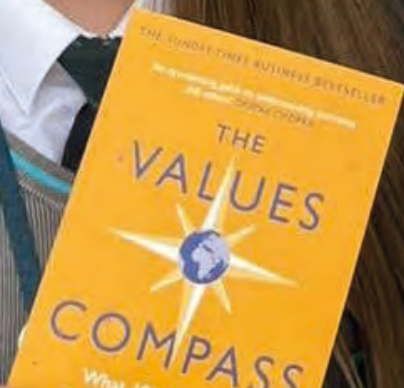


# HOULTON MAY NEWS 2026



HOULTON  
SCHOOL

'One Humanity'  
Symposium Inspires.  
See page 3 for the  
full story.



## Welcome from the Executive Principal

**As we come to the end of another relatively short half term, I continue to be inspired by all that we have achieved together across our school community.**

This term has certainly been an exciting one, with so much to update you on in this latest edition of the newsletter.

Some of my personal highlights have included exploring our unique heritage and building partnerships with our international namesakes in Houlton, USA—a project that promises to flourish over the coming years. In addition, we have been exploring the new Houlton School Primary building, which is going to be a fabulous setting for teaching our youngest pupils from September. Preparations are also well underway for welcoming our first cohort of sixth formers.

Despite the swift pace of these past weeks, with the guidance and support of our dedicated staff team, our students have also been embracing every opportunity with curiosity, creativity and determination.

Students on our Silver Duke of Edinburgh expedition demonstrated impressive resilience and teamwork, while a number of our talented performers took to the stage at the Leicester Curve, showcasing their confidence and creativity in

a professional setting. Academic excellence has also been on display, with students representing Houlton with pride in the UK Junior Maths Challenge.

Alongside these achievements, our Year 11 students have been working with real focus and determination as they continue their GCSE examinations. Their commitment has been evident every day, and we are incredibly proud of the maturity and perseverance they have shown.

As always, I'd like to thank you for your ongoing support, working in partnership to provide the best possible learning experiences for our students.

I look forward to a final half term filled with even more opportunities to celebrate their successes.

**Paul Brockwell**  
Executive Principal



# Message from the Head of School

As we approach the May half-term, I am delighted to share some exciting news from our school community. Mr Brockwell and I had the pleasure of taking part in a special online meeting with our namesake school, Houlton High School, and their wider leadership team in Maine, USA.

Despite being more than 3,000 miles apart, we quickly discovered just how much we have in common. Our conversations focused on the possibility of developing a formal "Sister School" partnership between our schools - a collaboration that we hope will grow and flourish in the years ahead.

What makes this connection even more special is the shared history between our two towns. We reflected on the incredible story of how, 100 years ago, a Morse code signal was transmitted from Houlton here in Rugby to Houlton, Maine. It was wonderful to share details of the current exhibition at Rugby Library, which celebrates this historic link through photographs and archive materials. We have also sent our American colleagues a book about the history of Houlton School and our historic radio station as a gesture of friendship.



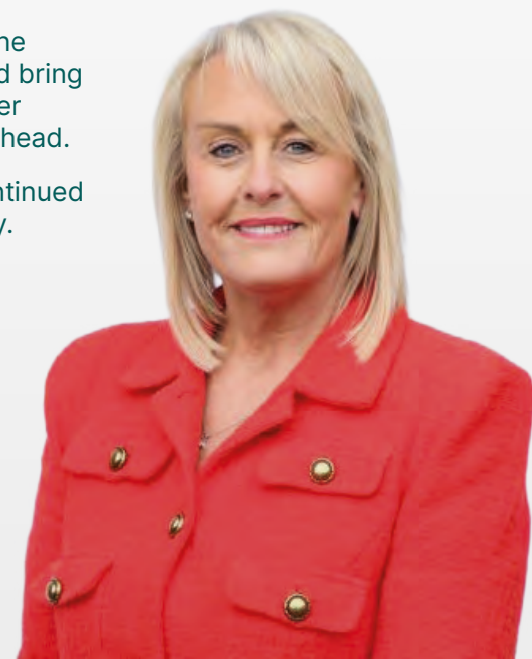
This partnership is not only about celebrating history, but also about creating exciting opportunities for our students. Plans are already underway for future online meetings between students and staff, cultural exchanges, and even a special radio transmission event planned for January 2027, where we hope to speak live with our friends in Maine.

We are incredibly excited about the possibilities this partnership could bring and look forward to sharing further updates with you in the months ahead.

As always, thank you for your continued support for our school community.

I hope you all enjoy a restful and enjoyable May half-term break.

**Lorna Pountney**  
Head of School



# From STEM to the stars – Houlton welcomes Professor Sam McKee

In April, we were delighted to welcome one of our first keynote speakers to Houlton, Professor Sam McKee, to talk to Year 11 aspiring scientists about his work on DNA molecular biology and its role in groundbreaking cancer research, as well as to open their minds to potential careers in science.

Sam works in education and academia as a researcher in Biomedicine and as an Associate Tutor in History and Philosophy of Science at Manchester Metropolitan University and has a whopping nine degrees to his name! In 2023, working with the International Space School Educational Trust (ISSET), he oversaw an experiment in biofilm and microgravity that took place on the International Space Station.

Students asked many insightful questions following his presentation, and left the talk inspired and open to the many different possibilities and opportunities a career in STEM can bring – on Earth and in space!



The talks form part of Houlton's exciting new Sixth Form provision opening in September 2026 and we are looking forward to inviting future key speakers into school to talk about other career pathways.

**Mrs Lorraine Cunliffe**  
Head of Sixth Form

## 'One Humanity' Symposium Inspires

Pupils and staff from both Houlton and Ashlawn Schools attended the 'One Humanity' Symposium at the Old Shire Hall in Warwick.

During the event, pupils were able to watch a variety of speakers discuss their incredible memories of walking amongst people of diverse backgrounds and experience. They were even able to meet Dr. Mandeep Rai and receive a signed copy of her book, 'The Values Compass'!

Pupils will now be working to consider how they can bring the values of equality, unity and compassion - so well-expressed at the Symposium- back to the school setting for the benefit of our pupils and the wider Rugby community.

## A New Home for Aspects Books

At the opening of the Rugby Radio Station centenary celebrations at the Rugby Art Gallery and Museum - running from 15th April to 3rd October 2026 - Mr Brockwell and Mrs Pountney had the pleasure of meeting members of the Rugby Local History Research Group.

The moment felt especially rewarding because the group's Aspects books now have a home in our library.

Although the books explore stories from the past, they were created with the future in mind. We have long believed that students gain a deeper understanding of their community when they can see how it has grown, changed, and been shaped by the people who came before them. Knowing that these volumes may support that learning is deeply encouraging.

