pm). You will also hand your phone in to Student Services each morning for 4 weeks and collect it at the end of the school day.

3 Third offence

The phone will be confiscated and returned to a parent/carer at an arranged meeting. You will not be permitted to bring a phone onto the school site for the rest of the academic year. Any breach of this ban means the device is confiscated for two weeks.

Easy fix: switch it off and keep it in your bag – then none of this applies.

Dates for the Diary

2-13 November	Y11 Mock Exams
Wed 11 Nov	Remembrance Service
16-20 Nov	Y11 Work Experience
16-20 Nov	Scholastic Book Fair
16 Nov – 1 Dec	CET Christmas Card Competition
Wed 18 Nov	Y8 Progress Evening
Fri 20 Nov	Children in Need
Mon 23 Nov	Y7-11 Nasal Flu Vaccinations
Wed 25 Nov	Y9 Outdoor Learning Trip to Keswick
25-27 Nov	Inclusive Outdoor Learning Residential Trip to The Calvert Trust
Fri 27 Nov	Friends of WHS Bake Sale
30 Nov – 4 Dec	Y9 Assessment Week
Tues 1 Dec	Y10 & 11 A Christmas Carol, Theatre by the Lake
Wed 2 Dec	Year 13 Progress Evening
Fri 4 Dec	Get Cosy and Read Day
Wed 9 Dec	Sixth Form Open Evening
Fri 11 Dec	Open Spaces Christmas Fair
Fri 11 Dec	Sixth Form Christmas Party (7-11pm)
Sat 12 Dec	Harry Potter Rehearsals
Sun 13 Dec	Carol Service at Brampton Methodist Church
Tues 15 Dec	Presentation Evening at Carlisle Cathedral (6pm)
Fri 18 Dec	Christmas Jumper Day
Fri 18 Dec	Last Day of Term