Each Aspects book represents around two years of dedicated research. The small volunteer group build on the work of many who have contributed before them - collecting memories, uncovering records, and piecing together the details that bring local history to life. Seeing this effort appreciated and put to good use is a wonderful affirmation of why they do what they do and our students are lucky to have such easy access to this wealth of knowledge.

**P Webb**  
Rugby Local History Research Group

# Designing the Future: Houlton Students Lead the Way for New Teen Space

We're pleased to share that we've been working closely with Urban and Civic to design a new Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) for Houlton families.

At Houlton, we believe that the best spaces are those designed by the people who use them. That is why, this half term, we put the future of our MUGA and teen play space directly into the hands of our students.

The recent KORE Consultation was a masterclass in student agency, ensuring that the new facilities won't just be for our teenagers, but designed by them.

The process began in every form room across the school. Each student was presented with the initial MUGA brief and a concept for the space. These sessions allowed for honest - and often passionate - discussions about what the students loved and what they felt was missing.

To ensure every voice was heard, 26 student representatives were chosen to bring the collective feedback of their peers to the official design workshops.

During the consultation, our representatives took on the role of urban planners. The workshop was broken down into two key stages:

- **Individual Vision:** Each student used a 2x3 grid and specialised product tiles to map out their "dream" space. This gave them the freedom to prioritise the hobbies and interests most important to their specific form groups.



- **Collaborative Planning:** Moving from individual ideas to teamwork, students worked around large-scale printouts of the existing site. Their task was to design a functional, exciting area specifically tailored to their own age group.

The outcome of these workshops wasn't just a collection of drawings; it was a wealth of invaluable data. Following the consultation, designers have been busy extracting insights from:

- The differing needs of various age groups.
- Specific preferences highlighted by girls versus boys.
- The common themes found in both individual and group work.

## What's Next?

By combining these layers of data, a final concept is being developed that harmonises the diverse interests of our student body. This final design will reflect the unique identity of Houlton School - a space where every student can feel at home, stay active, and socialise.

We look forward to sharing more updates as these student-led visions begin to take shape!

**Mrs Lorna Pountney**  
Head of School



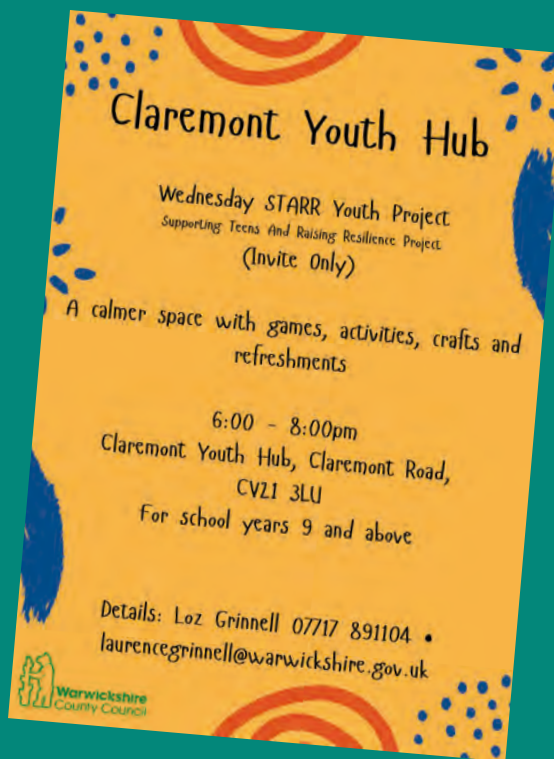
# Claremont Youth Hub

Warwickshire Youth Service is inviting young people in Years 9 and above to join their weekly youth groups at Claremont Youth Hub in Rugby. Sessions are held at Claremont Youth Hub, Claremont Road, Rugby, CV21 3LU.

Every Tuesday from 6:00pm to 8:00pm, the Youth Club offers a fun and relaxed space for young people to meet friends, enjoy games and creative activities, have refreshments and spend time in a safe environment.

A second weekly group takes place every Wednesday from 6:00pm to 8:00pm through the STARR Project (Supporting Teens and Raising Resilience Project). This invite-only youth group provides a calmer and more supportive space for young people experiencing anxiety, low confidence or social isolation, with activities, crafts and refreshments available each week.

If students or families would like to find out more, or if they are interested in joining either group, they can contact youth worker Loz Grinnell on 07717 891104 or email [laurencegrinnell@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:laurencegrinnell@warwickshire.gov.uk).



## Claremont Youth Hubs

Warwickshire Youth Service run two youth club programmes in Rugby that may be helpful for your students and young people. Both sessions take place at Claremont Youth Hub, Claremont Road, Rugby, CV21 3LU from 6:00 - 8:00pm.

Tuesday offers an open access youth club for school years 9 and above with activities, refreshments and a safe place to go.

Wednesday hosts the STARR project (Supporting Teens And Raising Resilience Project) an invite only group for years 9 and above. This calmer session supports young people who experience anxiety, low confidence or social isolation and includes activities and refreshments.

Flyers for both groups are available to share with young people, parents and colleagues.

If you would like our youth worker Loz Grinnell, to visit your school to meet young people or small groups about either programme, please use the contact details below. Visits can take place during breaks, lunchtimes or a time that is convenient for you.

Loz Grinnell 07717 891104  
[laurencegrinnell@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:laurencegrinnell@warwickshire.gov.uk)



# Reading for Meaning

This term has seen the exciting launch of our whole-school Reading for Meaning initiative, placing reading at the centre of learning in every classroom.

Across all subject areas, students are now engaging in weekly Reading for Meaning sessions designed to strengthen literacy, deepen understanding and support success across the curriculum.

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) highlights that literacy is a key driver of academic achievement, future life chances and social mobility. Their research also emphasises the importance of disciplinary literacy - teaching students how to read, write and think effectively within each subject. In response to this evidence, our Reading for Meaning approach is helping students access increasingly challenging academic texts with greater confidence and independence.

During these sessions, teachers model expert reading fluency by reading carefully selected texts aloud with pace, expression and purpose, and students are explicitly taught a five-step active reading strategy: Predict, Activate, Clarify, Question, Summarise. This supports students in developing comprehension, understanding subject-specific vocabulary and engaging more deeply with complex ideas.

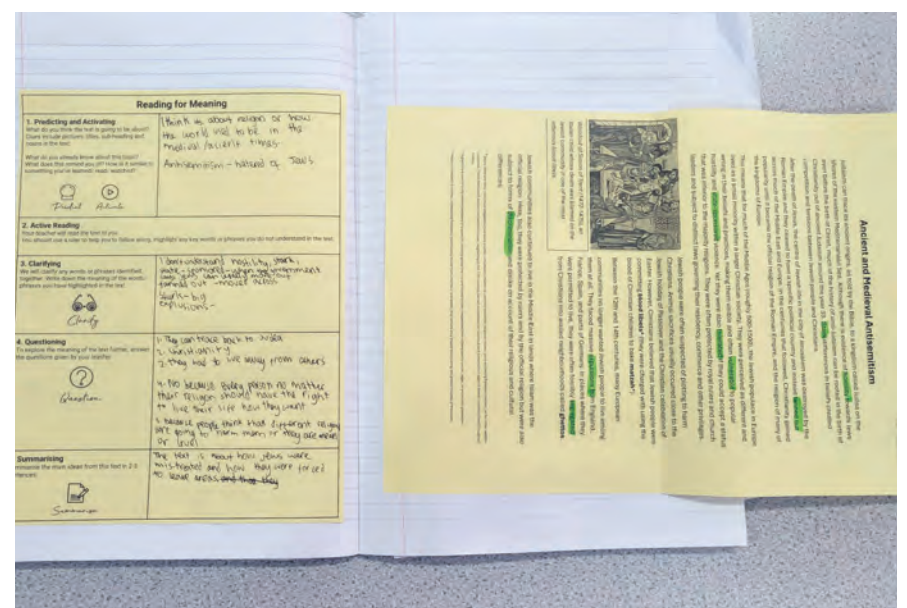
We have been delighted by the positive start to the initiative. Students have approached the sessions thoughtfully and enthusiastically, annotating texts, discussing ideas and making meaningful connections in their learning. Classrooms have showcased focused, high-quality work, with literacy truly at the forefront of teaching and learning.

We would like to thank our staff for their enthusiasm, commitment and hard work in bringing this initiative to life. Lesson visits highlighted excellent teacher modelling, carefully chosen texts

and purposeful classroom discussion which enriched learning and secured understanding across subjects. The consistency of approach across the school is creating a shared language around reading and comprehension that is already strengthening students' confidence.

We are excited to continue building on this success as Reading for Meaning becomes a consistent and valued part of learning across the school.

**Mrs Jennifer Ideson**  
Assistant Principal



# A Sneak Peek at Houlton's New Primary Provision

It is an exciting time for our community as we watch the building for the newest member of the Houlton School family take shape! We recently had the privilege of going behind the scenes for a site visit of the brand-new primary provision, which is currently under construction next door to our secondary site. We were delighted to be accompanied by the new Head of School for Primary, Becky O'Neill.

Led by Project Manager, Adam Sayer, the tour gave us a firsthand look at the incredible craftsmanship going into the build. While the exterior is impressive, the interior promises to be a truly inspiring space for learning. The design leans into a clean, Scandinavian aesthetic that feels both modern and incredibly welcoming.

We are officially on the countdown to September 2026, when the doors will open to welcome a new generation of Houlton learners. Stay tuned for more updates as this stunning project nears completion!

**Mrs Lorna Pountney**  
Head of School

Key architectural highlights include:

- High ceilings throughout the building create an airy, open atmosphere.
- The roof includes exposed timber beams that bring warmth to the classrooms.
- Between the beams, the ceilings are fitted with natural-toned woodwool acoustic treatment, ensuring a quiet and focused environment for students.

The momentum doesn't stop here! In June, we will be visiting Urban & Civic for a dedicated update on the interior design schemes. If the initial images are anything to go by, the finished product will be nothing short of spectacular.



# Creativity in Action: Inspiring Art, Design and Innovation Across the School

The Art and Design department has been full of creativity and innovation this term, with students across all year groups producing some fantastic work.

At the end of April, Year 10 Art students visited the Unveiled exhibition at Rugby Art Gallery, where they also explored future career opportunities within the creative industries. The visit provided students with an inspiring afternoon, allowing them to immerse themselves in a wide range of artists' work and gather ideas for their own coursework projects. Students were a credit to the school throughout the trip, demonstrating excellent behaviour in the community and acting as outstanding role models. Mrs Eburne and Ms Woodcraft were incredibly proud of them.

Meanwhile, Year 9 students have been bringing stories to life through the creation of paper mechanisms for children's pop-up books. Students have been experimenting with box folds, V-folds, sliders and lift-the-

flap techniques, developing both their creativity and practical making skills as they design engaging and interactive pages.

In Design Technology, Year 7 students have been tackling the exciting Big Question: Can Junk Become Funk? As part of the project, students have been designing and creating product prototypes using recycled materials. They have explored the properties of cardboard and practised how to safely and effectively use craft knives, while discovering how everyday waste materials can be transformed into imaginative new creations.

**Ms Ruth Woodcraft**  
Head of Creative

**Mrs Chloe Eburne**  
Teacher of Art



# Growing business knowledge

Year 10 students have made an excellent start to their study of Theme 2: "Growing the Business".

Throughout this unit they have explored key concepts including methods of business growth, the impact of changing aims and objectives, as well as the influence of globalisation and ethical considerations on modern organisations.

Students have engaged thoughtfully with a range of real-world case studies, drawing on familiar brands such as Cadbury and McDonald's to deepen their understanding and apply their knowledge in context. It has been particularly encouraging to see the level of curiosity and discussion within lessons, with students confidently sharing ideas and beginning to think like young business analysts.

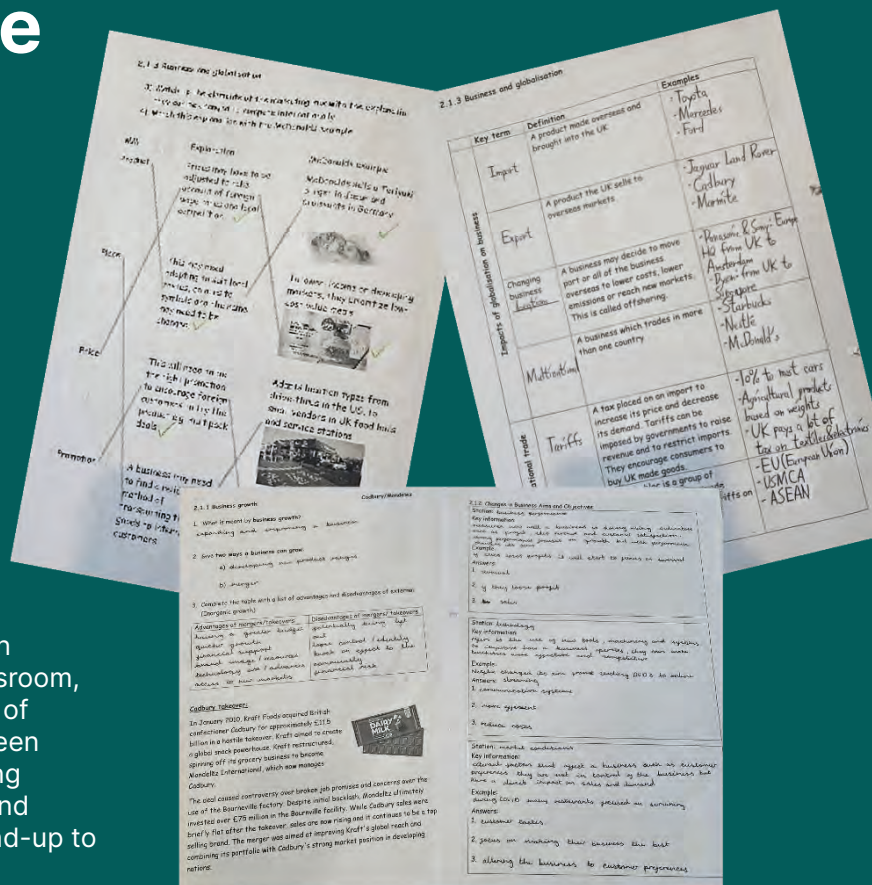
We are looking forward to rounding off the term with a lively and insightful debate, where students will have the opportunity to showcase their learning and articulate their viewpoints with confidence.

Year 11 students have continued to demonstrate resilience and determination

as they progress through their revision programme. Alongside revisiting key content, there has been a focus on developing effective exam technique, ensuring that students feel well-prepared and confident in approaching their assessments.

Students now have access to a comprehensive range of past papers and carefully curated revision materials, both in their folders and via Google Classroom, enabling them to take ownership of their independent study. It has been fantastic to see students engaging positively with these resources and supporting one another in the lead-up to their examinations.

As always, we encourage them to maintain a balanced approach, making use of the support available in school as they continue on this important stage of their journey.



**Miss Emily Strutt**  
Head of Business Studies

# Building Real-World Skills Across Every Year

Year 7 have done some fantastic work this half term looking at computational thinking (which isn't how a computer thinks!). They have looked at the four key concepts of computational thinking – Decomposition, Algorithms, Abstraction and Pattern Recognition.

The fantastic thing about these key concepts is that they do not just apply to computer science but the real world itself. We constantly recognise patterns and use previous solutions to solve them or identify what might happen next. The London Underground is abstracted depending on your location, you do not need to know the entire map just where you are going. We constantly break big problems down into smaller ones and then follow an Algorithm (set of instructions) to solve it. Next term we move onto one of my favourite parts of the course, Make:Code coding with microbits!

Year 8 have been working on how we present information to people as well as developing skills using photopea (a program very similar to Photoshop). As part of this they have been developing some fantastic presentations for a fictional charity that promotes online safety. I have seen some fantastic, high level and conscientious work produced. Next term we start to look at how we can use Microsoft Excel as a planning tool which is then further expanded in their Year 9 unit, Advanced IT skills.

Talking of Year 9 and Advanced IT skills, students are currently working on their budgets for different scenarios such as

studying at university and the weekly food shop. The use of Excel to help with this allows students to create a template that can be used in almost any situation. Previously, we have used IT skills to develop references and bibliographies. Over the next term, we will also be looking at professional presentations and the creation of CVs in Word.

The Year 10 cohort have continued their work through the course, having recently delved into Computational Thinking. During this we will get to one of my favourite sections – the sorts. This allows us the opportunity to get out of the classroom and practically engage in learning these sorts. After this we will be continuing with exam preparation and Python coding.

At the time of writing this, Year 11 are about to sit their exams and I wish them all the best!

As we enter the final term, I am looking forward to working with all the year groups to develop their computing skills.

**Mr Matt Cresswell-Peters**  
Head of Computer Science

```
//fires the appear event when appropriate
var check = function() {
  //is the element hidden?
  if (!t.is(':visible')) {
    //it became hidden
    t.appeared = false;
    return;
  }

  //is the element inside the visible window?
  var a = w.scrollLeft();
  var b = w.scrollTop();
  var o = t.offset();
  var x = o.left;
  var y = o.top;

  var ax = settings.accX;
  var ay = settings.accY;
  var th = t.height();
  var wh = w.height();
  var tw = t.width();
  var ww = w.width();

  if (y + th + ay >= b &&
      y <= b + wh + ay &&
      x + tw + ax >= a &&
      x <= a + ww + ax) {

    //trigger the custom event
    if (!t.appeared) t.trigger('appear', settings.data, modifiedFn);
  } else {
    //it scrolled out of view
    t.appeared = false;
  }
};

//create a modified fn with some additional logic
var modifiedFn = function() {
  //mark the element as visible
  t.appeared = true;

  //is this supposed to happen only once?
  if (settings.one) {
    //remove the check
    w.unbind('scroll', check);
    var i = $.inArray(check, $.fn.appear.checks);
    if (i >= 0) $.fn.appear.checks.splice(i, 1);
  }

  //trigger the original fn
  fn.apply(this, arguments);
};

//bind the modified fn to the element
$.fn.appear.one('appear', settings.data, modifiedFn);
```

## Duke of Edinburgh's Award

# Silver DofE Expedition

Our recent Silver Duke of Edinburgh's Award practice expedition proved to be a true test of determination. Over three days and two nights, our students took on challenging routes and showed outstanding perseverance throughout.

The weather certainly kept everyone on their toes! Students experienced almost every season imaginable, including heavy rain, hail, strong winds, a light dusting of snow, and even a few welcome bursts of sunshine.

Despite the unpredictable conditions and many miles of walking, spirits remained high from start to finish (despite having wet boots and wet clothing).

The students were brilliant throughout the expedition and were a pleasure to accompany.

They showed such resilience in difficult conditions, supported one another during challenging moments, and approached every obstacle with positivity.

**Mrs Sophie Cunliffe**  
Interim DofE Manager



# English in Focus From Shakespeare to GCSE Success

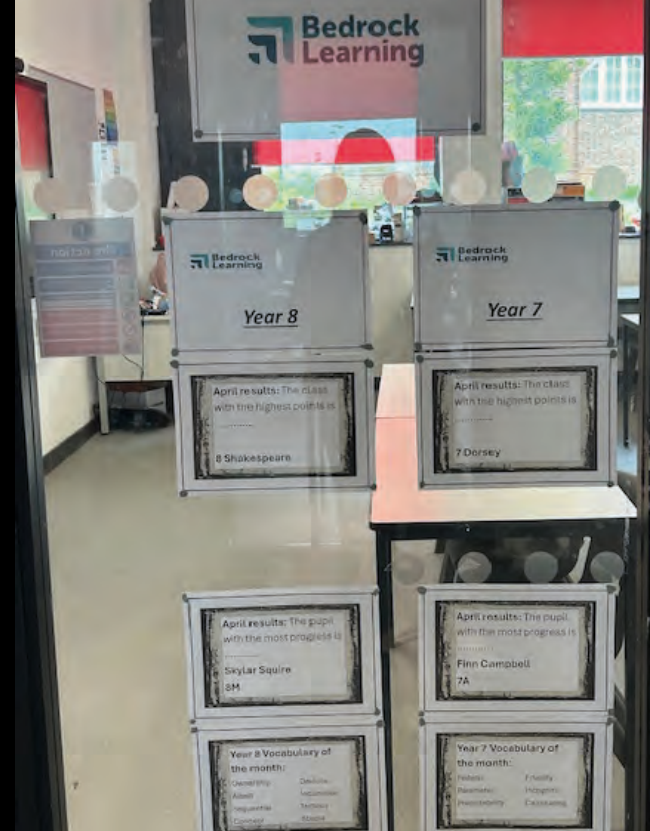
## Key Stage 3:

Year 7 have begun their study of Shakespeare and the Renaissance. They have been learning Shakespearean vocabulary in class, including some authentic insults, so watch out if anyone calls you a “distempered, eye-offending cutpurse”! Year 7 work will culminate with their study of *The Merchant of Venice*.

In Years 7 and 8, students are set homework on Bedrock. This challenges our learners with work on reading, comprehension, vocabulary

and grammar, and Ms. Straw has set up a league table to create a competitive edge to this work. In April, the Year 7 college with the most Bedrock points was 7 Dorsey. In Year 8 it was 8 Shakespeare. Individual winners were Finn C 7A and Skylar S 8M. Well done! You are our first Bedrock Champions!

Year 9 have been studying *Jane Eyre* and Gothic Literature this term and have completed their first round of assessments in the exam hall. This will give them a realistic experience of what GCSEs will feel like in two years' time.



## GCSE

Year 11 students are entering their GCSE examinations period. Key dates are:

- **Mon 11th May** GCSE Literature Paper 1 – *Macbeth*, *A Christmas Carol*
- **Tue 19th May** GCSE Literature Paper 2 – *An Inspector Calls*, Poetry Anthology, Unseen Poetry
- **Thu 21st May** GCSE Language Paper 1
- **Fri 5th June** GCSE Language Paper 2

All the teachers and students in the English department are working hard to get ready for these exams and have a wealth of resources on Google Classroom, but if parents and carers wish to support them further then these websites have proved useful over the years.

## Top AQA English Literature Revision Resources:

- **BBC Bitesize AQA:** Offers structured notes, videos, and quizzes covering 19th-century novels, Shakespeare, and poetry.
- **Save My Exams:** Provides detailed revision notes, topic questions, and model answers tailored to the AQA specification.
- **Seneca Learning:** Free interactive platform featuring specific courses for AQA Power & Conflict poetry and set texts.
- **Physics & Maths Tutor (PMT):** Excellent for A-level notes, flashcards, and exam questions.
- **British Library:** Excellent for deeper context on set texts like *Macbeth* or *An Inspector Calls*.
- **SparkNotes & CliffsNotes:** Useful for character analyses, chapter summaries, and thematic analysis.

This term we are reading:

- **Y7** Introduction to Shakespeare and *The Merchant of Venice*.
- **Y8**, *Ruby in the Smoke*.
- **Y9**, *Jane Eyre*.
- **Y10**, Poetry.
- **Y11**, Revision and GCSEs.

Keep on reading!

**Mr Ben Coleman**  
Head of English and Literacy



# Kenilworth Castle Trip

Our Year 10 History students recently enjoyed a fantastic and highly valuable visit to Kenilworth Castle as part of their preparation for their GCSE Paper 2: History Around Us.

This visit is a crucial element of the course, allowing students to experience the historic environment first hand and deepen their understanding of the site they will be writing about in their exam.

During the visit, pupils explored a range of key features across the castle grounds. They examined the Norman keep, one of the oldest parts of the site, originally built in the 12th century and designed as a strong defensive structure. Students also visited the remains of the Great Hall, which dates from the medieval period and would have been the centre of noble life, used for feasting, ceremonies, and displays of power.

A student favourite is Leicester's Building, added in the 16th century by Robert Dudley. This impressive structure was designed to provide luxurious accommodation for Elizabeth I during her famous visit in 1575 and even contained a private chamber for Elizabeth to dance in, reflecting the shift from a purely defensive castle to a residence focused on grandeur and status. We also enjoyed the beautifully recreated Elizabethan Privy Garden, a colourful and symmetrical garden that would have only been available for Elizabeth and her guests to use.

Houlton students benefited from a guided tour, which helped to bring the history of the castle to life, before having time to explore the site independently and take in its scale and significance.

We would like to extend a big thank you to Mr Roy for organising such a successful and enriching trip. This experience allows students to confidently discuss the site evidence needed to be successful in their GCSE exams next year.



## Year 11 GCSE History Exams – Important Information

As we approach the final stretch of the academic year, we are busy preparing our Year 11 students for their upcoming GCSE History examinations.

The exam dates are as follows:

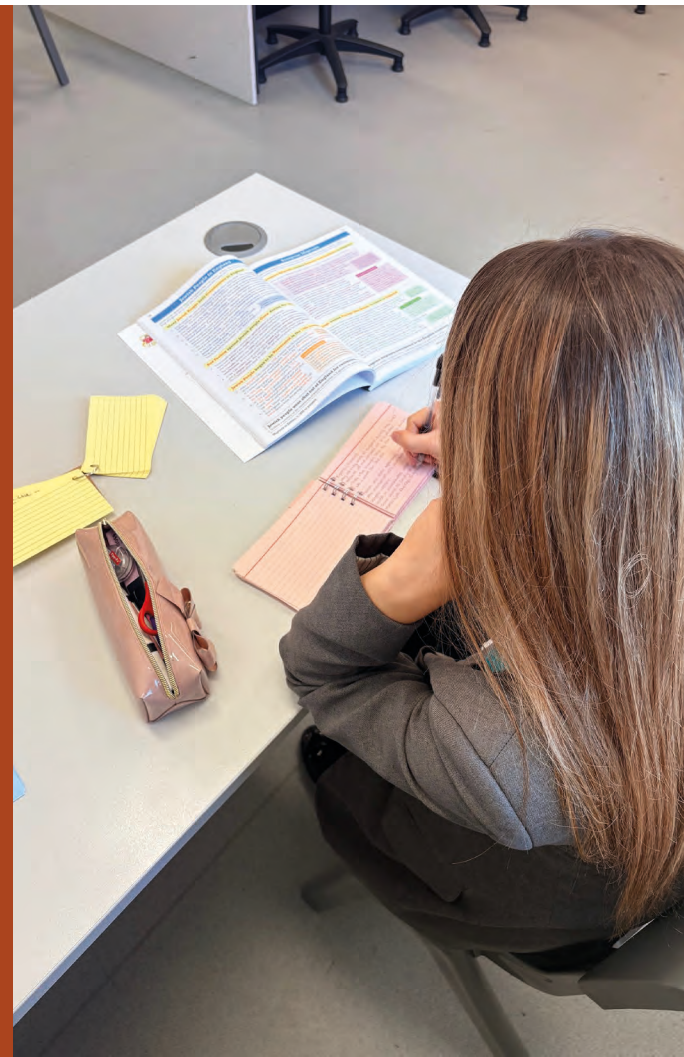
- Friday 15th May – Kenilworth
- Thursday 4th June – Migration and Elizabeth
- Tuesday 9th June – Making of America and Living Under Nazi Rule.

To support students in their revision, after-school sessions are running every Tuesday and Wednesday with Mrs Cooper and Mr Roy. These sessions are a valuable opportunity for students to revisit key content, practise exam questions, and build confidence ahead of the exams.

We would also like to remind parents and students that every Year 11 student has access to a dedicated History Revision Google Classroom. A link can be found on their usual class Google Classroom page. By clicking on the 'Classwork' tab, students will find a wide range of resources, including support for knowledge recall, chronology, exam structure, and model answers.

We encourage all students to make full use of these resources and attend revision sessions where possible. We wish all our Year 11 historians the very best of luck in their exams!

**Mrs Becky Cooper**  
Head of Humanities



# UKMT Junior Maths Challenge

26 students from Years 7 and 8 took part in the UK Mathematics Trust Junior Maths Challenge – and what an experience it was!

This national competition is all about stretching your thinking and having a go at tricky, puzzle-style maths questions. This year's paper certainly didn't disappoint, offering plenty of challenges to get everyone thinking hard.

Houlton students showed fantastic determination and enthusiasm as they worked their way through the problems. While many found it tough, the overall feeling was that it was a fun and rewarding experience. Well done to all who took part!

Some student comments:

- Oliver (Year 8) said: "UKMT was definitely a challenge. But despite this difficulty it was definitely rewarding. Each question was challenging yet human enough to be able to get through. I would recommend it if you want to be stretched beyond normal classwork."
- Harvey (Year 8) shared: "The maths challenge was so much harder than I anticipated... I am so glad that they offer different age groups for the challenge, so I can try again."
- Divij (Year 8) added: "I found the maths challenge intriguing and fun, because of working out the different problems."

- Year 7 students were just as positive. Cara said: "It was fun, we got to express ourselves, and it was challenging," while Jazmin commented: "It really challenges you to think hard about what the answer could be. But I enjoyed it!"
- Emma summed it up simply: "It was challenging but fun."
- Matthew added: "The maths challenge was very fun... it was one of the only tests I haven't properly finished. I had a very fun time, and I am looking forward to doing it again."

Overall, the Junior Maths Challenge was a brilliant opportunity for students to try something different, challenge themselves, and enjoy maths in a new way.

Fancy giving it a go next time? Maths Challenge Club runs every Tuesday lunchtime and is open to everyone interested in taking part in next year's competitions. Alongside the Junior Challenge, we're also hoping to run the Intermediate Challenge for Years 9–11 and the Senior Challenge for Sixth Form students.

Everyone is welcome – come along and give it a try!

**Mrs Helen Camps**  
Teacher of Mathematics

## Performing Arts

# Houlton School Shines at Leicester Curve!

Our talented Performing Arts Scholars and GCSE Drama students took to the professional stage at the Leicester Curve, delivering a show-stopping performance of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

As part of the Coram Shakespeare Schools Theatre Festival's 25th anniversary season, our students reimagined this classic comedy with modern wit and incredible professional poise.

The production was appraised by Patrick Wilson, who described the performance as "truly hilarious" and a "wonderful production".

The review highlighted several standout moments that showcased the hard work and creativity of the cast. The appraiser was "very impressed" by how connected the ensemble remained throughout the performance, particularly during a "bullet twanging" sequence where the entire cast moved perfectly in sync, allowing the comedy to land brilliantly.

The "Mechanicals" were praised as a "fantastic unit" with playful energy, bringing humour beyond the original text and reflecting the unique personalities of the students. The much-anticipated "Chariots of Fire" moment also lived up to expectations, with Wilson describing it as "very, very funny". Despite the pressures of rehearsal, the company demonstrated a "high level of professionalism" alongside impressive maturity and focus throughout the production.

This performance proved that Shakespeare is at its best when in the hands of young people who are willing to be fresh and exciting. We are incredibly proud of our scholars and GCSE students for their commitment.

Congratulations to the entire cast and crew for representing Houlton School so brilliantly! We look forward to seeing our performers return to the stage.

**Mr David Bird**  
Head of Acting



# Houlton PE Half Term Highlights Success Across Sport and Leadership

It has been another extremely busy and successful half term for the Houlton PE Department, with a wide range of to, fixtures, and activities taking place across all year groups.

One of the standout moments this term was the completion of our very first GCSE PE moderation day. Our students were outstanding throughout and were a true credit to the school. Their efforts made the day a great success - well done to everyone involved!

In competitive sport, our U16 girls' football team reached the county cup final, eventually losing 4-1 to Kenilworth. This was still an exceptional achievement, especially considering that many of the team were playing up one or even two age groups.

The rounders season is now underway. Our Year 11 team kicked things off with a tournament on the first Tuesday back after Easter, finishing with one win, one draw, and one loss. Meanwhile, our mixed Year 9 and 10 team are currently competing in fixtures, having already played Rugby High, with matches against Harris, Avon Valley, and Rugby Free still to come.

We were also proud to have 14 of our sports leaders support a primary school event held in the sports hall. They assisted younger students through a variety of activities throughout the day. Although it was a long and tiring experience, it proved to be incredibly rewarding, and their leadership skills were evident for all to see.

In lessons, students in Years 7 to 10 have been focusing on athletics, particularly track and throwing events. Students have been working hard to improve their performances and beat their personal bests.



Year 10 students have also been taking part in a team-based competition, representing different countries and earning points in a bid to come out on top.

Overall, it has been a packed half term filled with participation, progress, and success. We are now looking ahead to an equally exciting final half term, including our annual Sports Day, which will take place on 3rd July.

We also have our Town Championships coming up in the next half term and students have already been registering their interests for this.

Monday 1st June U14 & 15 at Rugby Athletics track

Thursday 25th June U13 & U12 at Rugby Athletics track

Thank you to all students, staff, and supporters for their continued enthusiasm and commitment to PE at Houlton School.

**Miss Abbie Hartfield**  
Head of PE



# Talking about Puberty!

Our Year 7 students have been exploring the changes that occur during puberty. As part of this learning, they have also been finding out more about the range of period products available and how these can support individuals in managing these changes with confidence and dignity.

We have been incredibly impressed with the maturity shown by students throughout these lessons. They have approached the topic with thoughtful curiosity, asked insightful questions, and demonstrated a willingness to contribute positively to class discussions. We would also like to extend our thanks to parents who have also provided us with valuable positive feedback about your discussions at home relating to this topic. It is fantastic to hear that students have felt comfortable and confident to share their knowledge with you.

Students have also been reminded that a range of period products are available in school and can be accessed through the PELS, Ms Kirsopp or by speaking with any other member of staff.

This is an important area of learning, and it has been fantastic to see students developing their understanding in such a responsible and mature way.

**Mrs Becky Cooper**  
Head of Humanities



# Personal Development

This half term has been a busy one at Houlton school for student personal development.

During tutor time, KS3 students have been focussing on learning about British Values and why they form the bedrock of the peace and stability in our nation. Students have begun by exploring the importance of democracy, including how our voting system works in the UK.

They are now moving on to learning about the rule of law and gaining an understanding of this both in school, as well as in the wider community. They have even had a go at setting up their own mini-society, imagining themselves on a deserted island where they make the rules. Within this they have also been focusing on their



literacy skills, with debates, new vocabulary and extracts from texts such as 'Lord of the Flies'. Please ask them about what they have been doing and learning, as they are very excited to share this with you and have had some fantastic debates.

In KS4, meanwhile, we are looking to the future. Year 11 have been working hard during their tutor time interventions to revise for their exams, which they have begun incredibly well. We wish them the very best of luck and are here to support them in any way that we can. In Y10, our students have been focusing on careers. They have been working hard at home to secure their work experience placements in their specific fields of interest and have gained valuable insight into the challenges and processes around job-hunting.

Their tutor time sessions have explored a range of useful careers guidance, from how to develop transferable soft-skills to how to engage proactively and safely with AI in the workplace. Students have been committing themselves to creating their own action plans so that they can gain experience and evidence of successful working skills for interviews. Please engage with them about what they are looking forward to in their study of careers and their work experience.

Students have also been engaging in a variety of assemblies, the most recent of which focused on Mental Health Week. Students were offered support and guidance around where to access resources for issues such as low mood and self harm. Students were reminded that we are always here to help and signposted to staff whom they could come and speak to around their mental health.

Before the half-term break, rewards assemblies also take place, to ensure that all of our students get to be celebrated for their fantastic efforts. These are the highlight of our team and we are so happy to be able to share in their successes with them.

Here is to a fantastic final term at Houlton, where we can praise and reward them even further.

**Mrs Sian Warde**  
Assistant Principal

# Oral presentation skills in RE

This term in Religious Education, Key Stage 3 students have really risen to the challenge, showing confidence, effort and determination. All students have created and delivered their end-of-topic presentations, using an oracy framework to help them plan, organise and present their ideas clearly.

Speaking in front of others is not easy – we all know how challenging it can be to stand up and present. That is why we are so proud of every student for having a go and pushing themselves beyond their comfort zone. Developing confidence in speaking is

an important life skill, and RE lessons are helping students build this in a supportive and encouraging environment.

Each year group focused on a different area of study:

- Year 7 students presented on a religion of their choice
- Year 8 students focused on Islam
- Year 9 students explored Hinduism

Across all year groups, students spoke clearly, used the oracy framework effectively and showed respect as audience members. It has been fantastic to see their hard work and progress.

Well done to all KS3 students – you should be very proud of yourselves!

**Mrs Dupinder Gatora**  
Head of Religious Studies



## Attendance

# Win the June Jackpot!

### Did you know that:

- Year 11 students with above 95% attendance are almost twice as likely to achieve Grade 5 or above in English and Maths?
- Research reveals that every day missed between Years 7 and 11 is associated with an average loss of £750 in future earnings? By age 28, persistently absent students could earn around £10,000 less than their peers with above 95% attendance!
- Every year spent in school or university improves our life expectancy? Completing primary, secondary and tertiary education is the equivalent of a lifetime of eating a healthy diet, lowering the risk of premature death by 34%.

That is why, in June, every pupil who has 100% attendance throughout June will win a June Jackpot Joy-bag!

We want to promote and celebrate good attendance with all of the future benefits that it brings.

Are you up to the challenge of winning the June Jackpot?!



# Exploring Minds, Building Empathy and Real World Connections

Year 10 Psychology students have recently started the fascinating topic of Perception. Students have been exploring a range of visual illusions and discussing how our brains interpret what we see.

Have a go yourself - what do you see?  
A duck or a rabbit? An old woman or a young woman? Vases or faces? These illusions have sparked some excellent classroom discussions about how perception can differ from person to person.



Year 10 Sociology students are continuing their work on Families and Education. We have enjoyed some particularly interesting discussions around the functions of education and the important role schools play within society. Students have continued to engage thoughtfully with different sociological perspectives.

As students begin preparing for their Year 10 exams, this is a reminder that all revision resources can be found on the Psychology Revision Google Classroom and the Sociology Revision Google Classroom. Please encourage students to use the Classwork tab, where all resources are clearly organised by type and topic to support effective revision.

Year 10 Health and Social Care students have now submitted their first controlled assessment. As part of this, all students delivered a health promotion campaign to an audience. We have seen some wonderfully creative demonstrations, including using marbles and bowls to explain the importance of vaccinations, and pepper alongside washing-up liquid to demonstrate the importance of handwashing. We have been incredibly impressed with the enthusiasm, creativity and professionalism students have shown in approaching this piece of work.

Beyond the classroom, we have continued to strengthen our links with Butler's Mews Care Home. Students have enjoyed weekly games of cribbage and scrabble alongside a cup of tea and a piece of cake with residents. The visits continue to be a wonderful experience for everyone involved.

Recently, we asked both students and residents what they enjoyed most about these visits, and we wanted to share some of their responses:

- **Scarlett, age 13:** "I enjoy coming here to visit people that might not have family."
- **Danvi, age 13:** "I like playing games with the old people and making them happy."
- **Samina, age 13:** "I like playing with the elderly people and they are happy to see us, and they are almost like family. I don't have any grandparents, so they are like grandparents to me."
- **Safiya, age 13:** "Meeting new people and playing games with them."
- **Raffaella, age 13:** "Talking to people and just being around them makes me happy."
- **Grace, age 16:** "I like coming here to play games and beating Brian at Cribbage."
- **Residents also shared their thoughts about welcoming our students into the home:**
- **Bob, age 87:** "The kids get involved with everything we do, it's brilliant."
- **Brian, age 82:** "I like the banter."
- **Maggie, age 82:** "I love mixing with a different generation."

These visits continue to highlight the positive impact of intergenerational relationships and the kindness, empathy and confidence shown by our students.

Finally, by the time this newsletter is published, our Year 11 students will have completed their GCSE examinations in both

## Key Dates For The Diary

Here are some key dates for the next coming term

### 4-5th June

- Silver Duke of Edinburgh

### 11 - 12th June

- Bronze Duke of Edinburgh

### 12th June

- Year 11 Leavers Day

### 17th - 19th June

- Year 10 Mock Exams

### 30th June

- Year 12 Induction Day
- Boys Dance Workshop

### 2nd July

- PJ Day for Cancer Research

### 3rd July

- Sports Day

### 8th July

- Transition Day

### 8th July

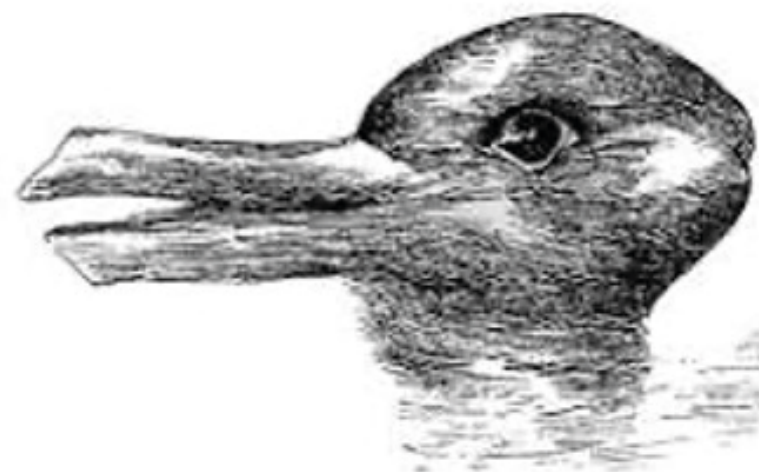
- Year 6 Parents Evening

### 6th -10th July

- Enrichment week including Year 10 Work Experience

Psychology and Sociology. We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate them on the mature, hardworking and positive way they prepared for and approached these exams. They have shown real resilience and determination, and we are incredibly proud of them. We wish them every success and happiness in whatever their next chapter may entail.

**Ms Emma Clark**  
Head of Social Sciences



# The Year 11 Half-Term Toolkit




We are officially at the halfway point! As we head into the May half-term, our Year 11 students have already shown incredible resilience through their first set of GCSE exams. This break is a critical “pit stop” - a chance to refuel, sharpen the tools, and get ready for the final sprint in June.

It's a common myth that half-term should be 100% revision. In reality, burnout is the enemy of memory. To perform your best when exams resume, you need to balance focused work with genuine relaxation.

- The 3-to-5 Rule: Aim for 3 to 5 hours of focused revision per day. This leaves plenty of time for lie-ins, seeing friends, and clearing your head.
- The Pomodoro Power: Work in 25-minute blocks followed by a 5-minute break. After four rounds, take a longer break to go for a walk or grab a snack.
- Morning Momentum: Try to get your revision done in the morning. Once it's out of the way, the rest of the day is yours to enjoy guilt-free!

## Revision Tips

Don't just “read” your notes - your brain needs to work to remember! Use active recall techniques to make the information stick:

-  **Flashcards** - Perfect for quick-fire facts, dates, and formulas.
-  **Blurring** - Read a topic, close the book, and write down everything you can remember on a blank sheet. Use a different color pen to fill in what you missed.
-  **Past Papers** - The “Gold Standard.” Practicing under timed conditions is the best way to build exam stamina.

## Refuel and Relax

Your brain is a muscle and, like any athlete, you need recovery time. This half-term, make sure you:

1. Prioritise Sleep: Aim for 8-9 hours. Your brain processes what you've learned while you sleep.
2. Move Your Body: A 20-minute walk or a kickabout in the park can significantly lower cortisol (stress) levels.
3. Digital Detox: Try to keep your phone in another room while you revise. Those “quick” social media breaks often drain more energy than they give.

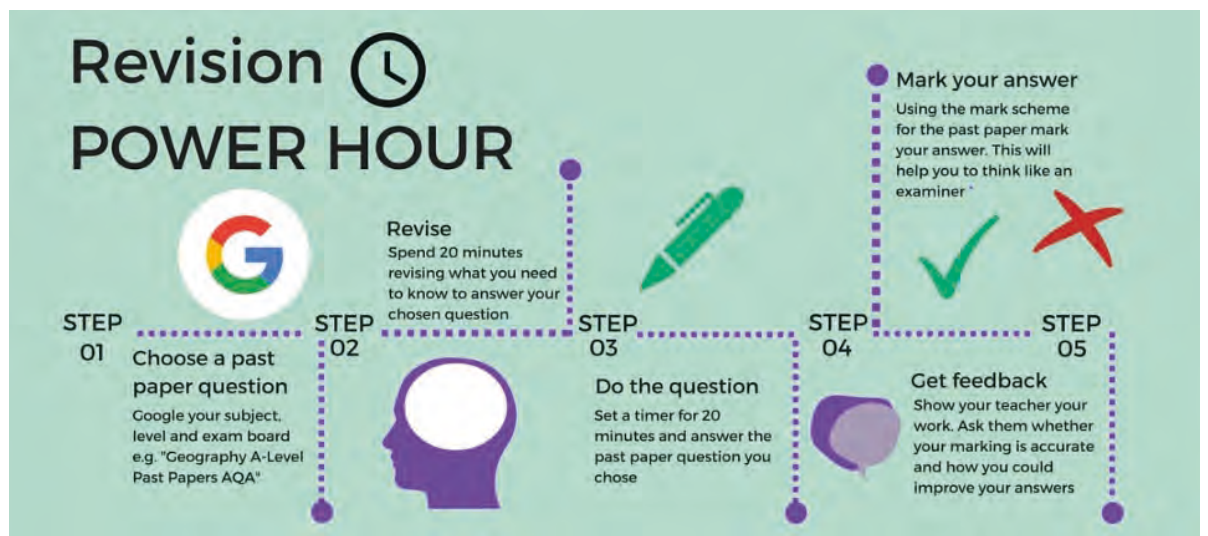


## Motivation: You're Closer Than You Think!

It's normal to feel a bit frazzled at this stage, but remember:

- Look Back: You've already tackled some of the biggest papers (English Lit, Maths Paper 1, Biology). That's a huge achievement!
- Look Forward: The finish line is in sight. Think about that feeling of walking out of your very last exam.
- The Reward: You are just weeks away from the longest, most deserved summer holiday of your life.

Good luck, Year 11. Enjoy your rest, stay focused, and let's finish this journey strong!



# College Points



Armstrong  
19,817



Dorsey  
21,815



Obama  
24,451



Shakespeare  
26,805



Winton  
23,125



Morse  
23,323



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